

Reading exercise.

This text shows the use of the simple present tenses. There is lots of great vocabulary to learn.

1. Read the article through without stopping to think about unknown words. You will get some meaning through context.
2. Replace the underlined with the synonyms given by dragging and dropping.
3. Check your answers
4. Read the text again.

Adapted from:

### *What Keeps Me Calm: Reading Alain de Botton*

Review of 'How Proust Can Change Your Life,' author Alain de Botton wrestles with Proust's philosophy and his own witty account of life.

<https://metro.style/culture/books/what-keeps-me-calm-reading-alain-de-botton/25853>

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In de Botton's attempt to recount Marcel Proust's philosophy, he puts forward a witty narrative resembling a self-help book. At its very core, *How Proust Can Change Your Life* sheds light on the most practical ways on how to best live life. The author splits the book into named sections that encapsulate the lessons he hopes to share—How to Read for Yourself, How to Take Your Time, How to Suffer Successfully, How to Express Your Emotions, to name a few.

divides

presents

which  
looks like

Here are some of the points that have inspired me to appreciate my life more widely:

give

funny

#### **Literature makes you more aware of the things you feel**

A beautiful idea presented by de Botton is that we are the readers of our own selves. The books and novels we read serve as optical instruments that grant us access to ideas and feelings that we may, deep down, already know but could not quite yet acknowledge. "A book sensitizes us to things we wouldn't have noticed," he mentions. De Botton also identifies the problem of putting all our energy into consuming and reading a lot, but never taking the time to think about what you're reading.

appreciate

teaches about

brings to our  
attention

“The value of a novel is not limited to its own depiction of emotions and people akin to those in our own life, it stretches to an ability to describe these far better than we would have been able, to put a finger on perceptions that we recognize as our own, yet could not have formulated as our own.”

extends

identify

When it comes to putting into words the feelings I find most difficult to explain, books remain unrivalled. De Botton explains that the greatest strength of a book is also its limitation which is that it doesn't leave its reader with answers. “A reader's wisdom begins where that of the author leaves off,”

ends

### **Believing in “not having enough time” hinders you**

the best

A large portion of the book is centred on taking one's time, with even an entire chapter dedicated to teaching the reader how to do so. De Botton emphasizes that by going about things more slowly, we are able to better see what's in front of us and what surrounds us. While I do enjoy the instantaneous rush of getting things done fast, I'm also guilty of hiding behind the frail excuse of “not having enough time” quite often.

intelligence

weak

I can't enjoy a cup of coffee because I have a pile of work I have to finish.

excitement

I can't take the time to call and catch up with a friend because I have other things to do.

short

I can't enjoy the scenery because I'm too busy trying to get to where I need to be.

reconnect

So much of the comfort I can find in these mundane things in life is taken away from me every time I believe that I “don't have enough time”. What's wrong with enjoying a sip of my coffee, clearing my mind, and staring at nothing for a minute? What's wrong with spending twenty minutes hearing a friend's voice after asking them how they're doing? What's the matter with taking a brief moment away from my phone screen and taking a closer look at what's outside? De Botton reminds us that time should not be measured in how much we get done, but in how well we do the things.

ordinary

## Learning entails being a “good sufferer”

According to de Botton, we can't really learn anything properly until we are faced with problems. He lays down the uncomfortable truth that it is normal for humans to continue their ignorance when everything seems fine. However, it is possible to think and reflect properly without being in pain. He explains that we acquire wisdom by two methods:

presents

confronted

a) painlessly via a teacher, and b) painfully via life.

knowledge

He suggests that we become even more inquisitive in the face of distress. “We suffer, therefore we think and we do so because thinking helps us to place pain in context, it helps to understand its origins, reconcile ourselves to its presence,” he enthuses.

sadness

“Happiness is good for the body but it is grief which develops the strength of the mind.”

notice

says with  
enthusiasm

## You construct your own dissatisfaction

To fully rid ourselves of unnecessary and self-created unhappiness, we must learn to see our own individual lives in a manner that is more honest and vulnerable.

throw away

“Beauty is something to be found, rather than passively encountered. It requires us to pick up on certain details.”

way

How Proust Can Change Your Life by Alain de Botton is a beautifully written narrative that reminds us to stop living life racing ourselves, but to experience life better and more with less.