

Reader Response to *Humanities Magazine*

In this Reader Response, we asked readers to consider the role they see humanities playing in the broader BYU mission, how their humanities education impacted their lives, and how their humanities education helps them engage with different cultures.



Mary Cassatt. *Under the Lamp*, c. 1882. The Art Institute of Chicago

Q1: How does studying the humanities play a role in your life, your community, or BYU's mission to provide a balanced, uplifting, and productive education?

A1: Humanities education provides context to all other learning by giving us understanding of the continuum of human experience and creativity. It helps us understand and revel in our place in the universe as beloved children of God with a divine destiny and eternal purpose. Through the humanities, we feel the worth of a soul and the wonder of the human mind through depictions in literature, music, history, art, and philosophy. We appreciate the divinity we see in the creations of our sisters and brothers who have shared this planet. The humanities help us see beyond an earthly finite to the heavenly infinite.

A2: I think that humanities, more than other subjects, allow students to explore points of view other than their own. I felt more comfortable as a queer BYU student with my French professors than with professors from any other department and wouldn't have survived without them. I feel like my professors presented new ideas in fun and interactive ways that made me interested in different topics and made me want to continue to learn.

A3: The College of Humanities gave me a home to explore my questions, and my classes provided tools to aid me in the journey. As I sharpened these tools in my study of the humanities, I left my undergraduate study equipped with skills that have helped me navigate every aspect of my life—from my personal relationships to my faith journey to career goals and responsibilities. In short, my study of the humanities helped me learn who I was and wanted to be, which has impacted all my decisions since then.

A4: The humanities help me see God as the living Father of us all and His Son as the Savior of mankind.

A5: I taught English for over 12 years at a therapeutic boarding school for troubled youth in Provo. I feel like my broad education literally blessed the lives of my students since I was often able to instill a love of learning in them, which they would take home with them when they left.

A6: I think the humanities provide the “why” behind why people and organizations do things. Other colleges on campus may emphasize the “how.” But without the “why,” it's easy to get lost. We need both.

A7: My humanities education has made me a curious person. I'm a generalist and don't shy away from describing myself as such. My general understanding of the world has helped me to communicate with just about anybody in an engaging matter. In my professional life, this skill is indispensable.

A8: My humanities education allows me to approach the world with curiosity instead of judgment. When I think of the elements of human nature that I read about in literature, I recognize those in real life.

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A9: In a world that is so technology driven, the humanities provide a refining, softening, and ennobling element.

A10: I am a physician, and I can think of no better way to prepare one not only for the rigors of medical school and residency training but also to lead a balanced life as a physician. My BYU humanities education grew my ability to care, to understand, and to feel in addition to enhancing skills of critical thinking, speaking, and writing all within a framework of spirituality.

A11: I loved the interdisciplinary nature of my American studies major—looking at American history and culture from literary, historical, religious, musical, political, and economic perspectives was deeply enriching and just left me wanting to learn more and more.

A12: As a homeschool mom, I feel that having a broad base helped me be prepared by knowing about a lot of areas—but more so how to evaluate the effect it would have on my children and their upbringing. I often think that every person should be trained in the humanities because it helps us think outside of ourselves.

A13: My study of linguistics in the humanities has been a benefit in my own life in many ways. It has proved very useful in genealogical research when it comes to deciphering old documents, including names and naming patterns, and how the meanings and spellings of words have changed. It also helped me when I worked for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. I was involved in transcribing audio material of interviews with alleged war criminals and war victims for lawyers to use in later trials.



Rembrandt van Rijn. *Lieven Willemsz van Coppenol, Writing Master: The Smaller Plate*, c. 1658. The Art Institute of Chicago

A3: Other languages and cultures open us up to new ideas and new ways of thinking. This provides opportunities for expanding our knowledge but also challenges the ideas we have. Often, I have found that seeing things from a different perspective has strengthened my own beliefs as I see the flaws in other ways of thinking. In other situations, I've seen that my ways of thinking need some changes.

“Rich cultures enhanced and shaped my own culture.”

A4: My study of humanities makes me feel like I should learn much more than just the language; understanding the history and folklore better will help me connect better with my Chinese family and teach Chinese to my daughter. I also love learning about other cultures through food and music.

A5: At a minimum, the study of other languages and cultures broadens our understanding of our own language and culture. Such study also broadens our view of the world, especially our fellow brothers and sisters scattered across the whole earth. As we learn more about their interaction with one another and with the world in which they live, we deepen our understanding and appreciation for them and for the larger world in which we live. It also deepens our feelings and appreciation for our Heavenly Father and His plan for all His children.

A6: Completing a French study abroad in Paris and studying French really opened my eyes to how little I know about the world. This made me want to keep learning about different languages and cultures and meet different people and hear their stories. I believe that if people know only one language and do not travel to learn about other cultures, their view of the world is really limited.

A7: Learning other languages opens up new worlds, both outside and within our own country. Although I am of Japanese ancestry, I never felt Japanese until I learned the language. I am not German, but I appreciate things German since I have studied the language. I even feel I get new insights from reading the ancient and modern scriptures in German. In some ways, a new language reveals a different worldview beyond material culture.

A8: Studying the humanities taught me about one of Christ's crowning characteristics. As our Savior, He understands us perfectly. It is for that reason that He can succor us so perfectly. Studying the humanities allows us to be like Him in that it teaches us to understand others. While we will never be able to understand with perfection as the Savior can, to understand others is to emulate Christ. **H**

Q2: How has your study of the humanities helped you understand the importance of learning other languages or impacted your desire to engage in different cultures?

A1: Language learning opened my eyes to new worlds. Rich cultures enhanced and shaped my own culture. Three times in my career I lived and worked as an expatriate in foreign cultures where I was not a visitor but an immersed denizen. I credit my humanities background for giving me a strong curiosity for language and culture.

A2: BYU gave me the BEST education in this. From study abroad to professors uniquely qualified through their experiences and study, I realized long ago that my education in language and culture far exceeded that of my colleagues who attended other universities in the same field.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

ACROSS 1 ways, 5 Santa, 10 road, 14 Arte, 15 on top, 16 side, 17 side of the pillow, 20, ate, 21, SSN, 22, outlet, 27 kimono, 33, unban, 34, ACT, 37 Calif, 38, to have, 40, lie, 41, behalf, 42, inside job, 43, Izzard, 47 ver, 48, bonnai, 52, Duomo, 53, ERS, 54, aphid, 55, eterna, 57, stode, 58, Sno, 61, RCA, 63, hit the broadside, 72, ICEE, 73, roams, 74, OreI, 75, deal, 76, Depot, 77, back

DOWN 1, was, 2, ARI, 3, YTD, 4, see, 5, soft, 6, ante, 7 ntl, 8, toes, 9, apps, 10, RSL, 11, oil, 12, ado, 13, dew, 18, eat, 19, ink, 22, outside, 23, UNNO, 24, TBH, 25, Laa, 26, enviton, 28, iceboat, 29, mAb, 30, ola, 31, nil, 32, offside, 34, alive, 35, clder, 36, leers, 39, end, 41, bob, 44, zut, 45, Zoe, 46, AMR, 49, NPR, 50, Sho, 51, Aid, 56, ash, 57, sad, 59, nerd, 60, oboe, 61, Romo, 62, cast, 63, hid, 64, ice, 65, tea, 66, tel, 67, rap, 68, sob, 69, Ira, 70, Dec, 71, elk