

My dear friend,

I wonder if you're purposely trying to bewilder my decision-making capabilities.

With the most provoking brevity, your letter asked me this question:

"Kristin, what three pieces of literature would you deem necessary before one could consider his education
'complete' and why?"

Well, I'll simply repay you with a broad reply.

I have a particular interest in literature, and in education, since both happily occupy a good part of my life. Indeed, I credit reading and books and literature with the majority of my spiritual and intellectual development. I love good books, to put it plainly. (Small wonder I had such a difficult time picking *three*.)

In this perverse world, I feel the need to restate that while literature is praised for its artistic qualities, and education for its enlightening powers, both are only so worthy as they are subjected to the glory and honor of the Creator. This mindset guides my answer to your inquiry.

The greatest work of literature that any student can examine is the one written by the Divine Author. As a literary masterpiece with the theme of redemption running throughout, the Bible conveys every element of human vice and virtue, every aspect of Divine perfection and providence, through prose, poetry, fiction, history, biography, and philosophy, and through profound, thought-provoking plots. Take, for example, the jealousy of Ahab and the scheming intrigue of his wife, which resulted in an innocent death—or the poignant friendship that endured time, separation, royal displeasure, and Jonathan's knowledge of eventual displacement in his friend's favor—or the tragic

betrayal and remorse of Judas Iscariot, juxtaposed against Peter's less treacherous denial, in the intricate drama of Christ's final days. Yet the Bible's supreme benefit lies in the truth it imparts to every searching heart who carefully studies it. To those who criticize this work, I ask, Please don't, until you've thoroughly explored it; you discredit your education. And to others who are not Christians—Ignorance is not bliss when it comes to your eternal destiny.

Piece two of the trio might raise eyebrows when classed as "literature", but a slightly stretched definition includes the United States Constitution. (The preamble, at least, could be regarded as have "excellence of form", and possibly "great emotional effect", as prescribed by the dictionary.) In recommending this, I speak primarily to my own countrymen, although others may benefit by understanding the laws of a nation unequalled in prosperity, liberty, and stability. America's comprehension of the Constitution is crucial to the longevity of her freedom; however, it greatly lacks readership and suffers astonishing misunderstanding. I have heard that most law students aren't even required to read this basic element of American government. Yet how can citizens properly exercise and protect their rights if they don't have a fundamental knowledge of the system supporting those rights? Isn't a "complete" education supposed to help generate wise, useful members of society, for the betterment of humanity? I tell you, when a nation fails to educate itself in its own law, tyranny gets a mighty foothold; the ignorance of those with the power and responsibility to hold leaders accountable—the people—only furthers unlawful government action. Consequently, the First Amendment allegedly supports removing the Ten Commandments from a State Supreme Court, while

the dust-covered original would tremble to think it was thus interpreted. For heaven's sake, friend, *read the Constitution*, and spend a little time thinking about it.

The person wanting a well rounded education should also peruse the book *Can't You Sleep, Little Bear?*¹ I can see your surprise at my choosing a children's picture book. But folks are apt to become too focused on the technicalities of education; they forget to school themselves in humor, tenderness, and simplicity. I think you'll find the illustrations in this piece particularly—amusing.

Friend, read these three works with an understanding heart, and I promise you two things: first, your education will be more complete than ever before; and second, you will afterwards possess enough material to continue your education for a lifetime.

Your literature-loving Friend

¹ Written by Martin Waddell and illustrated by Barbara Firth