

Reading Between the Lines

Serena Karim

Today's evolving career climate prioritizes a STEM-skilled workforce. However, this overwhelming shift in studies has detracted from the perceived value of the liberal arts, producing graduates who are missing a vital segment of their education.

Literature can restore these missing pieces. Take *Crime and Punishment*—a psycho-epic detailing a young murderer's motives, fears, and subsequent insanity. Dostoevsky speaks through his characters to weave a collection of philosophies and ideologies throughout the novel. Notably, one character considers the dangers of neglecting the humanities, asking:

How can you, a doctor, whose duty it is to study man and who has more opportunity than anyone else for studying human nature—how can you fail to see the character of the man in the whole story?

"The X-Ray Waiting Room in the Hospital," by Randall Jarrell, develops this shortcoming from a contemporary stance. In the poem, a patient longs to feel connected to his nurses but is instead reduced to an "indistinguishable" case. To close the gap between professionals and patients, I believe that future caregivers must look beyond their academic checklists to find value in the liberal arts, too. Indeed, successful careers in medicine are contingent on both biological expertise and interpersonal insight.

As a prospective nurse practitioner, I strive to pull from literature to access a multitude of human perspectives. Fiction, while imaginary, uses its creative range to express larger philosophical, historical, and sociological experiences. By reading between the lines, I can develop unique insights to effectively and empathetically cater to each patient I encounter. Indeed, I will challenge myself to "see the character of the man" in his own story—novel in hand, patient in mind.

