

PAGES OF PURPOSE

How to Cultivate a Sustainable
Daily Reading Routine

with Fadhilah Wahid





Firstly,

Are you
a *Reader*?

Reflect on your
reading journey:

*What books have
you been reading?*

*How was your
habit of reading
cultivated?*

*What are your
favourite genres?*

*Why do you read or
stopped reading?*

A History of Wardah Books

- Located in Bussorah Street in Singapore, Wardah Books, where Fadhilah works, used to be the youngest bookstore in Kampong Glam.
- The area used to be lined with bookstores and publishing houses. It was where people from Nusantara would gather to read, seek knowledge and got their supplies before embarking for Hajj.
- The area was bustling with bookstores and artists, authors and writers exchanging ideas.



Now, it's a
place of
consumption,
instead of
collaboration
:(



To Ponder:

Why
do you
read?

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Does reading takes work?

When we ask ourselves this question,
what we are really asking is,

“What's in it for us?”

**“Why do we dedicate time, effort
and energy into reading?”**

Because to most of us, it feels like work,
since it's not as relaxing or as chill as
watching Netflix, or scrolling our
phones.

Reasons Writers Read

shared in Why We Read

*for pleasure
for adventure
for knowledge
for illumination
for stories
for company
for reassurance
for challenge
for meaning*

and more!



Part 1:

Reasons for Reading





Read to Heal

- One of the biggest reasons for reading is that it allows us to process and understand the transformations occurring at every stage of our lives.
- For example, when reading The Sound of SCH about a person who had to deal with a schizophrenic patient in her family, Fadhilah could relate to the author's experiences as she had to deal with a family member with Asperger's.
- She could relate to the author's emotions and learnt that despite what she and her family went through, the author came out of the ordeal as an amazing woman.



Read to Understand

- We read to understand ourselves, to understand our loved ones, to feel less alone, to be inspired, and to find strength.
- Daybreak in Gaza consists of detailed stories of Palestinians and how they live their lives. The book helps us look beyond the barrage of nuisance statistics, stories hidden behind numbers. Their stories are no longer just a newspaper article; we see the people behind these stories, hence we read to empathise, to care, to jolt our self-interaction, to feel a sense of togetherness and to remember.

The background of the image is a soft-focus photograph. It features a pink building with a window that has a blue and white patterned curtain. In the bottom left corner, there are dark, silhouetted palm trees. The overall color palette is pastel, with shades of pink, blue, and white.

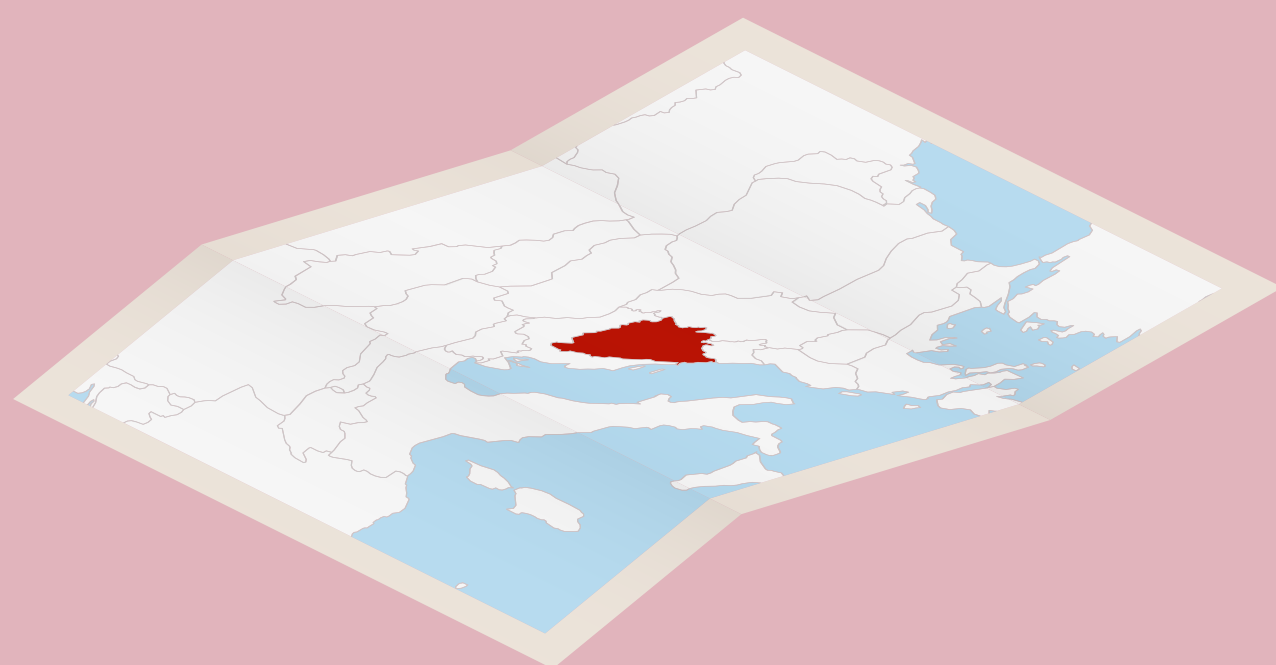
*Reading
gives us the
opportunity
to witness the
lives of those
we may never
have the
chance to
meet.*



Read to Remember

When we don't read, we deny the existence of the memories belonging to those who have been marginalised. Once we forget and stopped reading, the lives and narratives of these individuals lose their significance.

When we read, we're keeping their memories alive.



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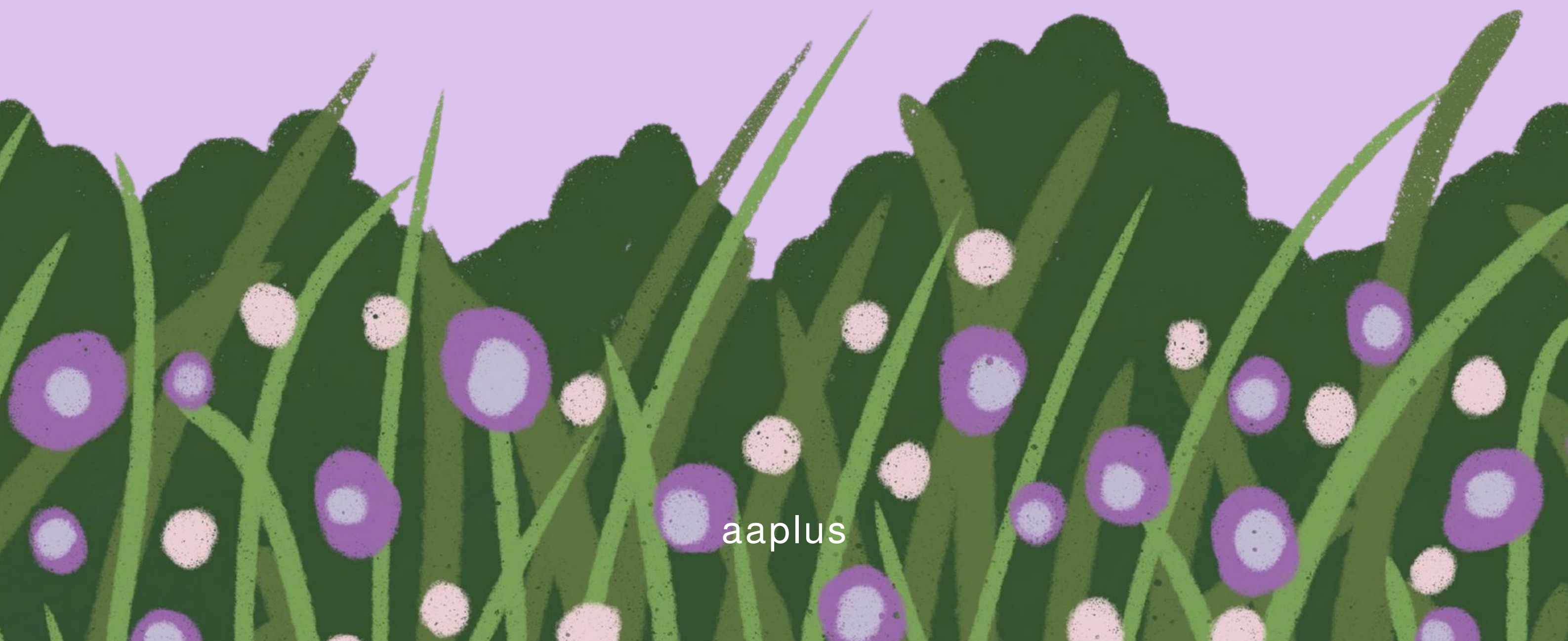
Read to Learn

- We read to learn and to see the world with new eyes. We read to appreciate, to get ideas and to find meaning.
- Fadhilah recently read a book on Islamic architecture - Spiritual Significance in Islamic Architecture - and she recalled her intrigue regarding the reasons behind the specific designs of mosques and the construction of buildings in that manner. This knowledge remains valuable, even if she is unable to implement it in her personal life at the moment.

*For example,
the entire world comes
to life as we read about
the secret network of
nature.*

*What are the trees
communicating?*

*What are the plants
saying to the animals?*



Part 2:

Ideas that illuminate joy in reading

*by Jonathan Haig
in The Anxious Generation*



Idea #1:

The psychological state known as ‘narrative transportation’

When we become fully absorbed in a book, the outside world fades away, and it feels as though the book is turning its own pages. This sensation is one that many of us have lost, as our time is mostly spent in superficial engagements. We find ourselves reading brief text messages and emails, and viewing 10-second reels. The richness of life experiences has been reduced to fleeting moments, leaving us unable to delve into the deeper aspects of existence. Engaging deeply in an activity often leaves one feeling rejuvenated, in contrast to merely treading in superficial waters. This is the psychological effect that reading has on an individual.

Idea #2:

The emotion of moral elevation

When we encounter an act of charity or generosity, whether in reality or in our imagination, and when we **read** about charitable deeds (such as the generosity exhibited by Rasulullah ﷺ and his Companions), our spirit is profoundly moved by its beauty, **instilling in us a strong desire to emulate such actions.**

However, when we are exposed to negative content or vices, our soul instinctively recoils from it, leading us to reject such behavior. Engaging with uplifting literature fosters moral growth within us, motivating us to be better.

Idea #3:

The emotion of awe in the perception of vastness

Sometimes we get an epiphany when we read. For instance, Fadhilah was concurrently reading two books that share the same idea that 'pleasure is a relief from suffering'. Our society today is constantly bombarded with sexual content and by extension, other kinds of pleasures such as food or shopping. We think we are achieving maximum pleasure when in reality, we are trained to suffer all the time so that we are constantly seeking pleasure and businesses only profit from our suffering.

This explains the emotion of awe when ideas converge in our minds and we feel inspired, although we may be unaware of how to establish connections in the first place. Reading helps connect these thoughts together.

Labour of a Book

- Think about how much work goes into publishing one book - How many authors have spent countless years and sleepless nights editing, hating themselves, rewriting, throwing out their drafts? They collected everything they had learned, along with all the emotions and experiences they had gained in their lives, to impart knowledge in a book. Repeat this for the millions of books we have seen over the centuries!
- All we have to do as a reader is to lie down in bed and read these books! Within just a few hours, we effortlessly acquire knowledge that countless individuals have dedicated years to studying and comprehending.

Travel through Books

- Without moving from where we are physically, we can travel to a different city, landscape, or country and meet an individual we would not have had the opportunity to meet otherwise. For instance, meeting renowned authors like Imam Ghazali and Imam Shadhili through their books.
- We will feel a sense of familiarity with them without ever meeting them. We can enter the minds of the author and the author writes because they want to enter our minds: all these can be done in the safety and the comfort of our room.

Part 3:

How to cultivate the habit of reading



Step #1:

Find pockets of time to read

- The number one excuse for not reading is the lack of time, but this is not true, especially for those of us who live in cities like Singapore and spend a substantial amount of time commuting in public transport.
- All we have to do is find pockets of time to read. We need to repel the idea that we need to sit down and read for two hours at a time.
- As Ibrahim Tahir of Wardah Books (Fadhilah's boss!) like to say, **'The secret gift of reading is time'**. Time is very fluid - it can either stretch with Barakah or feel constrained. If we spend time in a good book, we will feel that our time has more depth.

Step #2:

Change our perspective on what constitutes a relaxing activity

If we truly observe our emotions after a long time of scrolling, we will find that we feel tired, frustrated and guilty. The experience of being on social media is akin to having many people screaming at us all the time. We are constantly bombarded with people's emotions, opinions, requests etc.

We should be attentive and focus on our emotions - we can document our feelings after one hour of scrolling and after one hour of engaging in quality reading, then **compare the differences in our emotional state following each activity.**

Step #3:

Read materials that align with our interests

Perhaps we had an experience with reading a boring title, or we were forced into reading. This often leads us to maintain a negative view of reading throughout our lives, resulting in us identifying as non-readers. But we are all readers today! (One study shows that people are consuming more text today than in the past through their phones, albeit, they are all fragmented information.)

We need to find materials that align with our interest or curiosities to facilitate an enjoyable and easy reading experience. We must not force ourselves with materials that we find unappealing.

Step #4:

Remove prerequisites for reading and start small and consistent

We tend to put a lot of prerequisites for reading - we think we need a lot of time, or a beautiful and uninterrupted environment and more. These are self-inflicted barriers that we should throw out the window! The only investment we have to put in reading is to just get the book.

Start with minimum viable effort - it could be reading for 1 minute a day or one page a day.

Step #5:

Set up our space for success

We can place multiple books everywhere, such as in our bag, next to the bed, in the living room and more. This way, we have a book in different spaces to reach out to and read.

We must create an environment that enables our reading habit. The greater the number of reminders about books we possess, the simpler it becomes for us to engage with them.

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Step #6:

Be around people who read

When we surround ourselves with readers, we will feel FOMO and naturally want to be included in discussions about a particular book! Make it social.

Step #7:

Don't fall into the sunk cost fallacy

We feel pressured to finish reading books when this is not necessary. If a book doesn't speak to us, leave it aside and return to it later in life - **it might come into meaning for us only later.**

Step #8:

Set up our space for success

Another excuse that we give for not reading is that we can't focus for extended periods. Goldfish are recognised for having a focus duration of nine seconds; however, a study conducted in 2015 indicates that the attention span of humans has now decreased to merely eight seconds. This raises the question: **are we less capable of concentration than goldfish?**

Due to our current methods of consuming information, we are experiencing significant difficulty in maintaining focus. The good news is: focus can be trained - the more we practice focusing, the more we strengthen our focus capabilities and the longer we sustain reading.

How to train our focus muscle?

Limiting our social media use by putting distance between our phones and ourselves. Make use of apps or gadgets to help us in this mission.

When we limit our time on social media, we can reclaim our focus and start with shorter books.

As we go longer without distractions, we find it easier to focus.



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Step #9:

Embrace the inefficiencies of life

Because of the productivity and hustle culture in the society, we think that activities with a lack in movement or obvious output such as reading, taking a walk, spending time with friends, are meaningless. We have been trained since young that activities with no capital output are inefficient.

We have to step outside our comfort zone and embrace these inefficiencies. Instead of trying to be a finely tuned individual who want to get things done , we could actually become human for once, and exist between our tasks.

Reading makes us..

*Better servants
of Allah*

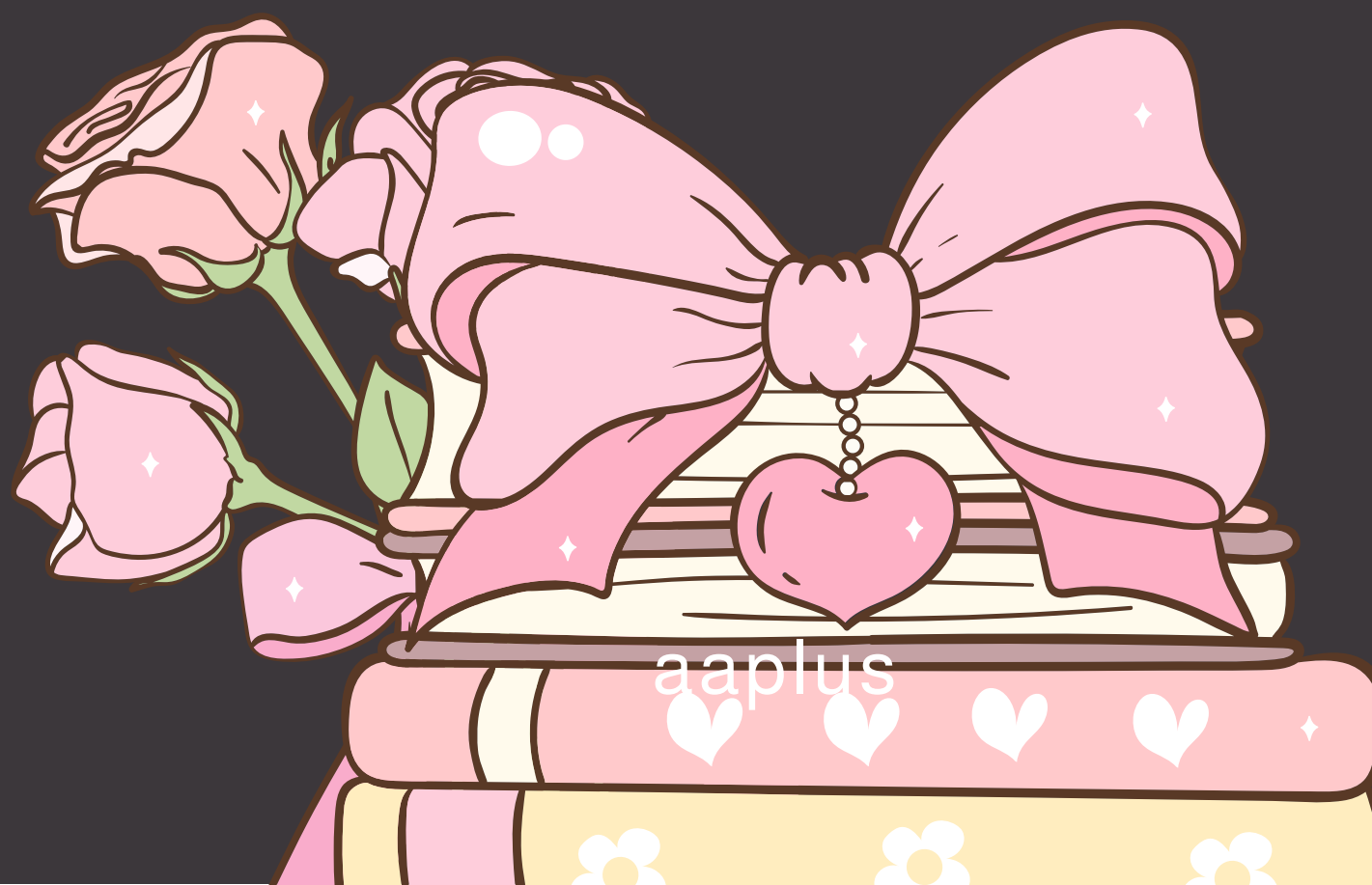
Better human

Better spouses

Better parents

Better child

Better friends



Put meaning back to life

- Reading gives meaning and depth to all the things we deem important in life.
- A lot of people in the world are facing depression, anxiety, etc and one of the root causes of this is acedia, a state of spiritual apathy. The cause of acedia is in our lack of focus as well as the social media. We become so tired of life itself, and don't want to move forward.
- According to the scholars of our time, **reading is one of the things that help us put meaning back into our lives.** It is one of the cures to depression and anxiety.

A loss in culture and beauty

- Much of the beauty and the meaning in Islamic civilisation is now lost.
- For instance, in Bussorah Street, Singapore, we observe that the Muslim tradition of reading and sharing knowledge has been overtaken by capitalism.
- Similarly, Iraq, once the heart of the Islamic golden age, renowned for its intellectual, cultural, and economic accomplishments, is now marred by the scars of war and desolate landscapes littered with debris and oil.



To Ponder:

*Where are we in this
space as readers?*

*Where are we as a
community of Iqra'?*

*Where are we in this
command that Allah
SWT has given us to
read?*

Seek the Truth

- Frank Furedi wrote in his book, 'Power of Reading,' that **reading is in decline because society no longer values truth.**
- As a truth-seeking Ummah, we want to find the truth and meaning of all things. Reading has lost its popularity because society no longer values truth.
- In this generation of AI, we don't even know what is truth anymore. Everyone has their own description of truth, and truth is easily manipulated.

- Prince Ghazi, in the Thinking Persons Guide series, said that **the cure to our times is to just start reading**. We have to change ourselves and our attitudes towards reading so that we become the people of change by reigniting the moments that brought the Islamic Golden Age of Islam to where it was. We have the power in ourselves to revive this.
- Mr. Ibrahim Tahir mentioned we are the inheritors of this intellectual heritage that we have totally forgotten. We were once a society of reading.



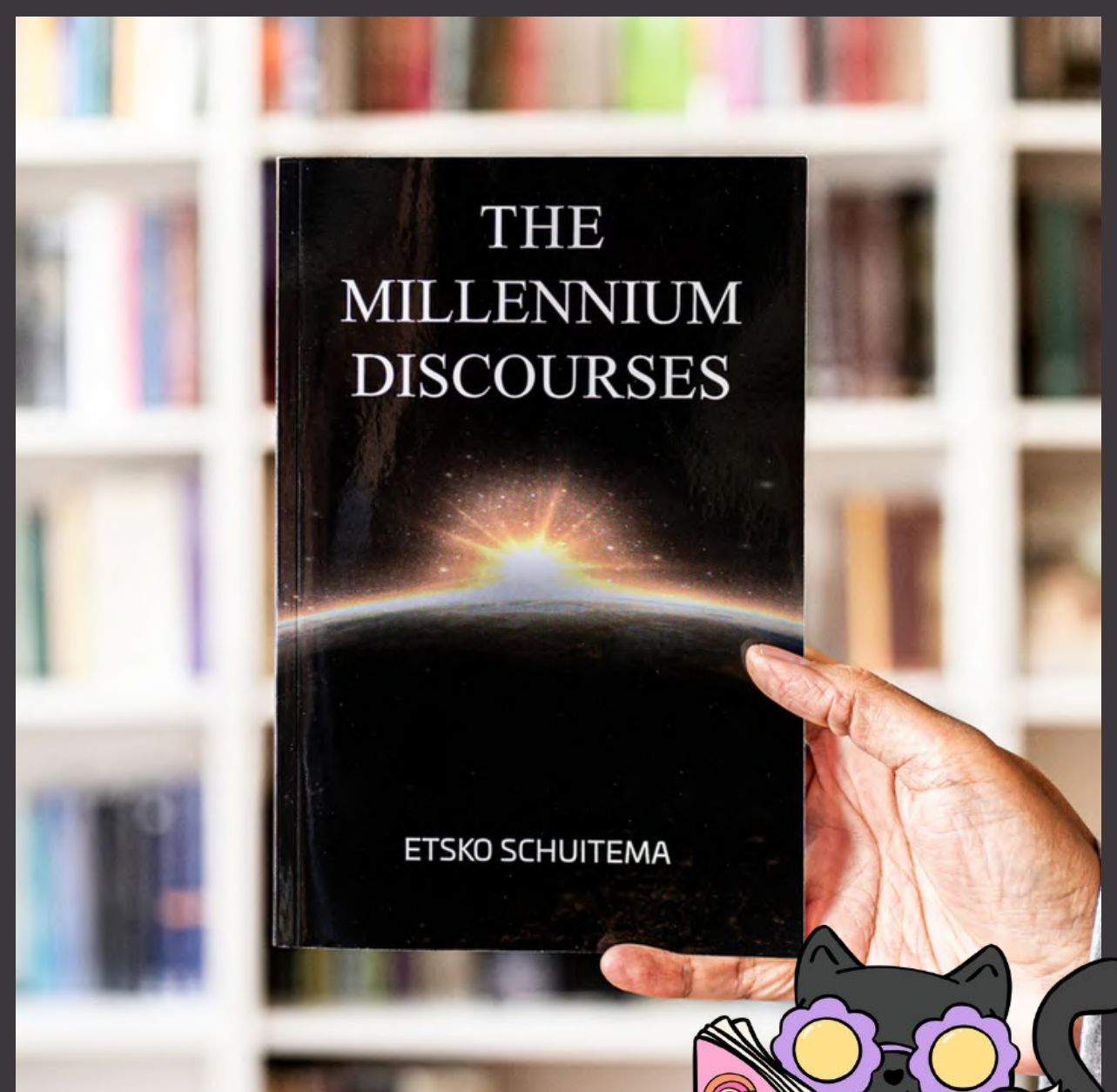
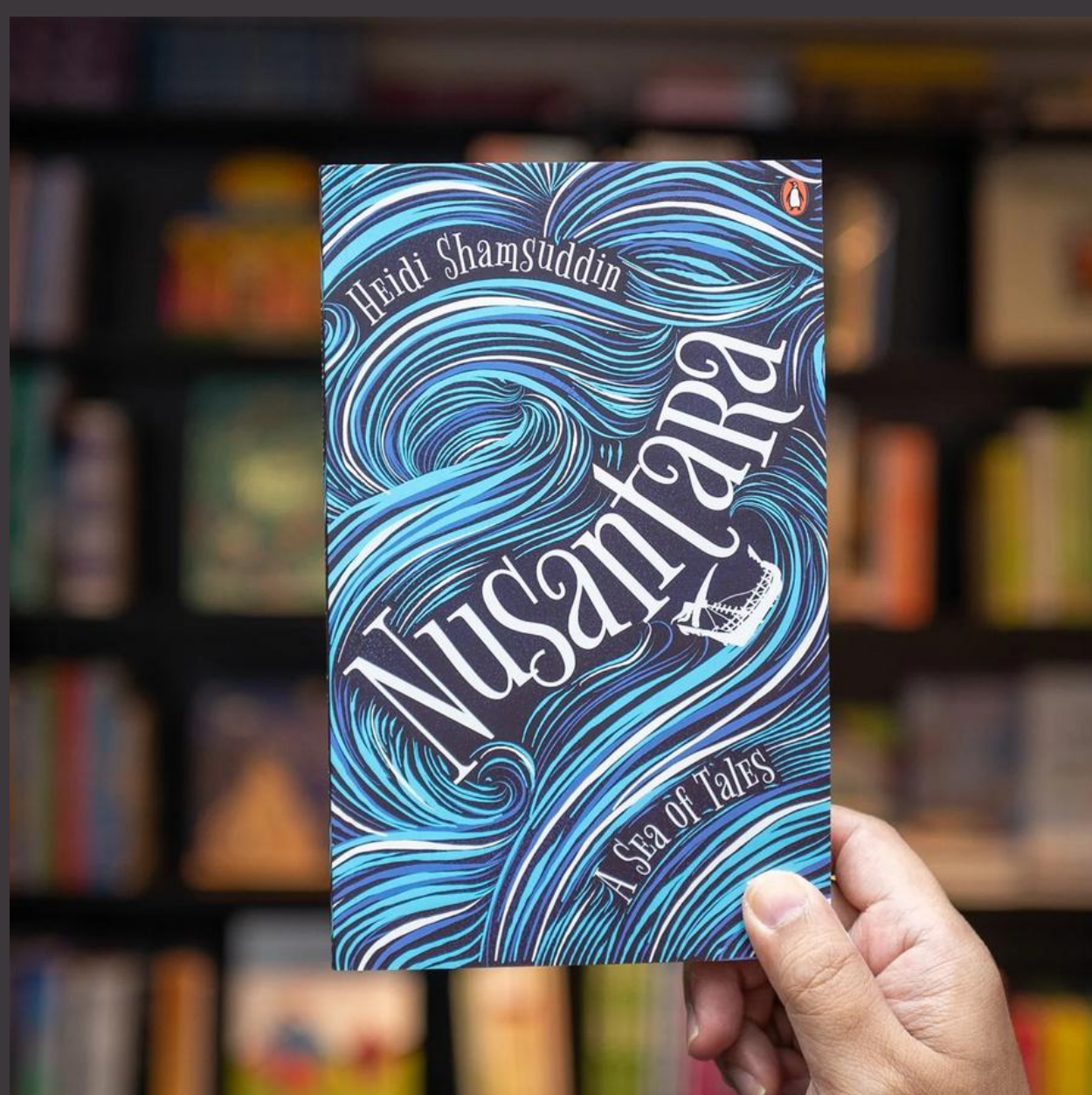
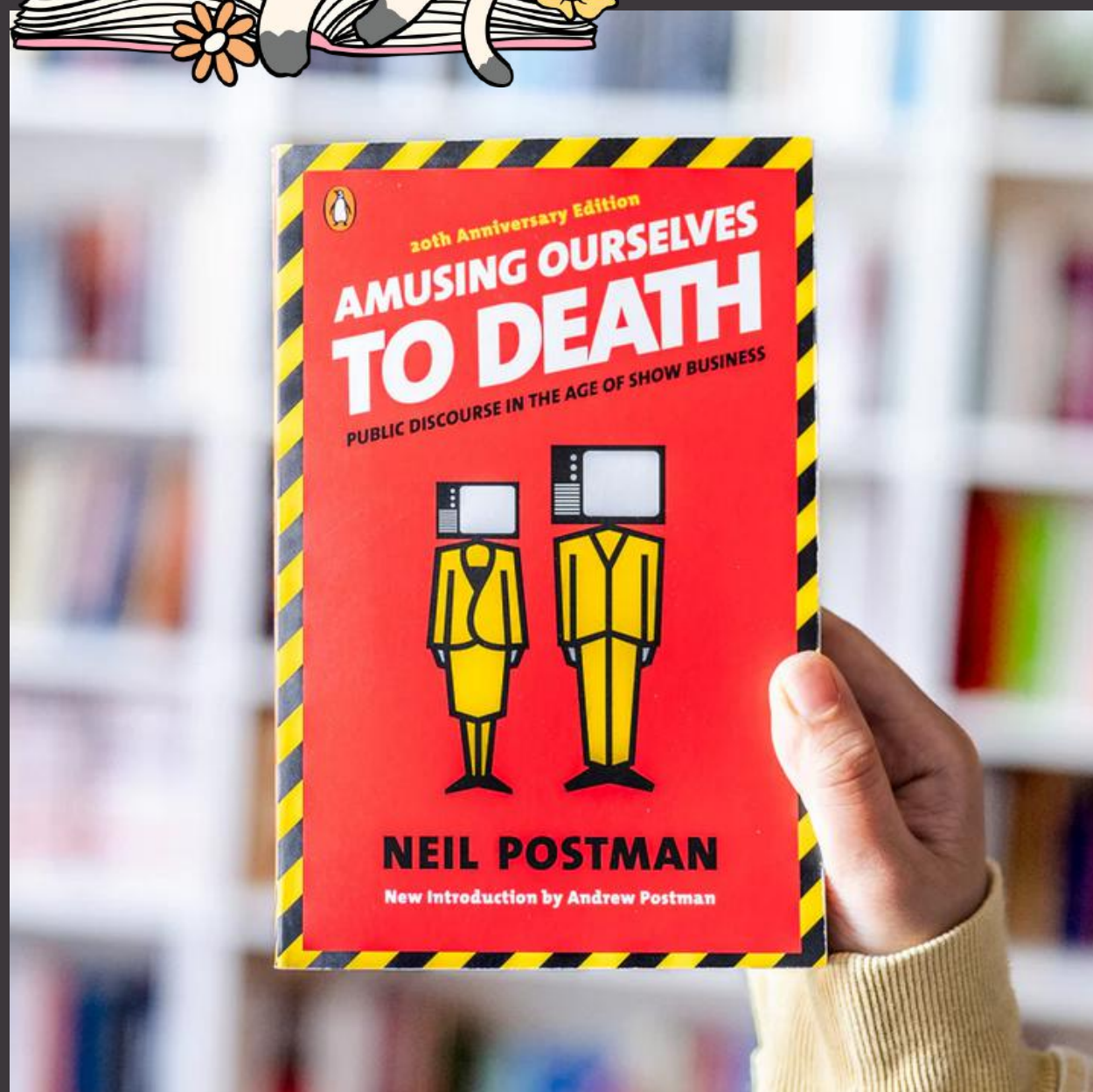
Final words from Fadhilah Wahid:

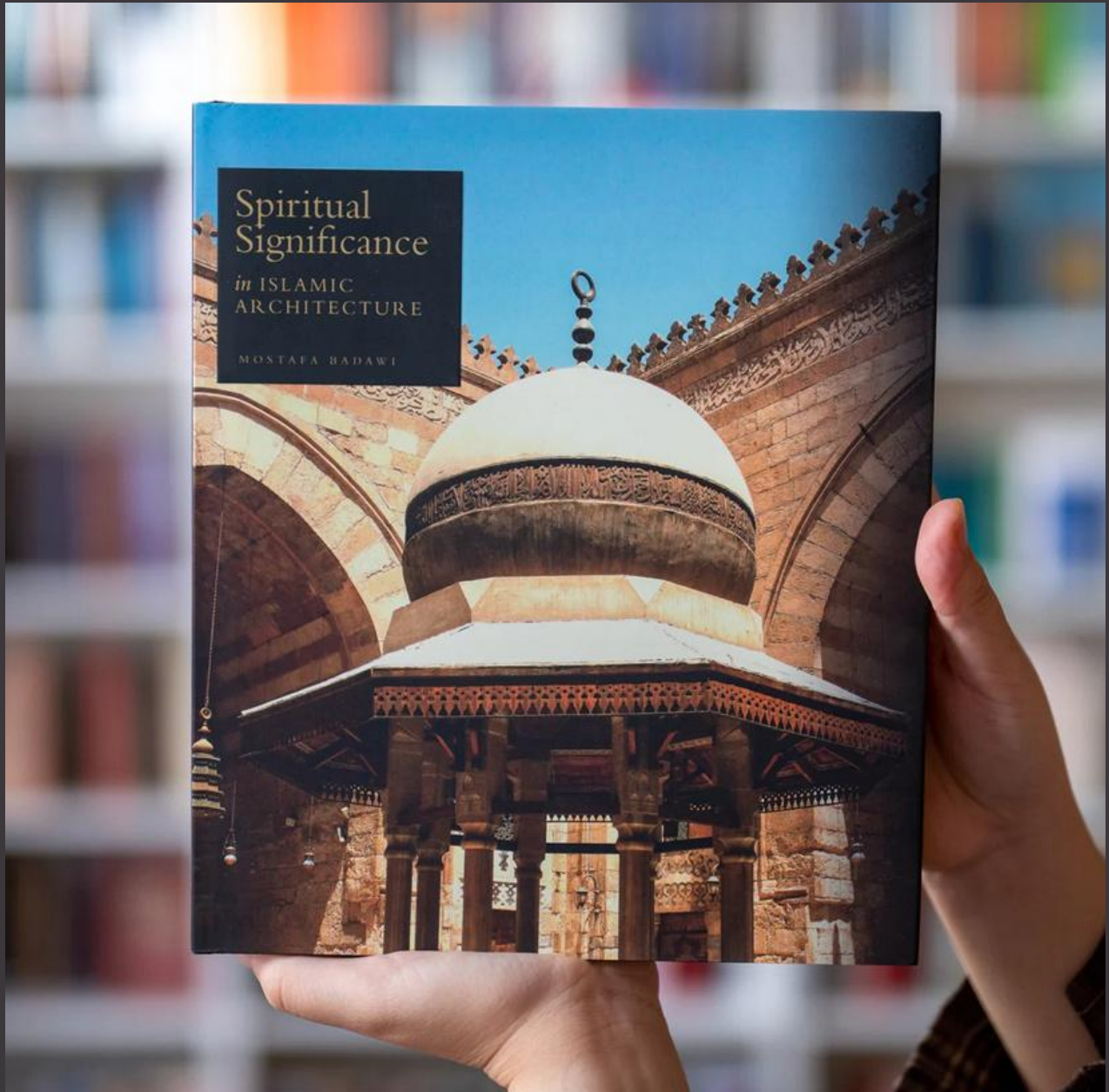
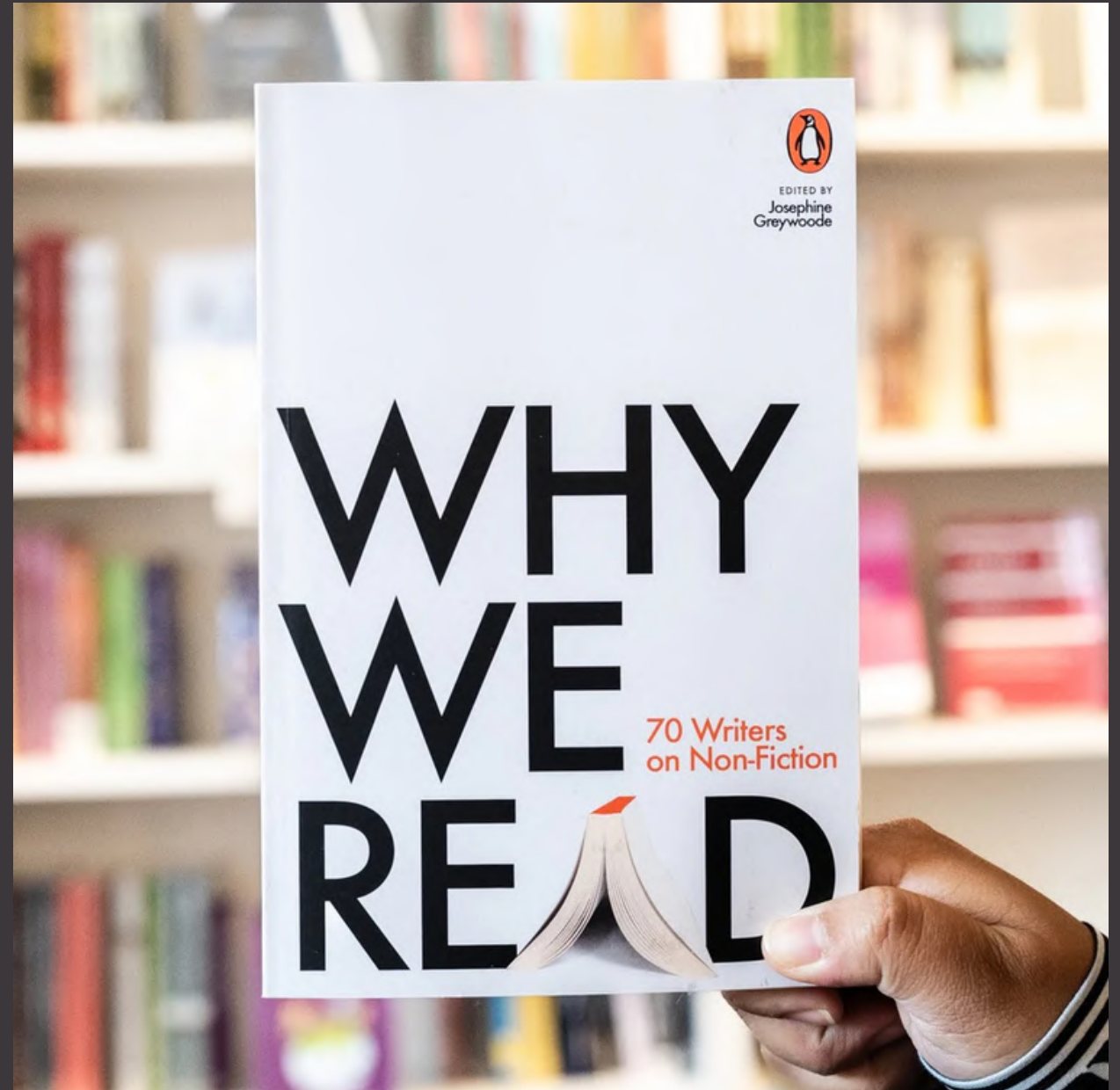
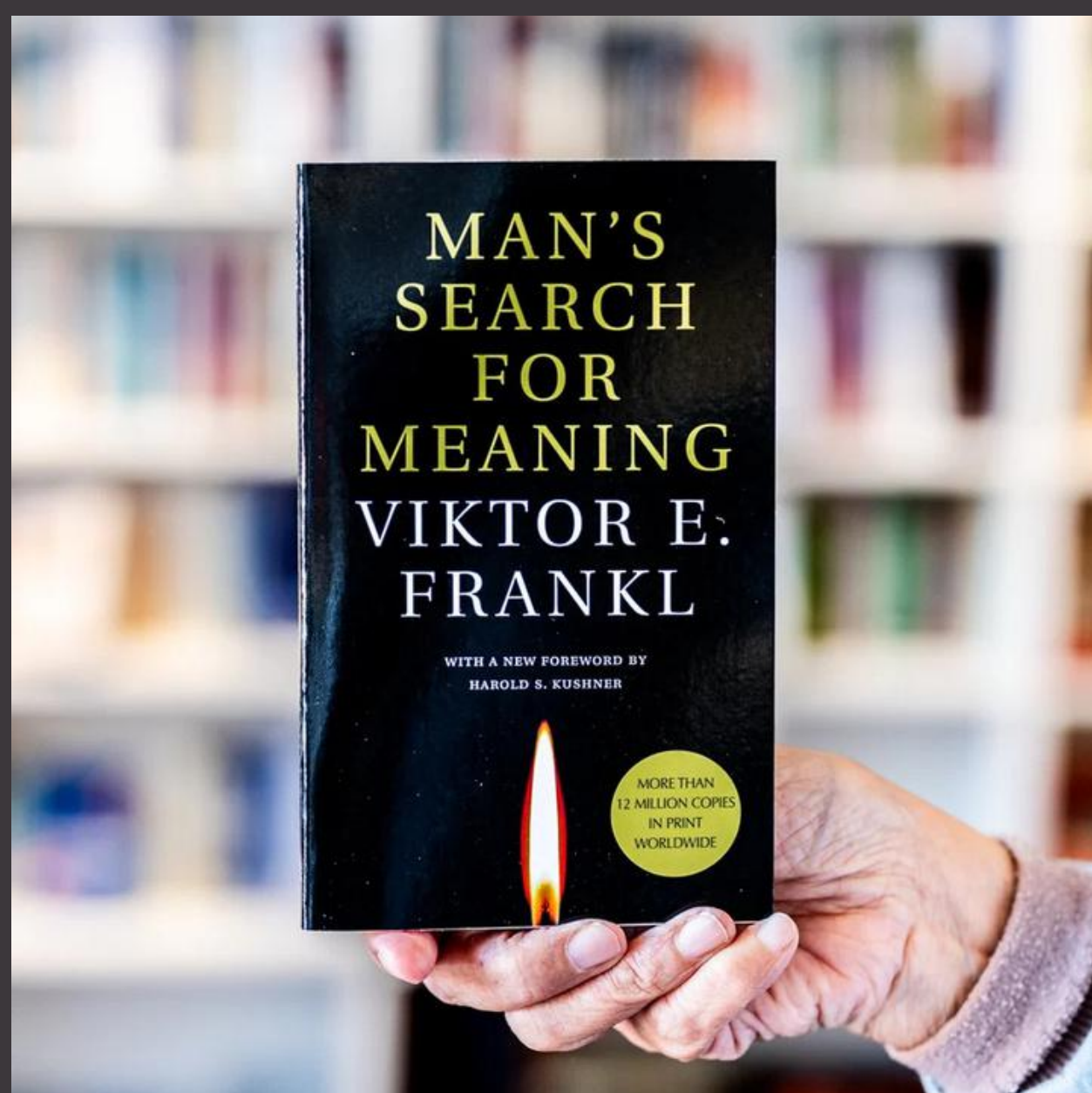
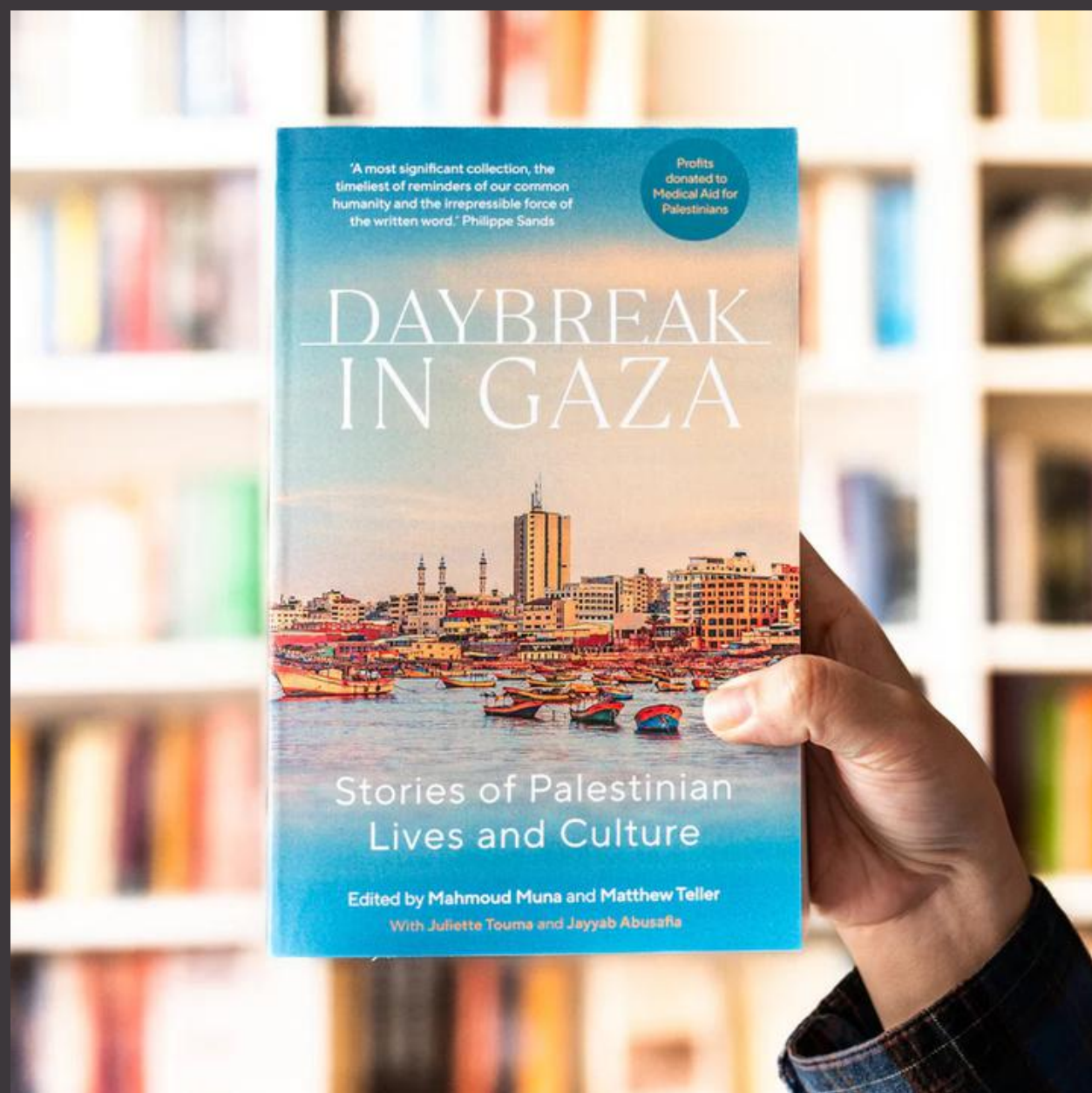
*Start today
with the right
intentions.*

*Start with
just one page
for a life
filled with
meaning.*

Books mentioned in this lecture:

*(Click on the pictures
for the links!)*







*The Thinking Guide series
by Prince Ghazi*



Philosophy on modern life series
by Byung-Chul Han

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