

Contents

1. Introduction: Cognitive Potentials of Fiction	9
2. Preparing the Ground: Reading Narratives and Fictions	31
Major Conceptualisations of the Cognitive Value of Fiction	32
Features and Functions of Narrative	50
Major Differences between (Reading) Fictional and Factual Stories	67
Fiction as a Privileged Means of Learning for Adults	85
3. Fiction, Empathy and the Emotions	93
Empathy, Embodiment and Narratives	96
Empathic Feelings while Reading Fiction	104
Fictional Stories as a Tool for Feeling	109
Reading Fiction as a Path to Emotions	119
4. Theory of Mind, Narrative Competence and Fictional Stories	131
Theory of Mind: Approaches and Criticism	133
Functions of Narratives for Understanding Others	149
Fiction, Theory of Mind and Narrative Competence	164
5. Fiction and Perspective Taking: Narrative Conventions and Sensitive Understanding	177
Novels and Perspective Taking	186
Realism, Aesthetic Devices and Perspective Taking	220
Imagine-Self vs. Imagine-Other Perspective	237

6. Beyond Perspective Taking and Simulation:	
Imagination, Aesthetics and the Dynamics of Reading	245
The Cognitive Value of Fiction as Simulation	247
Cognitive Implications of (Shifts in) Perspective Taking and Multiperspectivity in Fiction	262
Defamiliarisation, Polyvalence and the Denial of Closure	278
7. Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Taking Reading Fiction Seriously	293
Cognitive Benefits of Reading Fiction: A Brief Summary	294
Kinds of Stories and Modes of Reading Improving Readers' Cognitive Abilities	301
Future Fields of Research	306
Works Cited	313