

U. Miami survey respondents perceive literature as more difficult and more prestigious than the humanities in general.

(Survey results complementing WE1S big-data research)

At U. Miami, a WE1S [survey](#) asked respondents to associate the *humanities* and *literature* with positively or negatively flavored connotations. For both terms, positive associations predominated, but there were sharp differences between perceptions of *literature* versus the *humanities* as a whole.

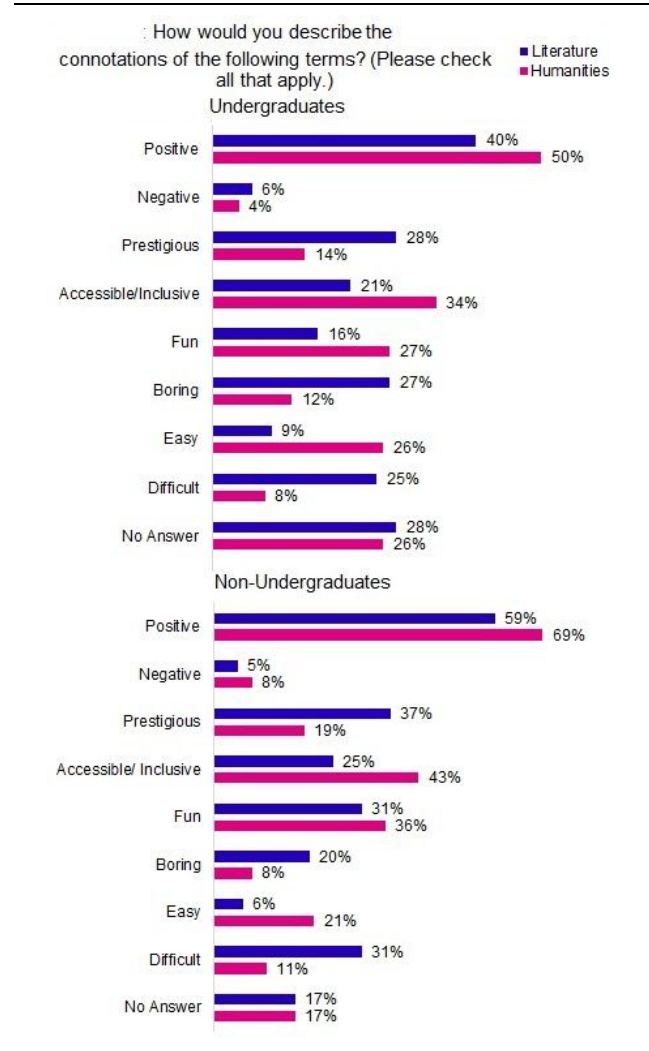
Around one quarter of undergraduates associated literature with *difficult* and *boring*. That was two to three times the number who associated the humanities with those sentiments (see graph). But undergrads had the inverse view in regard to prestige: 28% associated literature with *prestigious*, but only 14% did so with the humanities.

Non-undergraduates (including graduate students, faculty, and staff) had similar perceptions of the humanities and literature, but with greater divergence between the two. 31% thought of literature as *difficult*, and 20% thought of it as *boring*--slightly more and less, respectively, than in the case of undergrads. And, like the undergrads, they also inverted the ranking of literature and the humanities in regard to prestige, but with more emphasis: 37% associated literature with *prestigious* (a higher percentage than the undergrads), while only 19% associated it with the humanities.

Based on these responses, we can speculate that most of the prestige attributed to the humanities derives from perceptions of the status of literature. Interestingly, non-undergrads also associated literature more with *fun* than *boring*, whereas for undergrads literature is considerably less *fun* and more *boring*. As noted in our key finding [KF 9-4](#), undergrads report that they are exposed to the humanities mainly at school. A large majority of our non-undergrad respondents, however, work in the university system. We can safely assume they have more familiarity with the humanities as a profession,

and are aware of the challenges (“difficulties”) involved.

To learn more about the broader public’s perception of literature in news media, see our [KF 5-11](#).



(Click on graph for larger image)

Population studied: [C-HS-2](#), [C-HS-3](#), [C-HS-4](#), [C-HS-5](#)
 Evidentiary documentation: [MR-9-6](#), [MR-9-9](#), [MR-9-10](#),
 Related materials: [KF 9-4](#), [KF 9-7](#), [KF 5-11](#)