GETTING STUDENTS LIT UP:
TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH LITERATURE

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Abstract

For adult students at intermediate to advanced level of proficiency in the target language literature provides a rich source of authentic language material over a wide range of registers, which - if effectively exploited by the FL teacher - can help students improve their communicative competence and acquire a native-like command of English. Literature also opens a window to the culture of the target language and helps learners develop a better understanding of "otherness", as well as enhance their intercultural competence. Last but not least, literary texts are open to different interpretation - they provoke a more personal response in the learners, engage them emotionally and motivate them to participate more actively in the classroom activities and get more personally and responsibly involved in homework assignments. The aim of this article is to provide some guidance to EFL teachers on how to exploit the potential of literary texts in their FL classroom by careful planning of activities and skillfully scaffolding learners' performance, and to share the author's personal experience of making literature a powerful tool for adult learners' language learning and communicative competence improvement.

Key words: teaching English through literature, adult learners, a reactive approach

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Like any other specimen of authentically used language, texts of verbal art have long found their rightful place in the FL classroom. They may serve as a rich source of FL-related historic, geographic and cultural information for the learners (thus contributing to their intercultural communicative competence as well), as a means of enlarging students' knowledge of vocabulary and grammar structure in the target language (both consciously and subconsciously), and last but not least, as a powerful motivator for the learners to communicate and improve their language skills in an integrated way while reacting to the content and/or the aesthetic impact of the literary text, deciphering and (critically) reflecting on the author's message, reading between the lines, reviewing and evaluating, expressing their own ideas and opinions on the topic and sharing relevant personal experience, using the text as a springboard for their own creativity, and generally interacting with the text and the rest of the class and the teacher.

The question is how do we get our students to actually read books and appreciate witty artistic texts, and how do we ensure they reap the bountiful harvest outlined above to the benefit of their FL communicative competence? The aim of this article is to provide some guidance to EFL teachers on how to exploit the potential of literary texts in their FL classroom by careful planning of activities and skillfully scaffolding learners' performance, and to share the author's personal experience of making literature a powerful tool for adult learners' language learning and communicative competence improvement.

Literature in the FL classroom

The history of using literature in the FL classroom

The use of literature has formed a part of many traditional approaches to foreign language teaching, and literature has often been described as a powerful "ally of language" in the FL classroom (Brumfit & Carter 1986, p. 1). In the grammar translation method literary texts in the target language provided the main learning materials: they were regarded as examples of good language use, illustrating the rules of grammar and the meaning of lexical items, so they were read, translated and even memorized (Richards & Rogers, 1986). However, in this FL teaching method there was no significant interest in the content of the literary text and it was almost never used as a springboard for discussion or any other sort of communicative activities in the classroom.

Later on, the structural approaches to language teaching did not make extensive use of literary texts in the classroom as they worked on the assumption that target language can be best learnt through careful selection and grading of grammar structures and vocabulary, followed by various mechanical drilling activities leading to the automatisation of the presented patterns and utterances (Richards & Rogers, 1986), and authentic literary texts were discarded as unfitting for either of these purposes. Still, it should be noted that stories (usually written specifically in a less demanding language to match the proficiency level of the learners) and other types of narrative (e.g. comics), as well as some poems and songs, featured high in many EFL coursebook series at the time (most notably in "New Concept English" by L.G. Alexander) and the first graded readers[1] (some of which were excellent adaptations of literary classics, preserving the depth of the original and its complexity of themes) were published.

Literature was also excluded from the initial methodological paradigm of the communicative approach to language teaching, because artistic texts (especially canonical classical texts like those of Shakespeare, Dickens, Mark Twain or the Brontë sisters) were not considered representative examples of current authentic language use and in terms of content they fell somewhat short on the requirement for serving a communicative function in modern everyday settings. However, recently the role of literature in the FL classroom has been reassessed (Widdowson, 1983; Sage, 1987) and now many foreign language teachers view literary texts as not only providing rich linguistic and socio-cultural input, but also as effective stimuli for students to practise and develop their communicative skills in an integrated way, motivating them to become more observant and to think critically, as well as provoking them to put language to more creative, personalised use - i.e. literature has become one of the most valuable language teaching and learning resources available in the FL communicative classroom and beyond it (Collie & Slater, 1987; Duff & Maley, 1990).

Definition of "literature" in the FL classroom context

In 1994 John McRae made a useful distinction between literature with a capital "L" - i.e. the classical texts by renown British and American authors - and literature with a small "l", such as modern popular fiction and even song lyrics. He argued that the

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[1] Graded readers are books that have had their language simplified to help FL learners read them.

literature used in FL classrooms today should no longer be restricted to canonical texts, but it can and must include the works of contemporary writers from a diverse range of cultures and literary schools using English as their means of expression. Nor should FL teachers feel obliged to undertake that laborious literary analysis and elitist discussion of the literary texts with their FL learners that they remember from their literature classes at school or teacher-training colleges (O'Connell, 2009).

Furthermore, studies of the language of literature indicated that there is no such thing as a specific "literary language" and the language used in most literary texts is not different from the ordinary language used by people in their daily life with perhaps only slightly higher incidence of "literature-/art- specific" linguistic features like metaphors, similes or unusual syntactic and phonetic patterns, but these could also be found in nursery rhymes, proverbs or publicity slogans, which are not traditionally labelled as literary texts (Lazar, 1993, p. 7).

So, in order to use literature to facilitate language learning, teachers need no expert skills of dealing with it. Selected literary texts (excerpts and adapted or abridged versions of originals are just as good for the purpose) can be by contemporary authors and on topics that learners find relevant and easy to relate to, and for good measure, students should also be provided with the freedom to choose titles to read and discuss in class. Last but not least, literary texts in the FL classroom can be supplemented by picture stories (incl. comics strips and calligrammes[2]) and/or audio-recordings and film clips, thus enhancing the learning potential of the written text and providing learners with different learning styles with opportunities for multi-sensorial classroom experiences (TE editor 2014). In today's communicative classroom, it is also essential that literary texts are not only read and retold or translated, but also critically appreciated, used to develop students' cultural awareness and understanding, serving as a springboard for discussion and expression of personal opinion, and eventually even provoking learners' own imagination and leading them to linguistic creativity. In this line of thinking even street graffiti and sitcom scripts can be regarded as "literary" and "artistic" texts.

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[2] Calligrammes (or "beautiful writing") is word coined by French poet Guillaume Apollinaire in 1918 for his innovative format of poems which combined poetic writing with drawing mirroring the topic of the poem. It is also known as "visual", "concrete" or "shape" poetry. The mouse-tail in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* might be considered a shaped poem.

The benefits of learning language through literature

Duff & Maley (1990, p 6) outline three main criteria that commend the use of literature as a tool for foreign language teaching (cf. Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 2). The linguistic criterion relates to the fact that literary texts provide FL learners with genuine, authentic samples of language use, widely ranging in text type and/or genre, register and style. They are a rich source of contextualised linguistic input, exemplifying correct and situationally appropriate use of grammatical structures and lexical items. FL teachers generally agree that extensive reading helps learners (be it consciously or unconsciously – Krashen, 1989; Coady, 1997, etc.) acquire the target language better and integrate this knowledge of language form in improving their communicative skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing). In addition, literature often serves as a vehicle for FL-related socio-cultural information; it can subtly raise learners' awareness of "difference", help them understand and accept it, and facilitate the development of their intercultural communicative competence.

The second criterion is more methodological in character: it refers to the fact that a literary text is open to interpretation and often there is a lot to be found by reading "between the lines" and reflecting on it. Thus a literary text can generate different reactions and opinions from the learners, paving the way for authentic and meaningful language exchange and real communicative interaction with fellow students and the teacher. The learner becomes personally involved and active, autonomous and central to the learning process; he gets the unique chance to express his own ideas and share relevant personal experience.

The final criterion is connected with the motivational power of the literary text. A well-selected piece of literature can put the learners in touch with the real world and provoke a strong emotional response. The texts included in traditional "global" FL course books are often censored or "sanitised" (in observation of the "PARSNIP" principle of being politically correct and avoiding potentially offensive topics, such as **p**olitics, **a**lcoholism, **r**acism, **s**ex, **n**arcotics, etc. - see Gray, 2002) and may sound a bit artificial and detached from reality; in contrast, literary texts, albeit fictional, provide the learners with the opportunity to deal with universal themes and everyday facts of life such as love, war, loss, drugs and crime, and discuss them in the target language as

freely and confidently as they do in their mother tongue, sharing personal opinion and/or experience. Thus, in terms of content, literary texts are capable of stimulating learner interest and involvement in a way that course book texts rarely do (Carter & Long, 1991, p. 3); they also supply many linguistic opportunities to the language learners and FL teachers should capitalise on this potential and design an array of language activities, engaging the class in critical thinking, text reviewing and heated discussions (i.e. activities requiring the application of higher order cognitive skills and more communicative productive language use) along with traditional language analysis and revision of grammar and vocabulary.

Implementing a reactive approach to teaching English through literature with adult learners

Given the important role that literature can play in the teaching of English as a foreign language (especially when courses are run in non-English speaking countries), it is surprising that there are very few teacher-oriented resource materials and learner course books facilitating the incorporating of literature in the EFL classroom. Teachers get very little or no preparation at all on how to deal with literary texts in practice during their professional training, either: TEFL programmes traditionally include one or two literature courses familiarizing the teachers with the most prominent British and American writers and their works but future ELT practitioners are mostly left to their own devices as to how to present these to their learners in the FL classroom, so that they could truly benefit from it.

The following section is based on the author's personal experience of teaching English through literature to adult language learners at intermediate to advance level of proficiency and it offers some practical guidance to FL teachers on how to motivate their students to actually start reading literary books in the target language and exploit the potential of literary texts to improve their learners' communicative competence. Admittedly, very little will happen if students just read a nice excerpt from a literary masterpiece in class and are invited to discuss its content or comment on its aesthetic impact. Even less will be achieved if learners are given a literary book (or on a more optimistic note, a reading list with a few titles) to read for homework and then present / discuss it in class. Assigning a written book review without any preparation, will most

probably equal disaster with the aftertaste of frustrating even those learners who otherwise enjoy reading literature. In other words, in order to turn the encounter with literature in the FL classroom into a positive experience for the learners, i.e. one which they will both enjoy and benefit from, FL teachers need to carefully design and/or adapt the tasks on the literary texts they have selected for their learners to study[3], judiciously plan for both the classroom activities and the homework assignments, and skillfully scaffold learners' performance all along.

It is beyond the scope of the present article to review the infinite variety of language activities that could be done in the FL classroom using literary texts as a main resource and/or a starting point[4]. Instead we zoom in on some of the main challenges for the FL teachers embarking on teaching English through literature and offer them some practical tips for successfully dealing with the problems and reaping the plentiful harvest of using literature to boost their students' language learning results.

"I like my facebook, but I hate to face my book!"

Teaching English through literature to young adults may actually take some fine methodological manoeuvring on part of the FL teacher at the very start in order to clear some unexpected hurdles. Nowadays it is very often the case that digital natives have not read the compelling masterpieces we want to refer to and use in our language class (even translated in their native tongue) and are sometimes unfamiliar with their authors either. If you are not obliged to keep within the constraints of a pre-determined syllabus but still wish to widen the cultural horizons of your students and get across an idea of what the core of "English literature" is, it may be a good idea to provide your learners with a list of "recommended" classical authors and their most representative works and ask them to choose an author who they feel passionate about or who they would like to find more about in the course of your language classes and present to the group[5], and whose major work they will try to read and review in writing. The freedom

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[3] In some teaching contexts FL teachers may not be in position to choose the literature (writers and/or titles) to be incorporated in their syllabus; but if they do have this opportunity of selecting all or some of the literary texts to be used in their language classes, FL teachers should take into account the needs, motivation, interests, cultural background and language level of their students.

[4] For a good overview of the main types of language activities based on FL literary texts see Murat Hişmanoğlu, 2005.

[5] "Never do what you can get your students to do." (Mark Andrews) - the knowledge they gain in the process of doing this task will be far more lasting than any presentation of yours on the same topic, no matter how comprehensive, intriguing or passionate.

of choice is a powerful motivator in itself for the learners and there is no need to worry if not all of the authors on your list are covered by the group of students - remember, you are teaching English through literature, not literature as such, and as long as passion in reading is (re)kindled, the learning process (of learning the language through literature) will gradually unfold of its own accord in the direction and at the pace of the learner's own choice; the only requirement at this stage could relate to avoiding overlapping in student choices, so that everybody gets a personalised task and as a group they cover a variety of authors and titles (they later pool and share the information, teasing each other's curiosity). Students should be provided with some time to make the choice, as some of them will probably need to do some research on who is who (and what they wrote about) to make their tasks easier and/or more enjoyable for themselves.

Once learners select authors and titles they will need some time to get organised and prepare for the two tasks: it is a good idea to schedule individual presentations over time, so that students are not bored by the sheer amount of the information presented. This will also allow you to choose some texts from the same authors and bring them in (on the same day when a student is presenting that very writer) with appropriate language activities based on them (e.g. dictations, dictoglosses, reading comprehension tasks, listening comprehension tasks[6], tasks for summarising or retelling the text from a different point of view, relevant topic discussions, translation, cloze and error correction activities, etc.).

If your students are ICT fans, you might wish to use their interests to their interest and your advantage. For example, you can ask them to prepare a power point presentation for the author they have chosen - it will facilitate their presentation and also help the class focus and listen more attentively while following it[7]. Time allowing, they could also be invited to bring in a film based on one of the author's works and show a part of it to the group (preferably one which they liked most for some reason and

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[6] There are many audio books available now on the internet (in YouTube), some of the recordings have been adapted to suit learners of different language levels (e.g. "Learn English Through Stories").

[7] Remember to always give the listeners a task in order to engage them and make sure they too profit from their classmate's presentation. I give them a checklist to complete and evaluate the presentation they have just heard - both in terms of content and form; this is always followed by a Q-&-A session led by the presenting student and a whole group discussion, elaborating on the points raised in the student's presentation.

comment on it). There are other "small ways" in which you can employ your students' digital skills to broaden their knowledge of literature and improve their communicative competence: here are some ideas I have tried in my classes:

- "**Google it!**" (e.g. What is "Fahrenheit 451" and why is it so significant in Ray Bradbury's novel of the same title?; Where does the title of the novel "The Catcher in the Rye" come from?),

- "**See what the *wiki* says about it!**" (e.g. Where does the title of the novel "To Kill a Mockingbird" come from and what are the symbolic associations of the bird in the book?),

- "**Do some online research on …**" (Is "To Kill a Mockingbird" the only novel by Harper Lee?; What else did Oscar Wilde write apart from "The Picture of Dorian Gray"? Did he write fairy tales or plays? What is "The Nightingale" about? What does the bird stand for there?),

- "**Blog with your friends about it and tell me what they think of …**" (e.g. Do your online friends approve of the Great Gatsby – do they empathise with him or completely denounce him?; What is the place of women in modern day society? What do your friends think of strong women like Scarlet O'Hara (from "Gone with the Wind") or Jane Eyre and Tess of the Urbervilles?);

- "**Do the book quiz on … and share your result**" (e.g. if you are a "vampire" fan, you can do a quiz on the Twilight series - questions focus on the books' plot and characters and evaluate how knowledgeable you are about these - and, to make it more fun, they give you a personalised certificate of your "Twilight IQ" which you can share on your page/profile).

"We aren't literary experts!"

It is a fact that even those students who otherwise read literary texts with enthusiasm and welcome the integration of literature in their language classes may feel intimidated by the task of presenting an author orally in class and then writing up a review of his/her book (with some degree of literary analysis involved in it) for homework. They may feel that they lack the literary expert skills for doing so and/or that the requirements demand a far more advanced level of language proficiency than

their current one. In order not to frustrate the learners and/or avoid pushing them into the "copy & paste" bog (in which technique there is very little learning going on), the FL teacher should provide the learners with the necessary guidance and frameworks for producing a truly creative personal response.

A sample of the guidelines I give to my students for preparing their oral presentations (Figure 1) and two of the scaffolding tasks we do in preparation for their written book reviews (Figure 2) are to be found in the Appendix. It should be noted here that we first try applying these guidelines in class by discussing and reviewing together a short story (e.g. "Witches' Loaves" by O'Henry) and then continue exploiting the same checklist of literary analysis questions whenever appropriate as we read and discuss other excerpts of literary texts of more or less coherent nature.

"Literature belongs to the past!"

This is a fair observation and it may be quite a daunting experience for many language learners to dive in at the deep end of the ocean of FL literature and try to swim across without drowning but come out of it linguistically empowered and culturally enriched. Admittedly, literature was not created for the purposes of language teaching: if anything, it was meant to entertain the general public - very much like popular sitcoms or blockbusters today. So FL teachers may be better advised to start in the present - with something thematically more modern and relevant to the learners, written by contemporary writers in an everyday style of language (e.g. "Love Story" by Eric Segal or "Twilight" by Stephenie Meyer) - and then, slowly wind back to the past (e.g. "Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austin or "The Canterville Ghost" by Oscar Wilde for the above themes respectively), leaving the initiative to the learners themselves and making it very much a cooperative team effort where every student contributes to the common pool of literary knowledge (see the discussion in section 3.1 above).

To give you a feel of what may be a good starter, Figure 3 (Appendix) shows a sequence of activities designed on a modern "light" literary text: variety of tasks is important (i.e. do not just read texts and complete traditional reading comprehension tasks - if you want students to pay attention to their form and learn the language, do "unexpected" things with them, like distort their form in different ways and get learners

"to fix it"), as well as splitting the text in easy "instalments". You could kick the session off by asking the students to share what their favourite sitcom is and why. You will probably notice that the texts are usually cut off on "cliff-hangers"[8] - this is done on purpose: after learners do the first task and you check it for language performance, you may invite them to speculate what they think will happen in the next "episode" and whether they empathize with any of the characters. You may play the "devil's role" and provoke them to react, by offering an extreme version of plot development.

If you wish, you could expend the suspense and do each of the tasks on a different day and then, before starting the new activity, get the students to either retell the story so far as it is, or to offer a summary of the events from the perspective of different characters (e.g. Patricia or Tony). Never forget to make language learning fun and leave enough room for personal interpretation and creativity - adults are not any different from kids.

In addition to engaging the students in doing classroom activities based on modern literature texts (like the one above), FL teachers could capitalise on the potential of contemporary literature when assigning individual project work, as well: they could invite each of the learners to choose a book of a certain length and on a theme that they find interesting/entertaining or could relate to, written by a contemporary writer who is a native speaker of English and read it in the original. Learners may be encouraged to keep a diary as they read their books and take note of the vocabulary items and grammar structures that they learn and/or revise, as well as comment on the interesting cultural facts that they come across in it, the development of the plot, the characters and/or on the author's style of language. The final aim of the project would be for each learner be able to present their book and its author, review its content briefly and do some impromptu language analysis (based on a sizable excerpt from the book) to demonstrate their command of vocabulary and grammar structure. Again, in order to scaffold the learners' performance and facilitate their way through the book, the FL teacher may set up a Book Club and regular structured book appreciation seminars for the learners to present various aspects of their books and talk about what they have learnt from reading them. Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 (Appendix) are two

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[8] A cliff-hanger is a situation in a story or a film that makes you feel excited because you are uncertain what will happen next and you have to wait for the next "episode" to find out.

examples of the frameworks used to structure the book appreciation seminars.

A final word of advice: if you have to formerly assess the learners in your English through literature course, a similar form of continuous assessment where the grade is multi-componental encompassing the appraisal of various language competences as displayed by the learners in a wide range of task formats, may be both more valid and far less stressful for the students.

Conclusion

For adult students at intermediate to advanced level of proficiency in the target language literature (with both capital and small "l") provides a rich source of authentic language material over a wide range of registers, which - if effectively exploited by the FL teacher - can help students improve their communicative competence and acquire a native-like command of English: they learn the linguistic features of modern language use (both authentic and idiomatic in its essence) and become aware of how English is used for communication in real-life settings, they begin reading more analytically and critically, listening more attentively, speaking more clearly and fluently, and writing more precisely and creatively. Literature also opens a window to the culture of the target language and helps learners develop a better understanding of "otherness" and enhances their intercultural competence. Literary texts are open to different interpretation - they provoke a more personal response in the learners, engage them emotionally and motivate them to participate more actively in the classroom activities and get more personally and responsibly involved in homework assignments, exploring, discovering, creating.
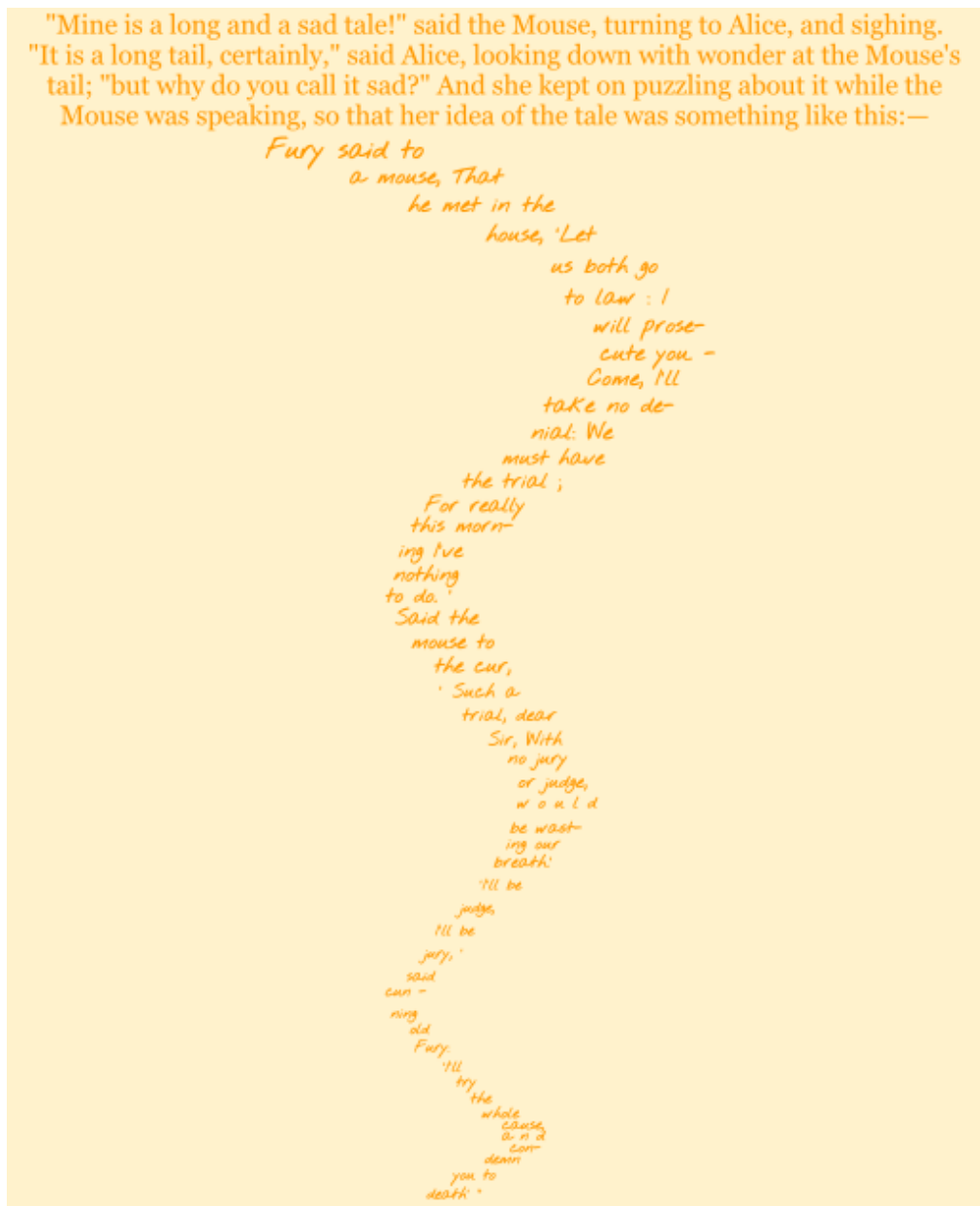
If the FL teacher manages to (re-)kindle that passion for reading literature in his/her students by carefully scaffolding their first steps and turning the encounter into a positive learning experience, he/she will have empowered them to become autonomous language learners, set on their own unique journey through the compelling world of verbal art and target-language culture.
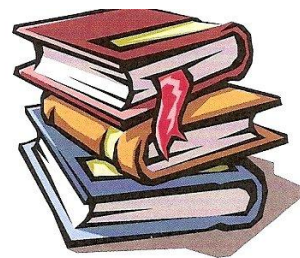
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Appendix

Calligramme Example

"Mine is a long and a sad tale!" said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing. "It is a long tail, certainly," said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; "but why do you call it sad?" And she kept on puzzling about it while the Mouse was speaking, so that her idea of the tale was something like this:—

Fury said to
a mouse, That
he met in the
house, 'Let
us both go
to law : I
will prose-
cute you –
Come, I'll
take no de-
nial: We
must have
the trial ;
For really
this morn-
ing I've
nothing
to do.'
Said the
mouse to
the cur,
' Such a
trial, dear
Sir, With
no jury
or judge,
w o u l d
be wast-
ing our
breath.'
'I'll be
judge,
I'll be
jury,'
said
cun –
ning
old
Fury:
'I'll
try
the
whole
cause,
a n d
con-
demn
you to
death.'

PRESENTING A CLASSIC AUTHOR & HIS/HER WORKS
(guidelines for the oral presentation)

I.   INTRODUCTION

1. **Topic**: say who you are going to talk about

2. **Motivation**: tell us how/why you chose your author [*Maybe you have read some books by him/her and enjoyed them? Or you are generally interested in the genre / literary period / theme? Or you have seen a movie based on one of his/her works and that sparkled your interest? Or perhaps a friend recommended it?*]

3. **Presentation Outline**: briefly describe how you have structured your presentation and what main aspects you are going to cover in it (incl. their order – i.e. *"First, I shall offer some information about …", "Then I'll turn to …", "Finally, I'll give you an idea about … "*)

II.   MAIN BODY

1. **Biodata**: give some biographical details about the author's life and his/her professional development (focus on the people and events that left a lasting imprint on his/her literary works)

2. **Historical Context**: you'll be better able to understand and appreciate literary works if you place them in their historical context and examine its influence on the writer's ideas and techniques [NB: even the escape from reality counts!]

3. **Literary Movement**: tell us what literary movement the writer is a representative of and how it is reflected in his/her works (it may influence their choice of topics, point of view [*e.g. 1 person narrative vs 3 person narrative*], setting, character description, plot development, style and other literary techniques); say how this writer compares to/differs from other representatives of the same literary period / movement

4. **Main literary works**: the writer you have chosen may be a novelist, but he/she may also have written poems, plays, film scripts, etc.; they might also have tried their hand at different literary genres, so first offer an overall picture of their "complete works" and then give the titles of a few main works by the author; last but not least include a brief synopsis of their major, emblematic works emphasizing what made them so influential and/or memorable [*make sure you include the recommended title from the author list* ☺]

III.   CONCLUSION

1. **Summary of main points**: tell us what you have told us

2. Offer **personal opinion** and/or **evaluation** of the author and his works [*Would you recommend that your classmates also read his/her works and why?*]

Figure 1. *Guidelines for the oral presentation*

WRITING A BOOK REVIEW

A. *Author and title*	**D.** *Language*	**H.** *Point of view*
B. *Central conflict*	**E.** *Other elements*	**I.** *Setting*
C. *Characters & characterization*	**F.** *Personal evaluation*	**J.** *Theme*
	G. *Plot*	

___1___ you write a **book review**, your task begins not with writing ___2___ with reading and understanding the book. Follow these guidelines when studying the book ___3___ the <u>classic author</u> you have chosen:

1. Read the book through quickly to find ___4___ what happens in the plot – you will need that information for its **summary** later.

2. Meanwhile, look ___5___ any unfamiliar words whose meaning you cannot derive from context in ___6___ dictionary.

3. Read the book again, this time concentrating ___7___ how the writer has created its key features (see below) – you will need this information for your **critical appreciation** ___8___ the book.

4. Refer ___9___ the book for evidence as you analyze ___10___ evaluate its main elements.

HOW TO ANALYZE THE BOOK

The following list outlines the main elements of short stories and of longer fictional works as well. Once you have made pre-writing notes about these aspects of the book, you are prepared to think about how each contributes to the meaning of the narrative.

1._____: Who wrote the book? What is its title? Does the title suggest the subject or theme of the book?

2._____: What are the main events in the story? What happens during each part of the plot: the *exposition*, the *inciting incident*, the *development*, the *climax*, the *resolution*, and the *denouement*? [Try to draw a cognitive mind map of the plot.] Does the story use special plot techniques such as foreshadowing, flashbacks, suspense, or a surprise ending?

3._____: What is the central conflict? Is the conflict external? Is the protagonist pitted against another character, society, or nature? Or is the conflict internal? Is there a struggle between different emotions and feelings within the protagonist?

4._____: What is the place, time, and social situation of the setting? What details create the setting? What is the setting's significance? Does it contribute to the conflict or mood?

5._____: Who is the protagonist? Is there an antagonist? If so, who is the antagonist? Who are the other major and minor characters? What roles do they play? What do the readers learn about each character's appearance, background, personality, actions, words, relationships, motivations, conflicts, and changes?

6._____: Who is the narrator, or storyteller? Is the narrator omniscient or limited, first person or third? Is the narrator subjective or objective, reliable or unreliable?

7._____: Does the narrative contain figures of speech such as hyperbole, irony, metaphor, or simile? Does the story contain special structural devices of sound or sentence composition such as onomatopoeia or parallelism?

8._____: What is the theme – the story's insight or central idea? How is the theme expressed?

9._____: Is the story addressed to a specific audience? If so, who? Is the book an example of a specific genre such as fantasy, science fiction, psychological fiction, mystery fiction, detective fiction, or regional fiction?

10._____: Aspects **1** to **9** of the analysis should provide a fairly objective picture of what your book is about, allowing your colleagues (who haven't read it to appreciate it for themselves). In the final part of your book review provide your own personal opinion of the book. Did you enjoy reading it? Why? Would you recommend it to your colleagues? Why?

Figure 2. *Preparing for the written book review (adapted from Thompson et al., 1991)*

Open the brackets and put the verbs in the right form:

If Jeffery (**not have**) a splitting headache that night, he (**not find**) the letters, and (**never know**) that his wife was cheating on him. But he (**have**) a headache, and after (**lie**) restlessly in bed for over an hour, he (**go**) (**search**) for aspirin in Patricia's drawers. She (**keep**) all sorts of drugs there, he knew; she (**do**) so ever since she (**have**) her first breakdown, and the doctors (**start**) (**stuff**) her with medication.

He (**be**) alone that night; she (**go out**) hours ago, (**say**) it (**be**) her girls' night out. Every Friday (**be**) a girls' night out, and up to that moment he (**believe**) her. In fact, he (**feel**) glad she met her friends once a week, even if only (**play**) cards and (**talk**) nonsense. She (**deserve**) some fun, he had thought.

As he (**go**) through the various boxes and jars of medicine, he suddenly (**come upon**) the envelope. Why would she hide an envelope there, he (**wonder**). Hesitantly at first, because he (**never go**) through her personal belongings before, he (**open**) it, and a photograph (**fall out**).

Fill in the blanks with one word only:

It was a colour photograph ..... a smiling young man with blue eyes and fair .... He was ..... swimming trunks and was standing ..... the beach, leaning ..... some kind of palm tree. Wonderingly, Jeffrey ..... the picture around and read the writing on its ..... . "With love, always", the words screamed ..... him; "to the loveliest woman I have ..... known". Jeffrey dropped the picture ..... if it was full of germs, and then saw the letters in the envelope.

The oldest one was dated more than six months ..... and began with "My dear Patricia"; the most recent ..... was from the day ..... yesterday, and was addressed ..... "The love of my life". The .....'s name was Tony.

With shaking hands, Jeffrey ..... reading the letters in chronological ..... . They had met ..... the swimming pool, and Tony had supposedly fallen in love ...... her ...... first sight. From the ..... beginning he had known she was something special, he wrote. He knew there was a considerable age ..... between them, but that didn't matter ..... him ..... all. He just knew he ..... not live without her.

Their first afternoon ..... the motel had been heaven. He hadn't been ..... to sleep all week after that, just thinking of her. And the following life without her. And he knew she ..... his feelings. Couldn't she talk ..... her husband, tell him the truth and ..... a divorce?

A red-hot rage ..... Jeffrey. The young bastard clearly wanted to get his ..... on Patricia's money, and the old fool had ..... his shameless lies.

Correct any mistakes that you can find:

She came from one of the most rich families in the country, and she was only child, so she was inherited everything when her father died on the age of 91. Much houses, shares in all the best companies, a several-million-dollars yearly sum for pocket money. Jeffery had once asked her if she actually knew how much money did she have, and she had just been laughing at his question and inquired was that the reason he married her. He hadn't spoke to her for days afterwards, and she finally had to come and apology. She said she is sorry, and that she knew he loved her deep and true.

And now here she was, having affair with one brainless, money-hungry beach-boy. No, he wasn't brainless at whole; on the contrary, he was clever and sly, and he had catched her in her trap.

Translate into English:

Няма да допусна това да стане, помисли си Джефри. Беше й посветил целия си живот и толкова много грижи, беше понесъл толкова много – болестите й, нетърпимата й ревност, навика й да го унижава пред общите им приятели. Но това последно унижение нямаше да изтърпи, реши той, и изведнъж се почуди как всъщност бе изтърпял всичко това през всичките тези години.

Качи се в спалнята, която от години не деляха – след като тя го обвини, че хърка прекалено силно и че винаги краде завивките. Измъкна прашния дървен сандък изпод леглото и извади ловната пушка, която някога бе принадлежала на бащата на Патриша. Избърса праха от нея, зареди я и слезе долу в хола.

Наля си малко уиски за кураж, седна на старинния семеен фотьойл и, хванал пушката в потна длан, зачака.

Finish the story, using as many of the words from the list – or their derivatives – as possible:

beg   threaten   forgive   delight   remorse   accuse   scream   embrace   joke   split   nap   caress   dream   extinguish   collapse   malice   enable   crash   smash   stab   claim   confront   deny   offensive   shrink   soak   ridicule   inferior   destroy   sparkle   bite   hound   assault   struggle   reliable

Charades: Guess the movie! *Mime the words from these film titles (one by one) to explain them to your team members in a way that they can guess them:*

Team A	Team B
"Four Weddings and a Funeral"	*"Lost in Translation"*
"The Sound of Music"	*"The Silence of the Lambs"*

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Figure 3. *The starter sequence of activities*

THE BOOK CLUB: CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

BOOK APPRECIATION Seminar 1 - Questions

(based on the first 30 pages of your book)

1 How did you choose your book? [*Maybe you have read other books by the same author? Or you have already seen the movie the book is based on?*]

2 Say a few words about the author, if you can.

3 Where and when is the story set? Do you learn anything about the people, customs and life of the country or region in which the book is set? What about the political or social events of that time?

4 How does the author lead into the story? [*A dramatic event? A picturesque description of a place? A character portrait? Some kind of retrospection?*]

5 Briefly describe the characters that have been introduced so far. Are they good or evil? Do you empathize with any of the characters? If so, why?

6 Choose **3** vocabulary items to teach to your classmates (*include the word's pronunciation and explanation in English, as well as some synonyms and/or antonyms and its BG equivalent; make sure you provide one or two examples of its use in context and list possible derivatives*).
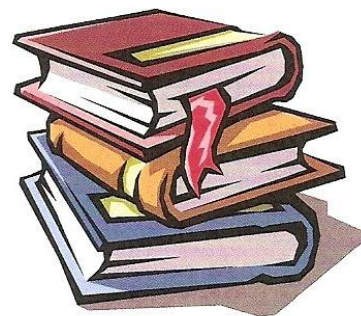
Figure 4.1 *Structuring the Book Appreciation seminars*

BOOK APPRECIATION – Seminar 2

Topic: The Plot & Character Development

(*within the first* 100 *pages of your book*)

Questions

1 Talk about plot development: what are the main events in the story so far? What happens during each part of the plot: the *exposition*, the *inciting incident*, the *development*, the *climax*, the *resolution*, and the *denouement*? [If you haven't read the whole book yet, the latter parts of the plot may not have been covered within the first 100 pages ☺.]

2 Who is [are] the main character[s]?

3 Choose **one** of the main characters.

3.1.   **Facts**: What information does the author provide about him/her [*briefly describe her/his appearance, personality, behaviour*]. Do we learn anything about their past?

3.2.   **Opinion**: Is s/he good or evil? How can you tell? Or is s/he just a normal human being like the rest of us? Can you relate to her/him? Do you empathize with her/him? If so, why?

4 Now choose **one** of the 'supporting' characters in the story. What is her/his relationship to the main character you have described above? What is their role in the story? Be prepared to briefly describe her/him using both facts and personal opinion.

5 **Author's style**: How are characters built? Do you learn everything at once or you are introduced to the character's traits step by step? Is there ambiguity in the description (and you are free to interpret and judge it for yourselves) or the portrait is clear-cut and everything is explicitly stated? Does the author make any use of metaphor/allegory in character description?

6 Choose **3** vocabulary items to teach to your classmates - *include the word's pronunciation and explanation in English, as well as some synonyms and/or antonyms and its BG equivalent; make sure you provide one or two examples of its use in context and list possible derivatives.*
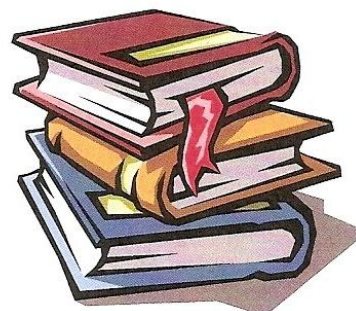
Figure 4.2 *Structuring the Book Appreciation seminars*