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## **Literature – A Way to Fire the Imagination of the Students in the Upper Secondary School.**

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## ABSTRACT

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The essence of this essay is how teachers incorporate literature in lessons and how they work with it. Articles and books will be the foundation in my result part. However, I have conducted four interviews to see how teachers use literature in the upper secondary school.

The curriculum is there to guide the teacher to work with different areas. However, there are no specific topics in the curriculum that the teachers have to work with. It is up to the teacher to choose that.

Some of my findings from my written sources where that there are different ways of working with literature. The most common way is to let the students read a book and then have a discussion of the book. You can also try and capture their interest by reading the blurb and letting them predict what will happen in the book. The advantages with literature are that you are more open-minded and you learn more vocabulary and fluency. Some disadvantages are that the texts might be difficult and too long for some students.

To conclude my essay, I wrote about that the amount and difficulty of fiction can vary depending on the class and type of programme. Some students read more than others and the teachers have to adapt to the class and see what type of literature works for them.

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# Content

ABSTRACT.....	1
1 Introduction.....	3
2 Aim.....	4
3 Method.....	4
4 Background.....	5
5 Results and Analysis .....	6
5.1 The curriculum .....	6
5.2 Different types of literature .....	7
5.3 Working with literature.....	8
5.4 Making literature interesting .....	10
5.5 The use of literary texts .....	12
5.6 Advantages and disadvantages with using literature .....	12
5.7 Interview with teacher A.....	13
5.8 Interview with Teacher B .....	15
5.9 Interview with Teacher C.....	16
5.10 Interview with Teacher D.....	16
6 Conclusion.....	18
7 Works cited.....	21
8 Appendix.....	23
8.1 Interview questions.....	23

# I Introduction

When I was a student in the upper secondary school I was very curious what the teacher had in mind with certain books we had to read both during lessons and at home. What was the purpose in reading those particular books? I wondered how the teacher managed to squeeze in a book in a topic that did not have anything to do with a literary era, when a famous author lived and wrote. I have become more aware of how a teacher thinks and why they choose to work with literature. However, my main question is how does a teacher incorporate literature in the upper secondary school?

Using literature in school can be quite a difficult crowd-pleaser on any level in school and that comes from personal experience both as a student and as a teacher. Having a teacher starting off a lesson by saying that they are going to work with literature for the coming few weeks may scare off a few students since quite a few of them have a pre-determined opinion on the subject; that it is very dull.

This essay will contain an analysis on how teachers use and incorporate literature in the upper secondary school. Another point that I will be discussing is what advantages and disadvantages there are, if using literature is even important at all in the upper secondary school or not and why. I will conduct interviews with teachers that have experience in the field to ask them what they think about using literature in school and how they include it in their lessons.

In the curriculum for the English courses A and B, the students have to be able to understand what the books are about and also to learn more about the time period in which it was written, the same applies for English C. The level of difficulty is increased for each course which also means that the literature gets more and more advanced for each year that passes.

Working with literature has always been something that I genuinely enjoy doing, both reading and analyzing it. Since I have very fond memories of literature from growing up both when I was young and now when I am older I felt that this topic would suit me very well to write about.

Coming to Sweden only 25 days “young” with my family from Chile was not easy. I began to learn Swedish when I was six years old and my journey began with a book that was filled with many pictures and some text. This made me very interested and it captivated me which made me fascinated with books. I was rather wild back in those days, but, reading made me very calm and I just kept on reading and reading. Here I am now, twenty years later writing an essay on how to use literature in the upper secondary school to fire the imagination of the students, as it did me.

## 2 Aim

This essay is about how teachers incorporate literature in lessons and how they work with it. Is working with literature needed or is it something that just can be glanced at? How is it used during a lesson? It is also about how to make literature more interesting for the students to work with. Are there any advantages or disadvantages with teaching literature in the upper secondary school? The final four statements here are sub questions that I believe are connected to my subject and that I wish to find answers to.

My two main questions in this essay are

- How do teachers incorporate literature in lessons?
- How do they work with it?

## 3 Method

I will be using numerous books and articles that are connected to my subject matter. This will help my investigation and also give support for my arguments in my conclusion. The articles I will be using are about how to make literature interesting and also how it is used in the classroom. Phillip Prowse and Alan Pulverness speak about these topics in their articles. I will see if there are any advantages or disadvantages with using literature in a classroom and in what way it will help the students lift their language. By using the pedagogic handbook by Penny Ur, I will be finding the information I need to finalize my analysis when it comes to the different advantages and disadvantages in teaching literature.

I will be looking into the curriculum to see what is written about how to work with literature and also what needs to be included in the lesson plan. There are, in fact, many rules for how to teach and I believe that the curriculum should be included in this essay because it is the very basis for a teacher since those rules need to be upheld by us teachers.

Since this is an essay which needs data outside the world of books, I will be doing some research in schools and conducting four interviews with teachers that were chosen randomly. I did not want to have any personal connections with the teachers because I felt that the answers might have been different. The answers were not taped and the reason for that is that I simply prefer to write down the answers as they come. The questions that I used in my interviews can be found in the appendix. It will help me understand what the situation is like nowadays in the school when it comes to teaching literature. I will be interviewing teachers asking them what they think about literature in English and whether they use it frequently or not. Another question that is of great importance is what type of literature they use and when. Are there any specific guidelines the teachers in the school have for teaching literature in English or do the teachers themselves choose whenever they want to work with it? A few questions that I feel are necessary to ask are, for instance, how long they have worked as teachers and how long they have worked in that school. Also if their opinions on how to use literature have changed during their career.

I believe that this will bring more depth into my interview since I will see if their opinions have changed during course of years. I believe that these interviews will give more in-depth knowledge on how they work with literature. Using a questionnaire would not do me much good since I want to be there with the teachers to be able to catch a glimpse of how literature is used nowadays. It brings more credibility to my analysis since I will be out in the field collecting information for my essay. It also adds an important ingredient in this pot and that is the experience these teachers have.

These interviews will be summarized one by one in the analysis part of my essay where I will write about what the different teachers said in the interviews. Later on, I will include my thoughts about some of the answers the teachers gave me and also compare them to each other to try and find a common denominator in my conclusion.

## **4 Background**

It has been a difficult task to find scholarly background on this subject. Searching through quite a few books and journals I have come to the conclusion that there is not that much written about this particular topic. Despite this fact, I have managed to find some background on this subject. I have found a combination of articles from a pedagogic magazine and literature that treat this topic.

The author Karen M. Feathers wrote a book called *Infotext: Reading and Learning*. Here she writes about how to give us teachers alternative ways of working with literature. She wants to give the readers an opportunity to help themselves. Feathers firmly believes that reading and learning both happen as soon as you open a book, therefore, she feels that these two things go hand in hand.

One of the world's best known magazine that focuses on pedagogic subjects is English Teaching Professional. There have been articles written during the course of years that have dealt with using literature in the classroom. Some of these articles have been about the pros and cons of having literature in different situations in school. Another question that has been dealt with is when it really is needed and why. Knowing what to do in certain situations and using the right texts for the right class is of great importance. There are a few research articles from English Teaching Professional.

The usage of literature in teaching and how teachers incorporate it has been a field which scholars have investigated numerous times. Studies by Alan Pulverness in the respectable magazine English Teaching Professional explains why, why not and how to teach literature. It is important to know that there are different types of literature that can be used. Short stories, poetry, novels and drama are well explained as to why they are considered to be literature and why they can be used for teaching literature. By using it, Pulverness says that it will motivate personal development and also help the students improve their language.

There have been studies about how to get started with reading and how to go about that. Philip Prowse's article in English Teaching Professional describes how to do so. In his article he mentions how to use different methods to get the students attention and how to work with literature to make it more interesting. Something that Prowse mentions that teachers fail to do is talk about reading and its great value and that it is very important for their education that you stimulate the students wish to read.

## **5 Results and Analysis**

### **5.1 The curriculum**

An important cornerstone for a teacher is the curriculum. The curriculum is there to show the teachers what is expected from them in terms of content in the lessons. We, as teachers, need to abide by the rules that have been stated by the Swedish government and we can only do our best to uphold those rules. Working with literature is part of the curriculum, although it differs somewhat in the English A, English B and English C course.

The intensity of the content and what needs to be done increases as the courses go by. The English A course is a continuation of the English that was being studied in the secondary school, the equivalent of the ninth grade in Sweden. This means that between the secondary and the upper secondary school the changes are not as drastic as they are between the English A and B course. (The National Agency of Education)

It is in the B course where you study more complex texts and authors or playwright like, for instance, Shakespeare. There are no specific authors in the curriculum that need to be taught, however, you should as a teacher go through the different time periods such as, for instance the renaissance. As you go through these periods of time there should be time to learn about more famous authors that have been of great influence in history. Studying the history and context of former times is an essential part of the curriculum. (The National Agency of Education)

The main points in the English curriculum are to work with listening, speaking, writing and reading. Those three are a recurrent theme passing through the three English courses. To be able to understand literature and to know more what it was like during that period of time is an important point that is mandatory to work with. Knowing about the culture in English speaking countries is also of great importance for a student to know. As the intensity and the level of difficulty is increased, the level of literature used is also gradually getting more difficult. (The National Agency of Education)

When you study literature, you do not just study the text by reading it, you should also know the context when it was written and about the culture that existed in those days. This is also mentioned in the curriculum and the purpose is to make students more aware of the history of that time. (The National Agency of Education)

## 5.2 Different types of literature

One question that people ask themselves is what is literature? There are many types of literature that exist in the world, everything from poetry to novels and everything in between is considered to be literature. (Eaglestone, Doing English: Guide for literature students 49)

A story does not have to be long to be considered literature. A short story can be very brief and you can without any problems read through a whole story in one lesson. Most short stories focus on a specific event or location and there are not that many characters to keep in mind. The language in these stories is perhaps not that complex but since the structure is simple it is easy to follow the story. (Pulverness, English Teaching Essentials Literature 40)

Poetry is another form of literature that can be used for teaching. The texts are usually not that long; however, the language might be difficult in poems. The reason for this is that poets have a tendency to break the rules when it comes to writing. The meaning of certain things in poems might have some indirect meaning or it may insinuate something that you can only understand if you have the proper context. Nevertheless, there are poets nowadays that write in a way that makes poems easily understandable and making them easy to read. (Pulverness, English Teaching Essentials Literature 40)

To generalise novels is very difficult since the range is wide, everything from short and easily comprehended novels to very long and demanding ones. Students can read extracts in the classrooms to get an idea of the novel and to get a spark of interest started. To watch a film clip or even an entire movie, both an old version and a more modern one, can give some inspiration for the students to keep on reading. (Pulverness, English Teaching Essentials Literature 40)

Drama is also a form of literature since it is in written form first. The manuscripts may have been written but are meant to be performed live. By handing out extracts from a play, the students can work with different scenes which they can perform for their fellow classmates, leading to discussions and text-based activities. (Pulverness, English Teaching Essentials Literature 40)

### **5.3 Working with literature**

There are some guidelines that a teacher should have in mind. It is important that all of the reading the students do is meaningful. There is no point in reading a book which serves no purpose at all. The texts have to be of interest to the students and it should be about something which they already know or something that they have already experienced. The world that they face in the books should have something to do with their own world. (Nilsson, Tematisk undervisning 37)

Using literature for teaching purposes is an excellent way for students to feed their imagination with images otherwise impossible to obtain without literature, also, to aid them in understanding how things were in the past. There are many ways of working with literature and teachers use different types of methods. One way might be using a class set of books or letting them choose for themselves, making the students read and pick out words from the text and then working with questions made beforehand. (Bergström, Nya erfarenheter i språkundervisningen 71)

By not explaining what the literary text is about or giving the students context you will most likely have lost half the battle right from the start. Therefore, it is essential that you give them an introduction to the text that they will not forget. Talking about the topic and theme can boost the students' imagination into wanting to read that specific text. As a teacher, you should not disturb them while they are reading, since if you spent some time working with the text prior to them reading it, there should not be much down-time for the students. (Pulverness, English Teaching Essentials Literature 40)

Pointing out some stylistic points in a text will help them to improve their awareness of finding those types of small linguistic tweaks in a text. Finally, to conclude this way of working you can let the students think about what might have happened if the author had written it in a different way. This will not only improve the creativity of the students but also their awareness of how the text works. (Pulverness, English Teaching Essentials Literature 40)

When you work with literature and the goal is to analyse it, it is important that the students are in groups that they can rely on and discuss with. One way of working like this is not to choose one book that the entire class has to read but to let the students decide on their own what they want to read. This is a way of minimizing the possibility of the student just passing without really reading the book or putting effort into working with it. However, there is one condition, at least three of the group members have to agree to read the same book. This means that there will be a discussion even in the smallest group although there might be a student missing. (Bell, Give them a choice 14)

The main purpose for analysing and discussing a text is to aid the students to get a better understanding of what the book really is about and what meaning it has. It might have different meanings and it all depends on how the reader interprets it. By doing this, the students get a chance to interact with each other and to hear different opinions on the book. (Glynn, Supporting Students with Literacy Difficulties 66). The students will not only gain a better understanding in how to discuss different matters, they will also use the language from the books to explain things which will help them learn new vocabulary as well. They might also appreciate reading and discussing more if they have these types of discussions. (Bell, Give them a choice 14).

It is imperative that the teacher prepares the students for reading. This can be achieved by talking to the students about the book, finding out what they know or what they think they know. Speculating on titles, key words and the beginning of the book and giving the students a sense of them making up an alternative storyline is an interesting approach to teaching literature. (Pulverness, The ghost at the banquet 6)

The amount of reading per week is something that is discussed among teachers. It is important that the teacher gives the students time to read and work with their books. To give the students entire lessons just reading is not the way to proceed according to Prowse. He believes that by giving them 20 minutes a week, the teacher will validate the activity of reading and ruptures the argument that the students sometimes use, “reading is not important because we never do it in class”. A teacher should not think that if they read for 20 minutes they will not learn anything. They do learn and it will help them a great deal in the future. (Prowse, Open your books 11)

It is significant to let the students know that they should read for pleasure and for themselves, not just to get a grade. If you let the students choose their books, they will experience satisfaction from reading. The level of English varies in a class; there can be problems when using a class set of books, especially if the teacher has chosen the book. (Mizuno, An Interactive Reading Community 38)

This leads me to another aspect which is that people assume that everyone can read at the same level. For instance if you learn how to read words, then you can read sentences and if they can do that they can read stories and if they are able to do that then they can go on to reading science related texts or political pamphlets. People learn things through proper context and it does not just come automatically. (Feathers, Infotext: Reading and Learning 21-22)

It is crucial that the teacher does not only focus on the historical parts of literature. One of the main reasons is that it simply draws our attention away from the literary experience. If we as teachers ask the students to focus only on the dates and the events of the past then they might feel as if they are working with History rather than English. (Hawisher, Gail E; Soter, Anna E, On Literacy & Its Teaching: Issues in English Education 101)

## **5.4 Making literature interesting**

If students do not read in their mother tongue, then how are we as teachers supposed to get them to read in English? That is a question that has been on the minds of teachers. The ideal scenario would be that the students pick up a book, look at the cover, check the content quickly and then sit down and read. Unfortunately, that is not often the case. So how can teachers make the students more interested in reading? (Prowse, Open your books 10) That question will be dealt with here.

Using the cover is a way to awaken interest in the students and to let their imagination play a great part in making it interesting. By asking the students to predict what the book is about and what will happen in the story you get their attention and their participation. Asking what type of genre they think it is and what the blurb means is also another way of making it more interesting for them. You can also let the students make up five different questions about the book. To match up different covers with the titles of the books can be turned into a game that can be appreciated by the students. You photocopy the covers and then remove the titles. The teacher can hold the book showing it to the class or the students can pick different books and introduce their books to their classmates.

(Prowse, Open your books 10)

The text itself can be a way of making reading more interesting. If you give the students about two minutes to read the cover, the few lines on the back of the book, the first paragraph and the last paragraph, then they can try to figure out what the book is about. Afterwards, they can explain to each other what they think it is about. By doing this, you break down the book into pieces making it more accessible for the students. They will not get the feeling of reading every single word in the book just to get an idea of whether the book is worth reading or not. (Prowse, Open your books 11)

After the students have read the first chapter and the last one, they can make their own stories about what will happen in the book. When the students have finished writing it, they can read their version aloud to the entire class and then they can see if they were right or not compared to the book. It could also be the beginning of a chapter and the end of that chapter, which would have the same effect. This will stimulate their imagination making it more fun to work with literature since they will be using their own thoughts. (Prowse, Open your books 11)

Sometimes it might be difficult for a teacher to work with the students if they have a negative attitude towards reading. It does not necessarily have to start in the upper secondary school, it often occurs at an earlier stage. (Spence Läsa Lära Förstå 22) Therefore, it is important that you do your best to work with literature in a way that interests the students.

To make literature interesting for a group of people who are not at all interested in the world of books might prove to be difficult. Therefore, it is essential that we as teachers try to show them the interesting sides of literature. Some students may have had bad experience with books and basically just builds a form of blockage in their minds and instantly believe that it will be as bad as the last time.

## 5.5 The use of literary texts

The term literary texts include types of literature such as poetry, prose and drama. These can be used quite effectively for the study of the language and, of course, also of the culture and history of the time. However, it does not start with the students working with literature texts. It starts with teachers in training, when they work with literature at the universities. Mostly because if the teachers work with literature and they realise the potential it has for improving your language skills, it will most likely lead to more use of it in the classroom. If the motivation of the teacher working with literature is very high then it would theoretically increase the enthusiasm of the students. (Spann, A case for literature 50)

Working with a text is not only about analysing it and reading it, it is also about the language in the texts. You can learn a great deal by reading and thinking about the language that is being used in that particular text. Improving your language skills leads to improved reading skills as well. Rhetoric is another aspect that might come up when studying texts. The words “secretive gardens” gives a new meaning to the text and the personification gives it something special. You learn to see different expressions in another way by reading. (Simpson, Language through Literature 14-15)

Another aspect that is not that much talked about is what the teacher can do to motivate students to read more literary texts. You should as a teacher try and read literature both in English and in the students’ mother tongue. By doing so, you can talk to them about books written in English and also in their mother tongue. If the students notice the teacher reading in their mother tongue and making an effort, they would see that a professional puts such a high value on reading that it would ultimately lead to more reading for the students. You can also give the students tips on how to read in a Language 2 (L 2) and how to develop that skill. L 2 is, for instance, the English language for Swedish students. (Jackson, Rewarding reading 16)

## 5.6 Advantages and disadvantages with using literature

There are both advantages and disadvantages when it comes to teaching literature. The advantages are that literature can be very enjoyable. It can also fire the imagination of the students when it comes to different styles of writing and different aspects of real-life language usage. You improve your vocabulary substantially which leads to the use of perhaps more complex words when writing. By using literature, the world knowledge of the students will improve and that will help them in the future. (Ur 201)

By working with texts and literature you learn more about the world. It helps us understand it more and also to understand ourselves more. We receive information and we can also make judgement on what the author has written. We have a right to an opinion on what is written and to say whether it is good or not. By reading we see world in another way, we experience empathy for those in the books but also you learn more about yourself and you might become a better person, being more able to empathize. (Abbott, Bills, Brooks 200)

Quite a lot of what we learn about the world comes from written sources. Therefore, it is important to be able to comprehend these sources to keep up with current events. It also helps the student to become better at understanding the texts since they are more aware of how the text is organised. The ability to create your own literary works through writing is increased since the reader improves general literacy skills. (Paran, English Teaching Essentials Literature Intensive Reading 40)

There are some downsides to using literature as well. The difficulty of the language in written works might prove to be difficult for a foreign language learner to read and comprehend. The usage of a simpler version of a text might be a pale copy in comparison to the original text. Literary texts are often very long and it can take some time to teach to the students. (Ur 201)

There are many different programmes nowadays which mean that there is diversity when it comes to the students' interests. Students that are studying a practical programme or a science oriented programme might think that literature is of no use to them in the future. (Ur 201) For instance, what can a poem written by John Donne have to do with the students future profession? (National Research Council 60) By working with literary texts as a way of teaching language, it might lead the students to think that it is very dull and it will ruin their appreciation of reading literature. (Ur 201)

Using simplified versions of texts can be a way of working with literature; however, there are some disadvantages. The storyline of those books is still there, nevertheless, there are still a few things that are not included. These things are, for instance, the narrative and linguistic aspects in the text that elevate the text. By using a simplified text, there is only a literal reading to the text and there is no room for personal interpretations. Basically, the reader will only know about the characters and the plot. (Gamble, Yates 156)

## **5.7 Interview with teacher A**

(See appendix 9.1 for the questions)

These are the answers these teachers gave during the interviews.

Teacher A is 51 years old and he has worked as a teacher for 27 years, 25 of these have been at a boarding school in Sweden. There are three programmes at that school, the Science programme, the Social-science programme and International Baccalaureate (IB).

1. I use all kinds of fiction; however, it depends on the class really. The Science programme students is a class in which I can use all kinds of fiction for instance. They get to choose books that they want to read but we also agree to read the same book which we discuss after working with it. There is really not one kind of literature that is better than the other. Nonetheless, I don't promote the reading of extremely violent literature.
2. In the English A course the students have to read one book per semester, which means a total of two book per academic year. However, in the English B course, they read one book in the autumn and two books in the spring. We usually work with the books about three to four weeks where they have to read a number of pages for each time. We don't work with reading all the time during those weeks, they study about the author and also about the time period. The reason for this is that I feel satisfied with the amount they read, it is simply enough. We work with articles and short stories as well.
3. I can't really say when, in what particular situation. I just decide that it is time to read a book. Doing other things at the same time, it is important to vary your teaching. Working with the course books, articles and films are ways of varying my teaching.
4. It is very important. The reason for me thinking that is because it is real. It is something that has not been adapted to the students, it is the thoughts of the author that they read. It opens up windows for different cultures and situations. You can enter a new country just by reading. I think that it is great if the students read a book and then watch the movie afterwards. It helps quite a lot to create authentic situations by reading literature.
5. I usually used more adapted literature before. By adapted I mean literature that is adapted to school, that are simplified versions. Now I want them to read real fiction. When I was younger I wanted them to know all the words and word tests were something I used. I don't do that anymore. Using the language, reading and listening to it is better. That is how they learn nowadays and now with the internet and all they really use the language when they are online.
6. There are no guidelines here. We talk about how we use literature between each other and we decide who has what set of books, though we never really agree. One type of literature might work with one class but not with another. We have a small library in the English department where students can borrow books to read.

## 5.8 Interview with Teacher B

(See appendix 9.1 for the questions)

Teacher B is 38 years old and he has worked as a teacher for four years. He has worked at a theoretical and practical school in Jönköping for two years now. Before he came to that school, he had worked in two schools in Gothenburg. The programmes that exist there are the science programme, the social science programme, the energy programme, the nursing programme and also special programme called JING, which is focused on commerce. There are two branches in JING, there is both a social science branch and a science one too.

1. We use all kinds of literature, everything from classical Shakespeare to more modern British novels. It is always good in the B-course to study literature, the same goes for the A-course. We analyse literature more in the B-course. We sometimes use class sets and the students write book reviews and gives an analysis of chapters so that I can keep track of them.
2. In the A-course we use simpler novels that don't take that much space. We usually read one novel per term and we work with other things as well. I would say that in the B-course we work with novels, texts from the course book about 90% of the time. The B-course is a lot about analysing literature. Also, the students are better in the B-course since they take the course a bit more seriously than they did in the A-course.
3. Literature is a big part of English language. I would say that it would not be that fun to teach without literature since it is a key thing in English. In the A-course the students read two books per term and in the B-course they read many books.
4. Literature is very important and I don't really understand how you can teach without it. It is a great way of teaching and also a great opportunity to get to know a new country and culture. Another plus is that you become better at English.
5. In the B-course it is evident to use literature that is interesting and that is more suitable. I believe that the use of literature has decreased mostly in the A-course. Nowadays, you have to basically force the students to read in the A-course.
6. No, we don't have any plans. We do have a big schedule where it says which teacher has what literature. We don't use material together, which I think is not good. I would be nice to have it. We don't have that much cooperation and I would like to have more of that. We have to work with our own material and so on.

## 5.9 Interview with Teacher C

(See appendix 9.1 for the questions)

Teacher C is 39 years old and she has worked as a teacher for seven years. She is currently working at a boarding school in Sweden and she has worked there for five years. The programmes that are available in that school are the Science programme, the Social-science programme and International Baccalaureate (IB).

1. I try to use fiction quite a lot, mostly Adult fiction. Youth fiction is good reading for the students because the language is appropriate and the topics are very close to the students.
2. In the C-course we spend a lot of time reading and studying literature. The students read two different novels and then they are put in two groups for discussion. Each term they read one book. We don't just work with literature, we work with articles, poetry and of course extracts of novels.
3. I decide when they have to read something. I read a lot myself so I believe that literature is important. It is important for acquiring a new language and different points of view on different subjects.
4. I guess it is a bit selfish, but literature has meant a lot to me and I automatically assume that it is important for the students too. However, I have noticed that students don't like to read that much nowadays. That is why I try to find books that appeal to them. In the library they can get tips on good books to read which helps them.
5. No, not really. Maybe I have moved away from more classics to literature written for young people. I always tried to get them to read. One thing that I have noticed is that the students studying in the social science programme are not that used to reading books. That is one change that I have noticed during my years as a teacher.
6. It is an important part of the curriculum and it is up to the teacher how much literature should be used in the lessons. So there is really no specific guideline.

## 5.10 Interview with Teacher D

(See appendix 9.1 for the questions)

Teacher D is 60 years old and has worked as a teacher for 35 years. He is currently working in a theoretical and practical school where he has been working for 15 years. The programmes that exist there are the science programme, the social science programme, the energy programme, the nursing programme and also special programme called JING, which is focused on commerce. There are two branches in JING, there is both a social science branch and a science one too.

1. It depends on which course I am having. We have adapted books, simpler books, in the A-course while we use Penguin books in the B-course. It really depends on the class which type of genre we use. Thrillers are usually a hit among the students, but if it is a class full of girls I usually go for a book with a little love in it. The reason for me doing so is that you have to try and meet them where they are. For instance plumbers are not used to reading difficult books so I don't use those types of books with them. In comparison, the science programme is used to reading so they read more difficult books.
2. There is a lot of fiction in the course books. The texts in the text books are often fiction. The science programme uses the course book and read one book per term. I usually give them roughly 3-4 weeks to read it. When they have read it I split them into smaller groups and they have a discussion for about 30 minutes or so. I want them to write something about the book. I don't want them to summarise the books, instead I want them to write what they think about it and why. It is a way for them to think about what they have read and also that their opinions on the books might be shared by others.
3. The course book is there all the time, though I don't really know when I ask them to read. Perhaps when I know that they don't have that much to do in other subject. Some of the students are not that used to reading and it is important to give them time to read a novel.
4. I think it is very important. You could never find new words and thoughts anywhere else. It is like jumping into a sea of language. It is a way for the students to gain perspective on things and growing up, not just thinking about what they are having for lunch.
5. Yes it has. It is much easier now to work with more difficult books. Mainly because the students know more English nowadays and they are more open minded too. I think that TV, music and internet are a big part of it. They meet English everywhere.
6. There are really no guidelines. The only guideline is to read novels, the way you work with it is completely up to you.

## 6 Conclusion

Literature is something that helps people in many ways. It can help you be more imaginative which could open a path to a more creative way of thinking. I know for a fact that literature can get you through some difficult moments in life. Not knowing if you are going to manage in a completely new country, books give you a sense of hope. You feel you can actually start and finish something. I believe that it is a sense of confidence that the students feel when they read through an entire book.

Making literature a fun thing to do is easier said than done. From my own teaching experiences I have come to the conclusion that the introduction of literature means a great deal. If you start off simply by saying “we are going to work with Shakespeare for three weeks now”, then most students will not have a clue of what to do and they will think that it will be very boring.

To connect to my personal experiences with working with literature, more specific Shakespeare, as a teacher in the upper secondary school, I started by introducing the subject with showing them the very famous Sonnet 18 and reading it. After reading it, I asked them what they thought about it and the immediate response was that they had heard it before. However, they did not know who wrote the piece. After the short discussion I started to talk about how life was back then and also a bit about the political climate in the country. This gave them context and this was also a way of giving them a chance to think about how was life was back then. After the introduction they started studying Hamlet. The main objective of the task was to present a scene from Hamlet where they had to introduce the scene to the class before performing it. This was great fun for me as a teacher and for my students because the sky was the limit. They took it seriously and enjoyed changing their way of working with texts. However, it was not that easy all the time. There were some occasions where some students asked why they did this and what purpose it served. My response was simply that I wanted to give them a chance to be more open-minded when it came to presenting subjects in school and also it was, in my opinion, an interesting way of working with the play Hamlet.

There are alternative methods of working with literature and I believe that teachers have to work in different ways each time to know which method works best. I think that not all ways of working is best for every teacher. For instance, using the blurb might be a great way of making students more interested since the blurb is almost always written in an exciting manner. By letting the students work with the blurb and trying to figure out what the book is about, they will most likely engage in conversation with their neighbour to try to work out what it is about. This is a great way of working with a book because they will have to use their imagination to figure out what it is about. Afterwards you can give the students time to reflect and then they can present their findings in small groups and then the groups can give account for what they discussed.

It is imperative to give the students time to read in class as without giving them time to actually start reading then what is the point of studying literature? In order to analyse the texts more in-depth, they have to be read first. After the introduction and after giving the students some context then you as a teacher should give them some time to commence reading. Giving the last 20-30 minutes of the lesson is invaluable in many ways giving them a chance to start their reading.

Working with literature might be quite challenging depending on the class. Some students are more open-minded and can read basically anything without hesitation, while others are not that enthusiastic. This means that you can't really have the same type of books for every class. Teacher D said in his interview that he uses "simpler" fiction for students that are studying a more practical program than those studying, for instance, the science programme. I find this quite intriguing because I know that this is the case in many schools, however, I did not find any written source about this. This made me wonder if this particular subject is taboo since everyone in the Swedish school system is supposed to have the same content in the English courses as everyone else. After giving it some more thought, I can imagine that it might be difficult to use more advanced fiction with a group that is not that interested at all in studying English. This complicates things for the teacher and he or she has to adapt.

The curriculum is essential for us teachers to know what needs to be incorporated in our lessons. Nevertheless, the curriculum does not have specific names of authors that every teacher has to work with. This gives great responsibility and, of course freedom to the teacher to use whichever book he or she wants to use. I suppose that if the teacher sees the need of using easier books for a class that is not capable of reading more advanced book, then technically they are entitled to do so.

The interviews that I conducted were interesting and I understood more how teachers use literature in their own classes. Some answers that were common was the fact that the teachers use fiction quite a lot and that they vary the type of literature from class to class. If the class has more girls in it then a love story comes well to hand.

The amount the students have to read is also very similar, they read one book each term in the English A course and the same goes for the English B course. However, one of the teachers uses a total of three books in the B-course. The way they work with literature is also quite similar. The teachers let the students read for about 3-4 weeks and then they discuss the books in groups roughly about 30 minutes or so. The teachers also feel that by reading you get a great deal of insight in how things are in another country. This helps them to be more open minded which allows them to read more.

All of the teachers agree when it comes to the importance of reading literature and working with it. They feel that it is important because of its authenticity. The content of the books is real and it is not something that has been adapted for the students. Teacher D said that reading literature is like jumping into a sea of language which I believe is an accurate analogy. Learning about other cultures and other countries is interesting, but what you gain language wise with new vocabulary and so on is invaluable.

One thing that I found quite striking was the fact that two of the teachers had different opinions on the difficulty of getting their students to read and work with difficult texts. Teacher B stated that he literally has to force his students to read while Teacher D feels that it is much easier nowadays thanks to the internet, music and television. They both work at the same school which makes me believe the reason for their different opinions depends solely on the classes they have. I believe that every class has a different recipient level. Some are more open-minded when it comes to reading literature and some are just completely against it.

One more thing that I discovered from the interviews is that the teachers do not have any specific guidelines in the schools. The only thing guiding them is the curriculum and they have to follow it. However, they do not have any information on what type of literature they have to work with, that is up to them to choose.

I have found a great deal of interesting things concerning how teachers work with literature in the upper secondary school. Something that I realised was that quite a few teachers use the same way with working with literature. The students have to read a book, then they have to discuss it and sometime the whole task is concluded with an exam. I am not saying that this way is the wrong way to work with literature. However, I do feel that there has to be more ways to work with it. By reading all of those books and articles I learned a few more tricks to have up my sleeve when I have to work with literature in the future. Hopefully, I will be able to fire the imagination of my students in the upper secondary school as my first grade teacher did to me.

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## 8 Appendix

### 8.1 Interview questions

- Age:
  - Gender:
  - Years working as a teacher:
  - School:
  - Years working at that school:
  - Which programmes exist in the school?
1. What type of literature do you use and why?
  2. How much space does literature have in your teaching and how do you use it? Why, why not?
  3. When and why do you use literature?
  4. How important is having literature? Why, why not?
  5. Has your opinion on using literature in lessons changed during the years? Why, why not?
  6. Are there any specific guidelines the English teachers in the school have when it comes to teaching literature?