



Reviewed work:

Literature Into the Classroom. (2016). Amos Paran & Pauline Robinson. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp 144. ISBN 9780194427524. \$24.13

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<http://www.amazon.com>

Literature Into the Classroom by Amos Paran and Pauline Robinson provides English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) teachers with a number of useful and practical approaches, techniques and activities that are based on literature. The main motif introduced in this book is how literature can be effectively exploited in teaching EFL in the classroom by deploying the suggested practical activities.

The book consists of three parts, with each part containing a number of chapters. Part 1 includes three chapters. In the first chapter, the authors set out the rationale for considering literature in EFL classrooms by discussing reasons that can motivate teachers to employ literary texts, especially those who might have concerns about the ability of learners to cope with such texts. The reasons include literature being a part of life and literature helping to enrich learners with knowledge about the culture of English-speaking countries. The example texts used in the book are thought to be able to change the view of those concerned teachers. The authors show how teachers can begin with literary texts in the classroom, and highlight that there are many non-literary texts with literary uses. Literature is described by the authors as a “secondary world” where writers create people as characters and describe places (e.g., cities) that sometimes are real. The functions of language are introduced, since there are a number of functions in texts that

would be helpful for both teachers and learners to be aware of. This chapter ends with a discussion on the use of the narrative, which is an essential part of literary text, and shows that narrative can be found in non-literary texts as well.

In the second chapter, the authors discuss the approaches and techniques for deploying literature in the classroom, starting with the overall approach of teachers to literature, and suggesting three main approaches of seeing literature: as “a body of knowledge and as content,” as “language practice material,” and as “a stimulus for personal development.” The authors argue that each one of these approaches has different implications. Then, they explore the potential challenges that might be encountered when using literature, and how teachers could use certain activities pertaining to learners’ experiences and attitudes towards literature in order to deal with these challenges. Paran and Robinson assert the importance of examining learners’ “responses” and “reactions” to literature in order to make learners’ experiences with literature enjoyable. This can be achieved by asking learners questions, or by having discussions with them to scrutinize their responses to literary texts, while examining their reactions through a selection of reactions that are prepared in advance. This chapter also explores the relationship between the texts and learners as readers, and the role of teachers in providing support and guidance in relating the texts to the learners’ own lives. A number of techniques that can be used with literary texts are provided, as well as some activities to bring learners' reflections into the classroom.

The third chapter explores the role of learners’ knowledge as readers while dealing with literary works, and suggests activities to familiarize learners with different types of genres. The chapter refers to the role of schema in reading texts and introduces different types of knowledge that are presented in literary texts, mainly “cultural knowledge,” “historical knowledge,” and “intertextual knowledge.” It should be noted that the key role of learners’ knowledge in reading comprehension has been discussed widely in the field of reading research (e.g., McNeil, 2011; Nassaji, 2007). The chapter concludes with examples of activities which can integrate the background knowledge of learners with the tasks.

After exploring the background that underpins the use of the literary works in Part 1, the authors go on to discuss the practical areas in Part 2. In Part 2, they present the different types of genres that can be employed in the classroom, including short stories, poetry, novels and longer works and drama. Each genre is discussed in a separate chapter. The first genre introduced in this part is short stories. The authors define short story as a genre, explain “event structure” and “discourse structure” as two main systems of narrative analysis, and make a comparison between the two. The authors provide tips for teachers who are considering using short stories in a class. It is suggested that these stories can be broken into chunks, with suggested tasks for each chunk.

Chapter 5 deals with poetry. Paran and Robinson refer to the common belief that many learners have about the difficulty of poetry due to the metaphorical and archaic nature of the language

used. However, they show in this chapter how poetry can be a helpful and interesting activity in the classroom. In this chapter, the authors concentrate on how to help learners deal with the language used in poetry and suggest certain activities to achieve this goal, as well as deal with sound in poetry. In Chapter 6, the authors explore the use of novels and longer works. The authors discuss the factors that affect the selection of certain texts in the class, how they can be introduced, and how to manage reading this kind of text. The chapter concludes with suggestions for activities to be used when choosing novels in the classroom. Chapter 7 covers the use of drama, with a chronological consideration of works from the 17th, 19th, 20th and 21st centuries by Shakespeare, Behn, Wilde, Fugard and Wertebaker. A list of useful websites that teachers can consult to obtain access to literary works is included at the end of the book.

In the final part of this book, the authors explore working with literature and film, as well as art and music. Chapter 8 explores the ways in which teachers can utilize the features of film in the classroom: for example, making use of the title sequence, teaching the metalanguage of film, comparing scenes from a film and a novel and discussing acting performance with learners. Chapter 9 suggests a variety of activities that integrate literature and art (mostly paintings and graphic novels). Music that is inspired by literary work can also be employed in the classroom, as shown in the last chapter in the book.

In general, I found this book to be a practical and helpful reference for EFL teachers, as the chapters are carefully contrived to focus on the use of a particular literature genre and the book provides a well-organized activity sequence. This book can be one of the few that provides a good guide to employ literary works in the EFL classroom. Paran and Robinson go beyond merely providing activities by establishing a background about issues in language and literature. Being aware of these issues appears to be helpful to teachers before they begin to utilize literature in the classroom. The authors consider the concerns and challenges that teachers might encounter in dealing with literary works and suggest practical tips to overcome them. The authors focus mainly on the literary works of authentic texts. However, it might be useful for teachers to employ graded readers, especially with learners who are not ready to read authentic literary texts. Graded readers have distinctive features that have been found to positively contribute to learners' vocabulary development. Uden, Schmitt, and Schmitt (2014) found that learners can move from reading graded readers to reading unsimplified novels. This is supported by McQuillan (2016) who suggested that learners can move from reading graded readers to reading more challenging texts, such as fiction books. To yield a significantly greater vocabulary learning, reading can be practiced in conjunction with listening (Webb & Chang, 2012). When it comes to using films that are based on literature, as suggested in the last part of the book, teachers could consider including subtitles as they enhance learners' comprehension (Hayati & Mohmedi, 2011). In summary, this book is useful and recommended for EFL teachers who are interested in making use of literary works in the classroom.

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