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"Teaching the Contemporary School Story in the English Language Classroom"

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1 <u>Introduction</u>

The school story, a genre that belongs to children's and young adults' literature, is rooted in Great Britain and has a long history. School stories had been enjoyed by millions of children and adults until the 1950s, when their eventual demise was officially proclaimed by P. W. Musgrave in his study, *From Brown to Bunter: The Life and Death of the School Story.* Although the genre was thought to be extinct, school stories continued to be written and read. Nowadays the genre enjoys great popularity again with the success of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Interestingly enough, the *Harry Potter* books contain many elements that were part of the traditional school stories.

As contemporary school stories attract thousands of young fans the question arises whether they should be integrated in foreign language teaching. There are many arguments in favour of teaching literature in general[1], but for a long time children's literature has not been perceived as what qualifies as 'literature'. Only gradually syllabuses are changing and popular fiction, song lyrics, children's literature or other forms of literature that are called 'literature with a small 'l'' are taught at school.[2] In this thesis my endeavour is to find ways of how to introduce children's literature, and in particular the school story, in EFL classrooms.

There is a considerable number of contemporary authors and researchers who take the teaching of literature in foreign-language classes into consideration. However, most of these authors either focus on teaching literature in general, or they concentrate on ways of teaching a particular text type. It is astonishing that hardly any author describes the teaching of children's literature and that teaching the school story is barely mentioned in any book or article. Therefore I am going to explore teaching this literary genre in the thesis. The paper aims to draw on a range of teaching methods and approaches available, and then to

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[1] See chapter 3.
[2] Cf. Pulverness, 1f.

generate ideas about how to apply or change these methods so that they are appropriate for teaching the school story. Since literature describing the genre usually lacks suggestions for teaching it, a considerable number of exercises and activities that may be helpful for teaching the school story are devised in this thesis.

The thesis is divided into four parts. In the first part I will concentrate on children's literature and the school story, its definition and historical development. In order to link the school story with teaching I am then going to present arguments why it is beneficial to teach literature, and especially the school story, in EFL settings. The third part will be of a more practical nature. The school story appears in many different literary forms, such as novels, short stories or poems. Apart from the more traditional forms, school stories can also be found as films or as radio plays. Each form of the school story will be linked with a particular teaching approach and additionally, numerous exercises will be designed. In other words, my main objective is to find teaching approaches and different forms of the school story that fit together.

Two approaches that are often mentioned in connection with teaching literature are extensive and intensive reading. Whereas the extensive approach suggests that pupils should read large quantities of material the intensive approach involves close study of texts and features of written English. Both approaches will be taken into consideration in this thesis. Moreover, other approaches to teaching literature, like 'literature as content' or 'the personal approach' will be analysed in order to find out about their value of being integrated into EFL teaching.

One form of literature that is often viewed with distrust by pupils and teachers is poetry, because figurative language is believed to be too difficult for foreign language learners to cope with. Therefore, I asked myself the question whether there is a teaching approach that aims at a student-centred and creative use of literary texts. In my opinion, exercises designed according to such an approach would definitely be beneficial for students, as they may facilitate dealing with poetry considerably.

Another chapter of the thesis will be related to young learners and picture books. A trend of introducing picture books in foreign-language teaching is gradually developing. Thus, I am also going to have a look at this kind of literature and produce several activities and exercises for teaching EFL at primary and secondary level. A further section of the thesis that concentrates on young learners will be about listening to school stories. Listening is very demanding for young learners because of their shorter concentration span. As children generally have an urge to move an approach that combines learning with physical actions might be useful in this context.

Moreover, an approach that is worth to be considered is called open learning environments or work-stations and was invented in the 20th century by Helen Parkhurst. As books or articles that focus on linking the approach to teaching literature are nowhere to be found my objective is to figure out whether it can be applied to teaching the school story.

The last section of the thesis will be a practice report about four lessons taught in a secondary modern school. The aim of this part is to find out whether my assumptions about teaching the school story are true and whether some theoretical approaches and methods are as useful in practical teaching as they sound in theory.

2 Children's literature and the genre of the school story

2.1 Children's literature

Children's literature is an area of writing that is remarkable in many ways. Firstly, it is classified as one of the roots of western culture; secondly, it is enjoyed immensely by adults as well as by children; and thirdly, it has 'exercised huge talents over hundreds of years' (Hunt, 1). Furthermore, it often includes words and picture and it merges with other art forms and modes, like video or oral storytelling. It fulfils the purpose that 'literature' is supposed to serve: 'it absorbs, it possesses and is possessed, its demands are very immediate, involving and powerful' (Hunt, 1). The characters that one encountered in children's books during one's childhood are part of most people's psyche. According to George Orwell

> [i]t is probable that many people who would consider themselves extremely sophisticated and 'advanced' are actually carrying through life an imaginative background which they acquired in childhood. (Orwell, 114)

Children's books are important in many different respects. They are significant socially, educationally, and commercially. Yet, defining their borders is a challenging task. Karin Lesnik-Oberstein defines children's literature in the following way:

> The definition of children's literature lies at the heart of its endeavour: it is a category of books the existence of which absolutely depends on supposed relationships with a particular reading audience: children. (Lesnik-Oberstein, 17)

Children's literature is by no means a field which has clear-cut boundaries and straightforward definitions. In the definition given above the concepts of 'children' and 'literature' still need to be explained. As stated by many scholars 'childhood' is a term that is defined in many different ways by various cultures.

Thus, a culture's notion of childhood is reflected very closely in the books intended for the young readership. Peter Hunt even goes so far as to claim that 'concepts of childhood differ not only culturally but in units as small as the family, and they differ, often inscrutably, over time' (Hunt, 5). He proposes that the most adequate generalization may be that childhood is 'the period of life which the immediate culture thinks of as being free of responsibility and susceptible to education' (Hunt, 5). In addition, children are not mature physically and psychologically and they have less life-experience than adults. In summary, researchers have not reached general and complete agreement on what the term 'childhood' really denotes. Moreover, it definitely needs to be mentioned that the concept is subject to change over time.

The definition of the term 'childhood' is as blurred as the meaning of the concept of 'literature'. Hunt claims that the characteristics of literature, which is being intellectual and exclusive, are not only inappropriate, but completely undesirable for children's literature. Therefore, the concept of 'literature' is simply not compatible with the term 'children'. In other words, Hunt emphasises that 'children's literature' is a total contradiction in terms.[3]

Books that fit into the scheme of 'literature' described above, in other words books that are intellectual and exclusive, are most likely to remain unread by children. Children's books usually tackle topics that are interesting for the particular audience and the level of language used is easier than in literary works intended for adults. As a consequence, children's books were for a long time regarded as being unfit for the patriarchal world of cultural and literary values.[4] Literature produced for children has been viewed as being worth less than that intended for adults. Tuchman has investigated manuscripts of the nineteenth-century and he found out that in publishing houses they were ranked in the descending order of 'high prestige', 'men's specialities', 'mixed specialities' and 'women's specialities'. As most children's books were and are still primarily the domain of women writers, they fell into the latter category.

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[3] Cf. Hunt, 6.
[4] Cf. Hunt, 6.

What is more, the fact that children's fiction is commercial fiction makes it suspect, as money is always regarded as being impure.[5]

Thus, children's books were hardly acknowledged by literary scholars and critics until recently. Hunt suggests that children's books should be removed from the literary hierarchy. It would be much better to treat them as a separate group of texts 'without reference (at least in principle) to 'literature' as it is known and misunderstood' (Hunt, 7). Lesnik-Oberstein comes to the conclusion that

> [t]he two constituent terms - 'children' and 'literature' - within the label 'children's literature' cannot be separated and traced back to original independent meanings, and then reassembled to achieve a greater understanding of what 'children's literature' is. Within the label the two terms totally qualify each other and transform each other's meaning for the purposes of the field. In short: the 'children' of children's literature are constituted as specialised ideas of 'children' […]. (Lesnik-Oberstein, 17)

In other words, children's literature needs to be looked at as a significant system of its own, 'not as a lesser or peripheral part of 'high' culture', which was still the case some years ago (Hunt, 7).

What is noteworthy is the unprecedented growth in the attention given to children's literature in the last decades. Authors of children's books, like Philip Pullman and J.K. Rowling, are topping best-seller lists and win literary prizes from which they would have been excluded by definition not long ago. It is recognizable that there is a shift in cultural attitudes towards children's literature. The status of children's literature as an academic field has been substantially enhanced. Especially in the USA and Australia, there are major research libraries and programmes dealing with children's literature.[6] A growing number of scholars, books, journals and conferences are devoted to this subject now. Moreover, there is a significant increase in the use of children's literature in Education studies.[7] Throughout the English-speaking world the field is taught at undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral level. To sum this up, the diverse

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[5] Cf. Gosling, *History,* 21.
[6] Cf. Gosling, *History,* 22.
[7] Cf. Butler, 1.

and vigorous area of children's literature is no longer considered a marginal area of English studies.

Children's literature is an umbrella term that includes many different genres. Among them are fantasy stories, animal stories, ghost stories and a lot more. This thesis focuses on the genre of the school story as it is of particular relevance to teaching.

2.2 The School Story

2.2.1 The genre

The term 'school story' denotes a genre in which the majority of the action centres on a school. It is important to note that the school is the raison d'être of the story and it is by no means enough to call a story 'school story' if there are just a few scenes set in, or a limited number of references to school. Sheila Ray claims that the school in a school story functions as 'a microcosm of the larger world' (Ray, 348). The most important characters in the school story, the pupils, learn 'how to integrate successfully into a community and to reconcile the demands of self and society' (Grenby, 113).

Conversely, Pat Pinsent states that the world of school stories can also be an alternative to the larger world.[8] Ray argues that students have 'power, responsibilities and an importance they do not have in the world outside' (Ray, 348). Boys and girls are full citizens in this self-contained world of school. At home a child is just a subordinate member of the family, and the parents are responsible to the law, they are the householders and decision-makers. At school, however, the child stands on its own feet and it is responsible for itself.[9]

A significant aspect of the school story is the focus on the relationships and interactions among children, as well as the teacher-student relationships. Ray mentions that

> a school story offers a setting in which young people are thrown together and in which relationships between older and younger children, between members of the peer group and between children and adults can be explored. (Ray, 348)

One of the central themes of many school stories is the tension between 'submission and defiance, authority and autonomy' (Grenby, 113). To put this differently, the issues of authority and obedience lie at the heart of the school

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[8] Cf. Pinsent, 8.
[9] Cf. Townsend, 111.

story. Usually the teachers wield the power, while the students are forced to obey, most of the time coerced by the threat of punishment. As long as the students abide by the basic rules they are autonomous agents, free to make their own decisions, but as soon as they challenge their teachers' authority they have to face the consequences and their freedom is restricted.

Matthew O. Grenby summarises what may be called the three basic criteria of the school story. She points out that

> [the school story] is set almost entirely in school; it takes the relationships between the scholars and their teachers as its primary focus; and it contains attitudes and adventures which are unique to school life. (Grenby, 90)

Stories set in schools and designed specifically for children have a really long history. School anecdotes amongst the Sumerians of Mesopotamia were inscribed onto clay in about 2000 BC. These compositions are remarkable historically, but all the more so, because they greatly resemble the texts used in medieval English. These so-called *colloquia scholastica*, schoolbooks used for studying Latin or English, often consisted of dialogues between masters and pupils or between fellow schoolboys. One rather late example is *Pueriles Confabulatiunculae: or Children's Dialogues,* written in Latin by Evaldus Gallus that appeared in English by 1617. What is so significant about this document which had basically been a book of instruction is that it fulfils the three basic criteria of the school story that were mentioned above.[10]

The school story as a genre, British in origin, developed in the mid-18th to mid-19th centuries. There is still a discrepancy among critics on the question about what was the first school story. Many critics claim that the genre dates back to 1857, when *Tom Brown's Schooldays,* a novel written by Thomas Hughes, was published. However, a considerable number of recent researchers argue strongly that the first school story was written as early as 1749. It was called *The Governess; or, Little Female Academy* written by Sarah Fielding. Sims and

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[10] Cf. Grenby, 88ff.

Clare point out that Sarah Fielding's school stories are collections of heavily didactic stories that laid stress on correct moral behaviour.[11]

Naturally, because of the fact that schools were segregated by gender at that time, school stories were either written about boys or girls, and the readers were as rigidly divided by gender as the schools themselves. Interestingly enough, novels for boys and for girls were often produced by the same writers, for example by Maria Edgeworth or Matilda Betham-Edwards. The settings, mostly small private or village establishments, as well as the messages, which usually had their focus on the consequences of disobedience and repentance, were similar. In addition, the plots frequently involved a deathbed scene. The question why the majority of the authors of these tales was female might be found in the answer that for women it was easier to publish this kind of work while other avenues were closed to them. Incidentally, scholars often mention that the reason is the association of women with the 'maternal' function of education of the young.[12]

The school story was a Victorian creation; a product of the educational developments in Britain in Victorian times. While in Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* a former grammar school was transformed into a modern public school[13] for boys of the rising middle class,

> girls' education […] remained largely 'at the manners and accomplishments' stage, constrained by an ideology that saw women's role as essentially private and domestic and therefore not requiring any academic training. (Zipes, 407)

Only as late as in 1870 an Education Act marked the first official step towards elementary education for all children, including girls on equal terms with boys. Nevertheless, boys and girls were not educated together; in other words the schools remained single-sex schools. Therefore, boys' and girls' school stories

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[11] Cf. Sims and Clare, 380.
[12] Cf. Zipes, 407.
[13] In Britain a public school actually denotes the most exclusive kind of private school, institutions generally founded in the nineteenth century or earlier and drawing their pupils from the social elite. […] Most public schools, as well as other less prestigious private schools, were single-sex (cf. Grenby, 88).

developed in two different ways.[14] At this point it needs to be added that despite boys' and girls' school stories show many differences there is a considerable number of elements both types of the school story have in common. For example, school stories frequently revolved around a public school, which is one typical feature of the genre. Other elements that often recur in the school story are listed below.

1. There is a tendency in school stories to start with a train journey. During that journey new children are introduced and old friends meet again. This specific use of the train could be described as a chronotope.[15]

> The train marks the transition between the parental territory (as it exists in time and space) of the home, and the teacher/pupil territory of the school. It is a kind of liminal time-space zone, in which, by the inevitably scattered nature of authority, no one is in total control and associations of characters are provisional. The chronotope of the school story, then, normally encompasses three distinct domains of time and space: home (often also holiday), train journey and school. (Pinsent, 13)

The journey shows the boundaries between home and school territory. If parents appear at school, there is general agreement that the authorities allowed them to be present at school, an 'alien country where their daughters and the staff are the inhabitants' (Pinsent, 12). Although one can observe that in more recently written school stories pupils have been delivered by car to school, some contemporary writers still try to maintain the 'train tradition'. A contemporary author, J. K. Rowling, starts her *Harry Potter* novels with a train ride to school. In addition, Anne Digby upholds the tradition in at least some of her *Trebizon* books.

2. Another typical beginning of school stories is the introduction of one or more new students. This is especially characteristic of school stories that appear in a series. The main aim of this introduction is to provide a way in for the reader who is not familiar with the story, whereas readers who already know

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[14] Cf. Zipes, 407.

[15] The term chronotope, defined by Mikhail Bakhtin as 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature', and more concisely translated by Maria Nikolajeva as the indivisible 'unity of time and space' in a work of literature, is seen by Nikolajeva as providing 'an appropriate approach to genres', since 'specific forms of chronotope are unique for particular genres'. (Pinsent, 13)

the characters may 'feel a sense of superiority to the character(s) concerned and enjoy a kind of vicarious meeting of old friends' (Pinsent, 13).

3. It is very often the case that the school itself functions as an additional character in the book. Each school has its own ideals and ethos and it tries to mould its pupils into it. Numerous authors of school stories for both girls and boys have a tendency to use the same school for many different books. One author that exemplifies this trend is Enid Blyton. In her *Malory Towers* series and in the *Twins at St. Clare's* books there is one school that appears in each and every novel.

4. School life, which means events internal to the school, constitutes much of the plot. Such events may be preparations for musical or dramatic productions, selection for sports teams, and relationships between pupils and staff. All this could be seen as a separate world, in contrast to the life outside, which implies past pupils, parents, etc. Due to the boarding-school environment, pupils live in a rather isolated world and they are not directly involved in activities that take place outside the school.

5. An advocacy of tolerance for others' abilities and differences is to be found much more often in girls' school stories than in boys' books.

6. The teachers in school stories tend to know their pupils very well and oftentimes they display a high degree of care for 'their' pupils. This does not exclude that they never make mistakes or become objects of comedy. Notably the French teachers frequently serve as 'stock characters'. Generally, however, in girls' school stories there is a tendency of stereotyping less than in boys' stories.

7. In almost any school story the adherence to a school 'code of honour'[16] is a fundamental principle, involving 'the avoidance of 'meanness' or 'sneakiness'

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[16] The code of honour is 'a set of rules or principles governing a community based on a set of rules or ideals that define what constitutes hono[u]rable behavio[u]r within that community. The use of an hono[u]r code depends on the idea that people (at least within the community) can be trusted to act hono[u]rably. Those who are in violation of the hono[u]r code can be subject to

and a hatred of snobbery, whether this arises from social class or academic excellence' (Pinsent, 14). What is also emphasised is the wrongness of taking advantage of being friends with those in positions of power.

8. What is noteworthy with regard to girls' school stories is the representation of gender In fact, it is very often an ambivalent one. According to Pinsent the ambivalence reflects 'something of the situation actually extant with 'real' boarding schools during the period concerned' (Pinsent, 14). On the one hand the single-sex schools make it possible for girls to excel at schoolwork and sport, but on the other hand the girls are constantly reminded of their roles as wives and mothers for which they have to prepare. Jo Bettany is the only Brent-Dyer character who is capable of combining all these qualities. When she is grown-up she is depicted as a successful writer and mother of eleven children. Therefore she stands as a model to later generations of *Chalet School* girls. However, Gosling mentions that some books also stress that women have other options than marriage. They emphasise that education is the key to success.[17] Another noticeable feature in girls' school stories is the use of boyish-sounding names. This characteristic is definitely prevalent in many girls' books. The first name of Brent-Dyer's character mentioned above is Jo, which might be an allusion to Louisa May Alcott's heroine in *Little Women.* There is no doubt that this name is androgynous, as indeed that of another Chalet School girl who is named 'The Robin'.

9. Friendships within a relatively small subgroup of pupils is a feature common of the school story in both, its male and female manifestations.

10. The 'bildungsroman' has some features in common with the school story. To explain that, the characters grow up and mature as the reader progresses through the series, which is less characteristic of the boys' series than of the girls' books. This is particularly evident if one contrasts Anthony Buckeridge's *Jennings* books, which are boys' school stories with Elinor Brent-Dyer's or Elsie J. Oxenham's books for girls.

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various sanctions, including expulsion from the institution.' Cf. NationMaster Encyclopedia. 11 Dec. 2008 (http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Honor-code)
[17] Cf. Gosling, *Significance,* 28.

11. The vast majority of boys' and girls' school stories written prior to the Second World War were set in boarding schools that were patronised by the upper class and the upper middle class, even though the readership of school stories included a substantial number of children from 'lower' classes.

After having provided a detailed account of several similarities boys' and girls' stories share, the differences between the two subgenres will be examined next. In what follows, a consideration of the differing developments of the boys' in comparison to girls' stories is undertaken.

2.2.2 Boys' school stories

Tom Brown's Schooldays has remained in print for 150 years and many critics tend to claim that it is the oldest traditional boys' school story. According to many critics it is the 'corner-stone of the genre' (Auchmuty, 57) and its huge popularity helped to establish the genre 'in the affections of its juvenile market' (Zipes, 407). A second, very different school story was published a year after Thomas Hughes' novel, namely Frederic William Farrar's *Eric; or, Little by Little.* This new novel showed the flexibility of the genre. Eric perpetuated a rather sentimental approach, while Hughes depicted the muscular Christian ideal[18]. Thus, Farrar's story did not become as popular as Hughes'.

From this point on the boys' school story took three paths. Firstly, there was the 'penny dreadful' melodrama, which consisted of stories or serials in papers and magazines. The first penny dreadful school story was *Boys of Bircham School*, by George Emmett. Some were later on published in book form. Secondly, the evangelical school story with its close friendships and delicate heroes developed. Actually, this branch of the genre survived up to the mid-20th century in, for instance, the work of Dorothy Dennison and Helen S. Humphries.[19] Finally, there was the form that established itself as the

> paradigmatic school story, which treated in a predominantly entertaining way the various facets of the schoolboy code of honour in the context of sport, fagging[20], fights, dormitory feasts, and breaking rules, with or without the addition of adventure or mystery elements. (Zipes, 408)

Based on this 'formula', an enormous number of boys' school stories was published until the beginning of the 20th century. Talbot Baines Reed, Harold Avery, F. Warren Bell, Richard Bird, Hylton Cleaver and R. A. H. Goodyear are

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[18] Muscular Christianity can be defined as '[t]he practice and opinion of those Christians who believe that it is a part of religious duty to maintain a vigorous condition of the body, and who therefore approve of athletic sports and exercises as conductive to good health, good morals, and right feelings in religious matters.' Cf. Webster dictionary Online. 11 Dec 2008 (http://webster-dictionary.net)

[19] Cf. Zipes, 407.

[20] fagging: a younger pupil in a British public school required to perform certain menial tasks for, and submit to the hazing of, and older pupil (cf. Flexner, 692).

some of the authors who fascinated generations of boys from the 1880s to the 1940s. Benjamin Watson claims that there is a huge difference between pre-war and post-war school stories and he speaks of a 'solid wall':

> The former celebrate English public schools as noble institutions engaged in character building for the good of the nation. The latter deride the stuffiness of public school values and tend to show the schoolboy as the victim rather than the beneficiary of the system. (Watson, ix)

He also looked at the taste of the readership, which changed drastically in the 1920s. Before the war the protagonists' nature was clear and straightforward. They were either good or bad and nothing in between. The good characters usually overcame the bad ones so that the social order was re-established. In the 1920s, the taste of readers changed 'under the realisation that fixed standards of right and wrong had perished in the trenches […] [and] moral ambiguity […] descended upon popular literature' (Watson, x).

The more elite boys' school stories became quite critical of school, sardonic and cynical. These stories rather aimed at an adult readership. At the same time a great number of non-elite school stories that made fun of the genre was published. They appeared in pop-culture magazines like the *Magnet* or the *Gem.*

Watson claims that post-war stories were 'caustic, uninhibited, and unconventional compared to the pre-war model' (Watson, XII). Because of that the number of readers declined drastically and only the press appreciated the new stories as they provided opportunity to attack outdated elitism.

> Post war school stories […] were far less successful, either commercially or artistically. Foreign Anglophiles found no charm in them, mothers and sisters were shocked, Old Boys angered. The press alone appreciated each new work as a fresh occasion for attacking outmoded elitism. Debates raged in newspapers over the true extent of anarchy, sadism, communism, and homosexuality in the institutions to which parents confided their sons. (Watson, XVII)

Although the number of boys' school stories published has dropped, the subgenre still exists. It is not extinct, but fewer school stories take place in boys'

schools. Nowadays the setting of most school stories is a mixed school, aiming at male and female readers alike. Many critics take the view that only the boys' school story is truly canonical. Sue Sims, one of the authors of *The Encyclopaedia of Girls' School Stories,* demands the acknowledgement of the girls' school story as being an equally important subgenre as the schoolboy novels.[21]

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[21] Cf. Pinsent, 10.

2.2.3 Girls' school stories

The subgenre of girls' school stories arose in parallel with the introduction of secondary education for British girls, from the late nineteenth century onwards. From the beginning of the genre girls from all classes read the books. At this time girls' lives varied widely. Upper class daughters were usually educated at home for a few years. Then they attended local day schools for two or three years, followed by a boarding school education. In contrast to this, lower-middle-class girls went to small, local day schools for four or five years. Nevertheless, school stories were enjoyed by those girls who were educated at home, but also by girls from lower-middle-class and working-class backgrounds. The reason for this phenomenon may be that '[school] fiction provided them with a common imaginary world' (Gosling, *History*, 3). The lesson these schoolgirl stories taught was the desirability of traditional images of femininity.[22] In L.T. Meade's books, for example *A Sweet Girl Graduate* or *Betty: A School Girl,* established principles of femininity, such as self-denial or caring for the others, were underlined. By the end of the nineteenth century, middle-class schoolgirls gained access to a type of schooling that deliberately aimed to parallel more closely boys' institutions. Mitchell describes the plots of the school stories of the time which were more overtly feminist, including Geraldine Mockler's *The Four Miss Whittingtons* or Elinor D. Adams' *A Queen Among Girls*, in the following way:

> […] schools encourage a girl to accept family responsibility and learn domestic skills while she gains the education to become a self-supporting and responsible woman. At the psychological level - as light reading - they supply the fantasy that one can have it all: Parental love and true womanliness without giving up ambition, success, and […] independence. (Mitchell, 83)

After 1900, girls' school stories began to be set in boarding schools. One example is Jessie Mansergh's *Tom and Some Other Girls: A Public School Story,* published in 1901. The number of readers increased tremendously at the

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[22] Cf. Gosling, *History,* 1ff.

beginning of the century and reason for this might be found in the fact that girls were encouraged to read and study literature because it was supposed to help them to develop their character.[23] The beginning of the genre's mass popularity was in 1906, when Angela Brazil's *The Fortunes of Philippa* was published. The key reason for her popularity may be the adoption of her readers' viewpoints and vocabulary. The author's main concern was not to instruct her readers, but rather to express the girls' tolerance of one another. Therefore, Brazil's books attracted a great number of juvenile females. Brazil can be counted as one of the five major writers of the genre, whose books were appreciated internationally. The other major authors are Elsie J. Oxenham, Dorita Fairlie Burce, Elinor M. Brent-Dyer and Enid Blyton.

The single-sex boarding school was an object of extreme criticism in the second half of the 20th century.[24] It was criticised for being 'so clearly a product and reflection of bourgeois capitalism, and a most effective instrument in its perpetuation' (Frith, 115). In other words, the school could provoke envy and desire for what it represented in terms of class privilege. However, this criticism can by no means explain why the subgenre remained popular until the 21st century. Its continuing popularity cannot be due to the real representation of girls' school lives, since the experiences of those characters have very little in common with the situation in contemporary schools. Gosling points out that girls' school stories contain ideas or lessons that are still as relevant and important now as they were at the beginning of the 20th century.[25] These ideas presented to the female reader's subconscious are, for example, that girls can succeed without their parents, they can build successful relationships with other girls, girls can play sport, succeed academically and that they are people in their own right. Lessons learned are, for instance, that education is the key to success or that one has to learn to fit into the community and to obey the law. Some girls' school stories also mention that all girls are equal, regardless of family background, and that women have other options as well as marriage.[26] Acceptable alternatives to marriage are being single or living with another

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[23] Cf. Gosling, *History,* 7.
[24] cf. Gosling, *Significance,* 1.
[25] Cf. Gosling, *Significance,* 29.
[26] Cf. Gosling, *Significance,* 28.

woman, which is for example depicted in Brent-Dyer's and Blyton's books. When Brent-Dyer's butch girl Tom leaves school she works with boys in London, and Blyton's tomboy Bill plans to run a riding school with her friend Clarissa. Being single or living with another woman is portrayed as being absolutely acceptable. Of course, such descriptions of female characters challenged 20th century heterosexual norms.[27] Thus, some critics believe that the genre is queer.

Actually, girls' school stories are still read by 21st century readers although most of them attend coeducational schools today. However, many ideas that are presented in girls' schools stories have not lost their relevance until now. This might be one of the reasons why the stories continue to appeal on a global scale.

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[27] Cf. Gosling, *Significance,* 18ff.

2.2.4 Schools stories since 1970

According to Pinsent (17) 'changes in society frequently act as the triggers of changes in literature written for children'. Richards comments that 'it is generally acknowledged that popular culture holds up a mirror to the mind set of the nation' (Richards, 1). At this point the question may arise why this is relevant for the school story. Pinsent claims that if school changes in the real world, it is represented differently in books, films and television dramas featuring it.[28] Interestingly enough, this was not the case during the heyday of boarding school fiction, between the two world wars. At this time the majority of British school children were attending day schools, but because of the social cachet attached to the boarding school, as well as 'the advantage given to the author by the virtual 'island', remote from urban society, that this kind of school provided', especially the spatial distance between young characters and their parents, the stories revolving around boarding schools lingered on until the 1970s.[29] Only then did society become conscious of equality issues and realized that the school story had to take on a different form.

Day-school fiction, depicting a mixed-sex environment, working class and non-white characters, was on the increase. Realism and 'issues-driven' fiction allowed the incursion of the outside world, and the boarding-school novel was not very appropriate for that. The paradigm of school as a microcosm of society was perhaps more obvious when the school was set in the wider community. An example is Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (1974), which criticises the practices of an American day school run by a Catholic religious order on the one hand, but can on the other hand also be read as a satire on Mafia-like organizations within wider society.[30] Additionally, recent school-based novels tackle typical teenage problems, like drugs, sexuality, teenage pregnancy, smoking, sex or eating disorders, which are topics that are common to be found

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[28] Cf. Pinsent, 17.
[29] Cf. Pinsent, 17.
[30] Cf. Pinsent, 18.

in young adult novels.[31] These stories are usually set in a day-school context. It is apparent that these kinds of school stories are very different to the earlier school novels. Nevertheless, the 'code of honour' and aspects like stereotyping are still evident.[32] An example of gender stereotyping can be found in the recently published novel *Flour Babies* by Anne Fine. When the annual school science fair comes round the teacher announces several options for his class' contribution to the fair. The options are making a project on textiles, nutrition, domestic economy, child development or consumer studies. One male student argues that he is not going to vote for any option as this is mere 'girls' stuff' (Fine, 12).

In the second half of the 20th century many critics attacked the school story vigorously and they lost no opportunity to draw attention to its lack of realism, false values and irrelevance. Therefore librarians and teachers began to remove the British school stories from school and library shelves. Unsurprisingly, this caused publishers to curtail their lists although there would still have been a reading market for them. In an article about the *Encyclopadaedia of School Stories* Rosemary Auchmuty writes:

> The British school story, with its single-sex cast and its emphasis on outmoded values like honour, loyalty, and playing the game, has long been the target of scorn and satire. Dismissed by critics, deplored by librarians and teachers, it began to be removed from publishers' lists […] (Auchmuty, *The Encyclopaedia,* 147).

By the 1970s critics felt that the school story was in decline and its death was in sight. Quigly, a critic at the time concerned, argued strongly that the world of common values which the school story represented was not appropriate for the time any more.[33]

> The genre was finished. It had relied on readers with ideas in common, shared experiences, above all a coherent attitude to the world around it; and schools now differed, writers differed, above all readers differed - from one another, and from what they had been before. In the genre of school story, what counted was certainty and self-confidence, insularity,

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[31] Cf. Gosling, *History,* 19.
[32] Cf. Pinsent, 18.
[33] Cf. Zipes, 410.

cheerfulness, and acceptance of the accepted; and in a world grown so much more self-conscious and uncertain, so much more international, gloomy, and self-questioning, with schools that were changing almost out of all recognition, it was impossible to keep it going. (Quigly, 276)

The school story's demise was also announced in the title of P. W. Musgrave's 1985 study *From Brown to Bunter: The Life and Death of the School Story*. When the school story was confidently claimed dead by critics, along came J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Since the launch of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in 1997, six more books have been published. Although Rowling's novels combine several genres, they are first and foremost school stories. The *Harry Potter* series reverts to a great extent to the typology of the earlier school novels; for example the boarding-school environment is chosen as a setting. Furthermore, the plots in Rowling's books focus on similar topics as the traditional stories did.[34] Morality and honesty have always been some of the most important principles in schools stories and they are still among the most important in a closed community. Still, it needs to be mentioned that the *Harry Potter* novels are set in a mixed school, as most British schools are coeducational today.

To conclude, although the school story has undergone fundamental changes, it appears to be beyond challenge that the school story is neither dead nor in decline. Traditional school stories still attract 21st century readers, but the popularity of these narrations is definitely less than that of the *Harry Potter* novels. The next chapter will show that there are numerous similarities between the traditional school story and the recently published *Harry Potter* books.

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[34] Cf. Zipes, 410.

2.2.5 The tradition revived

As already mentioned, there is no difficulty in locating many instances that resemble the traditional exponents of the school story within the Harry Potter books. Sims (17) admits that Hogwarts, the boarding school Harry Potter attends, 'departs from the traditional [school story] only in two small points: it is mixed; and it is magical'.

The first very typical element in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is the beginning with the train chronotope. Once Harry has managed to get on the train everything resembles the earlier school stories very much: trunks are being stowed away, children are taking their farewells from families, prefects are having their own compartments, new students, who are to become Harry's best friends, are introduced.

Hogwarts, the boarding school, shows central features of public schools. The most obvious one is perhaps the house system, 'where loyalty to one's house is paramount' (Steege, 145). As early as in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, published in 1857, the house system in a school plays a major role. For both, Harry and Tom Brown, it would be a tragedy to be in a different house. It is not only a temporary association, but rather constitutes a large part of one's identity. In Rowling's book the connection of identity and house affiliation is emphasised by describing Harry's fear of becoming a Slytherin rather than a Gryffindor. In the narrative a magic hat determines to which house a wizard is assigned to. Being in a different house would probably have meant for Harry to become an evil wizard rather than a good one. This is a typical school novel message, namely that 'the house moulds individual character even as individuals help mould the character of the house' (Steege, 147).

As it is common in a great number of public school novels, from *Tom Brown's Schooldays* to the *Harry Potter* books, the reader is presented with a school that is a world all to itself. It is completely isolated from outside influences. Hogwarts, a huge and ancient castle, is surrounded by forests and a lake. In

this way, public school life is often described as an experience where the 'outside world is far less important than the microcosm of the institution' (Steege, 145). While the pupils are at this isolated school, the 'outside world largely drops away and the hero can concentrate on his own exploits and development' (Steege, 145).

Another crucial feature in public school literature is the stress on games, most often football, rugby or cricket. In *Tom Brown's Schooldays* a boy's ability at sports is key to his acceptance by others. The *Harry Potter* books follow the school story tradition of making sports a central theme very closely. In the series the most popular and vivid scenes take place on the playing field. Although Harry plays Quidditch, a newly invented game, it has similar functions as football has in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Both novels depict kinds of sport that are team-oriented and both protagonists are admired by their schoolmates for their prowess at sports.

Furthermore, the value of the boarding school experience is described in both books when Harry and Tom talk about their greatest fears: not living up to the school standards, breaking the rules and as a consequence being expelled. The threat of expulsion is really effective as the students' love for school is usually great and all pupils desperately desire to be a part of the school. One may ask oneself what the reasons for the schools being adored so much by their pupils are. The lessons such places teach are certainly building friendships, proving to be a good friend and showing one's true character. Harry Potter frequently faces ridicule, resentment, contempt or unjustified accusations of wrongdoings from others in the books. Repeatedly Rowling, Blyton as well as many other authors of school stories, portray their characters as people who endure adversity, but ultimately win respect and friendships.[35]

In terms of today's audience, Rowling's books modernise the school story tradition so that it is pleasant to read for contemporary readers. A genre, made popular by books like *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, has been revivified by *Harry Potter*, a story about a wizard, who is nevertheless in the first place a pupil, a

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[35] Cf. Steege, 149 f.

character in a typical school story. The type of school presented is a coeducational institution, the student body is ethnically diverse and individuality is important.

The fact that Rowling's books are loved by children and read all over the world proves that the genre of the school story is still alive. I firmly believe that school stories will never die out as children will always be educated and school will continue to make up a large part of their lives. Therefore school is present in a considerable number of children's books as it simply represents part of pupils' worlds and children desire to read about something that is familiar to them. This is the reason why I am of the opinion that school stories should definitely be included in the school curriculum. There are some teachers who argue that literature only plays a minor role in language teaching, but there are several reasons why literature should undoubtedly be a subject in the English classroom, as will be explained in the next chapter.

3 <u>The significance of teaching literature in the language classroom</u>

For quite a long time the importance of teaching literature in foreign-language classes remained unchallenged. A truly educated person had to be familiar with a specific canon of classic pieces of English literature. This literary canon had consisted for many years until its relevance for teaching was called into question. Teaching literature was suddenly regarded as being superfluous, especially by the supporters of a communicative teaching method. Instead of engaging with novels or plays students should rather be prepared to be able to communicate properly in specific situations. Teachers primarily aimed at providing pupils with the language needed for getting by in foreign countries. Thus, training students to be able to ask for the way, reading forms or time schedules and understanding the menu were considered vital. There is no doubt that these are serious matters a language learner must be capable of, but one needs to question whether foreign language teaching should include more issues than just preparing pupils to get by in foreign countries.[36] Moreover, during the last 30 years the study of English for specific purposes (ESP), for example technical or legal English, has gained more importance. The emphasis has been on the spoken more than on the written language, which has also severely challenged the relevance of literature teaching.[37] For these reasons the value of teaching literature to foreign language learners undoubtedly needs to be reconsidered.

Before taking the advantages of teaching literature into account, the distinction between 'the study of literature and the use of literature as resource' has to be clarified (Carter and Long, 3). The study of literature is an academic approach to reading literature, involving literary concepts, conventions and metalanguage. Students should obtain qualifications in literary studies and they ought to be competent in using literary terms and concepts in order to write and talk about literature. What is more, the students are required to study 'information about

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[36] Cf. Bredella, 49; Nünnig and Surkamp, 12.
[37] Cf. Carter and Long, 1.

the target language, its traditions and conventions, its particular heritage, the nature of the influences' and the relation between texts, authors and contexts of a particular literary culture (Carter and Long, 3). One of the positive sides of this approach is that students view a literary text not as an isolated work, but rather as integral part of a culture, influenced by historical, social and ideological contexts. Besides, literature is understood as a coherent body of texts and connections can be drawn between the various works of a period.[38] This approach is mostly used at university level and is only sparsely found in secondary education. As the focus of this paper is on teaching literature to pupils in secondary schools, there will be more emphasis on the use of literature as a resource.

Although literature as a resource is a less academic approach it is still a serious way to read literature. While the study of literature centres on literature itself, the use of literature as a resource is keen on making literature a trigger for interesting language exercises. Rather than concentrating on the development of 'literary competence'[39] a course at secondary level might stress the value of a combination of literature and language teaching. Nevertheless, if teachers use literature as a resource from time to time, it is possible that some students start to acquire 'literary competence' simply through being exposed to works of literature and tasks related to it.

The second distinction that ought to be explained is that between 'knowledge about literature' and 'knowledge of literature' (Carter and Long, 4). Knowledge about literature refers to learning facts about literary terms, contexts, authors, dates, etc. by heart. This accumulation of facts does not automatically result in the ability to interpret a text or in a more responsive reading. Still, it is often prerequisite to have some background knowledge before one reads a work of literature. For example, if students try to read sonnets it is vital that they learned about Shakespeare, the language of the time, and the structure of the sonnet in advance.

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[38] Cf. Carter and Long, 3.
[39] Effective readers of a literary text possess 'literary competence', in that they have an implicit understanding of, and familiarity with, certain conventions which allow them to take the words on the page of a play or other literary work and convert them into literary meanings (cf. Lazar, 12).

Knowledge of literature focuses on the text itself and not so much on facts about the text. Approaches that focus on knowledge of literature, for example student-centred or activity-based methods, aim to lead to 'a high level of personal response and involvement' (Carter and Long, 4). This paper will primarily concentrate on exploring ways of fostering knowledge of literature, of various possibilities to combine literature and language teaching.

3.1 Reasons for using literature in class

It comes as no surprise that in foreign-language classes time is restricted and the teacher is required to consider carefully how he or she organises the lessons. The teacher has to make decisions about what to teach in class on the basis of the national curriculum. Although the national curriculum determines that literature should be part of EFL many teachers tend to leave literary topics out and put more emphasis on other topics, like for example on oral communication. In addition, in the Austrian school system there is no centralised examination that tackles questions about literature. Hence it is clear that one must reconsider whether literature is useful for teaching in secondary education. There are several positive aspects of literature teaching, which will be mentioned below.

3.1.1 Motivating material and personal involvement

According to Jennifer Hill the aspect of motivation is the most important justification for integrating literature on the syllabus.[40] Literature has the ability to appeal to the reader's emotions and to 'shift the focus of their attention beyond the more mechanical aspects of the foreign language system' (Collie and Slater, 5). The material needs to provide the necessary stimulus to incite pupils to read on. A story may be this thrilling and gripping so that students cannot stop reading and only try to find out what happens at the end. Nigel Reeves mentions that 'if a reader wants to find out what happens next, if it

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[40] Cf. Hill, 9.

seems important to him personally, he will read on despite linguistic difficulties' (qtd. in Hill 9). At school a novel, short story or play is often dealt with over a longer period of time and students are gradually drawn into the text. Finding out what is the next step to happen as events unfold is much more important than understanding each and every word or phrase.[41] Without really noticing students are confronted with complex sentence structures, with words that are new to them, or with unexpected uses of language. They may acquire language without having to study it intensively. Besides, a reader frequently shares a fictional character's feelings and emotions if the work is able to stimulate personal involvement in him/her.[42]

Another powerful motivator for students to read literature is the fact that literary texts are non-trivial. This means that the topics the literary text deals with were of such great concern to the author so that he or she decided to write about them. In contrast to literary texts, other forms of language teaching inputs often 'trivialise experience in the service of pedagogy' (Parkinson and Thomas, 10). There is no doubt that the 'genuine feel' of literary texts has a positive effect on students' motivation, especially when literary texts touch on themes to which learners can draw connections due to their own experiences.[43]

If a language teacher selects material that fascinates students and encourages them to read for pleasure, it is possible that this will have a positive and long-term effect upon the learners' motivation to read. It is very likely that people who were fascinated by books they read at school choose to read literature written in a foreign language from time to time in their future. The enjoyment of or love for literature is renewed as they continue to read English books throughout their lives. If this is the case the teacher has imparted a 'lasting pleasure in reading and a deep satisfaction in a continuing growth of understanding' (Carter and Long, 3). As Ronald Carter and Michael N. Long put it

> [t]his personal growth is rewarding because it results from learning how to appreciate and evaluate complex cultural artefacts; it is fulfilling because it is stimulated by an understanding of our society and culture

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[41] Cf. Lazar, 17.
[42] Cf. Lazar, 17.
[43] Cf. Parkinson and Thomas, 10.

and of ourselves as we function within that society and culture. (Carter and Long, 3)

Carter and Long stress that a teacher has to encourage 'personal growth' in his/her pupils. To achieve this goal the teacher has to inspire students in the literature class by choosing material that is motivating, to which they can respond and in which they can participate. Only then the reading of literature will be 'a memorable, individual and collective experience' (Carter and Long, 3).

3.1.2 Language enrichment

As already mentioned literature offers a context in which lexical or syntactical items are used and shown to the reader. By reading extensively students familiarise themselves with a substantial number of features typical of the language, as for example 'the formation and function of sentences, the variety of possible structures, [and] the different ways of connecting ideas' (Collie and Slater, 5). Using literature in the language classroom can be beneficial to students as they become more sensitive to some of the overall features of the foreign language.

Additionally, literature is a very effective way to stimulate the acquisition of unknown words and structures, 'as it provides meaningful and memorable contexts for processing and interpreting new language' (Lazar, 17). It is much easier to remember language items when a learner comes across them if demonstrated in discourse context than if they are presented in isolation. A study by Richard J. Riding proves that 'even native speakers have difficulty remembering unrelated words and structures and the problem is more acute for foreign learners' (qtd. in Hill 8f.).

Although language enrichment and vocabulary development are advantages often sought through literature, some theorists claim that the vocabulary in literature is distinct from the typical language use of daily life and therefore inappropriate for pupils to study. This objection to teaching literature may have some validity, but if the teacher selects the material to be read carefully and

uses other texts as well, there should be no reason to leave out texts that are more sophisticated in language use. It is important to stress that literary texts which are extremely difficult to understand should be considered as counterpoise and supplement to other materials.[44]

A further advantage of using literature in class is that it offers stimuli for training the four skills that are important in language learning, namely reading, writing, listening and speaking. All skills can be perfectly trained by providing the learners with exercises related to the literary text. It may come as no surprise that literature serves as an excellent prompt for practising different reading strategies. These range from skim reading, which means reading in order to get an overall impression of the literary text, to intensive reading, which aims at reading for detail. Apart from reading skills, activities that deal with a work of literature broaden and enrich students' writing skills, because students become more familiar with a substantial number of features of language they have not encountered before. After having dealt with the new feature in several exercises pupils may be able to use them when they produce texts themselves. Moreover, reading literature serves the function of being a stimulus for oral work, either for listening or speaking. Especially drama is extremely useful for developing students' listening or speaking abilities.[45]

In addition to the four skills already mentioned, students' abilities to interpret texts are developed by reading literature. Experts argue that literature is 'a particularly good source for developing students' abilities to infer meaning and to make interpretations' (Lazar, 19). The reason for this may be that many literary texts are rich in multiple levels of meaning, and invite the reader to find out the underlying implications and assumptions of the text. In poems, for example, words that take on meanings beyond their fixed dictionary definitions are no rarity. When students come across such words they have to form hypotheses and draw inferences and this opens up marvellous opportunities for pupils to discuss their interpretations of the particular item in the text. If teachers induce students to 'grapple with the multiple ambiguities of the literary text' their overall capacity to infer meaning will gradually develop (Lazar, 19). Eventually,

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[44] Cf. Collie and Slater, 5.
[45] Cf. Collie and Slater, 5.

this exceptionally useful skill can be transferred to any situation where pupils need to make interpretations, based on 'implicit or unstated evidence' (Lazar, 19).

3.1.3 Access to cultural background

Probably the perfect way for language learners to deepen their understanding of life in the country where the target language is spoken would be an extended stay in this country. Unfortunately, this is only very seldom possible for students at secondary level. For these learners, more indirect routes to the understanding of a foreign culture must be adopted. These forms of access to the culture of the people whose language they are studying could be films, videos, radio programmes, newspapers, magazines, and literary works.[46] However, one really has to keep in mind that teaching culture by using artefacts is a matter of some delicacy.

First of all, the relationship between a culture and its literature is a complex one, as few novels or poems represent a real picture of their society. Some texts might achieve the illusion of being factual documentations of the 'real world', but in fact, they are only works of fiction. Henry G. Widdowson claims that poetry is even more unrealistic since its meaning is only created by stress on the language.[47] In addition, there is a danger that students erroneously believe that a text reflects the totality of a society. Oftentimes it is the case that a text represents only one particular milieu in a specific period.[48]

What also needs to be considered is that nowadays English is used globally as first, second and foreign language. It may be problematic to try to separate language from culture. Literary English texts are written by authors who come from immensely divergent cultures and a variety of different countries.

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[46] Cf. Collie and Slater, 4.
[47] Cf. Widdowson, 149.
[48] Cf. Lazar, 16.

Accordingly, pupils should be made aware of the fact that the range of cultures from which literature in English is created is extremely wide.[49]

Of course it is true that the depiction of the world of a literary text is a created one. It may also be the case that it represents a culture only partially and that it just provides us with a fragmented picture of society. Despite all that literature offers a vivid context in which characters from various different backgrounds are portrayed.[50] The reader is able to catch glimpses of the behaviour and the reactions of the members of a particular society in a variety of situations. Customs, thoughts, feelings, possessions etc. are revealed to the recipient who is an outsider of the depicted culture. The imagined world can quickly give the reader a 'feel for the codes and preoccupations that structure a real society' (Collie and Slater, 4). Reading literature in English encourages pupils to become fully aware of the 'social, political and historical events which form the background to a particular play or novel' (Lazar, 17). Moreover, reading the literature of a historical period helps pupils to imagine life in the 'other foreign territory', namely the past. All in all, foreign literature portrays fictional individuals and in this way lets the reader gain insight into alien lifestyles, cultures, values, norms and worldviews. Nevertheless, as the description may only be a partial one, pupils should be critical in responding to the texts. Treating texts critically implies that 'the underlying cultural and ideological assumptions in the texts are not merely accepted and reinforced, but are questioned, evaluated, and if necessary, subverted' (Lazar, 17).

In summary, there is a great number of arguments that encourage teaching literature at school. Reading authentic texts can be very motivating for the pupils. Furthermore, working with literary texts is extremely helpful for language development. It also needs to be mentioned that reading literature is a way to understand foreign cultures better.

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[49] Cf. Lazar, 16.
[50] Cf. Collie and Slater, 4.

3.2 Reasons for teaching the school story

As the topic of this thesis is 'teaching the school story' at this point the question arises why it is this beneficial to teach the genre and not any other literary texts. One of the main reasons might be that pupils can identify very easily with the characters that are portrayed in school stories. Mostly, they are approximately the same age as the readers and the experiences the characters make in the stories resemble that of the readership. School makes up a large part of children's and young adults' lives and therefore reading about events happening at this institution is part of their world. It is often the case that especially teenagers spend more time at school than at home and thus it is no wonder that they like to read stories that are similar to their real lives. Of course, there are scholars and teachers who argue that children rather want to escape from their daily routines by reading fantasy books that are completely different to what they experience. There is no doubt that this argument makes sense, but I would still claim that it is easier for children to identify with particular characters that share their experience realm and which are of their age.

Especially in teaching literature it is difficult for a teacher to find books that appeal to each and every student in the class. Some students may like to read detective stories, others fantasy stories, and some might prefer problem novels. Therefore, the teacher has to find a genre that spurs most students' interest. In my opinion the school story is a sort of literature that meets these requirements. First of all, it appeals to girls and boys alike. Of course, there are school stories that are rather written for girls and others that boys may prefer, but the majority of the school stories published in the last decades aims at both, male and female readers. Most of the time the contemporary school stories are set in mixed schools and thus also problems that arise in these co-educational institutions are tackled. Secondly, it must be emphasised that in all school stories a considerable number of different characters with extremely diverse personalities, such as a shy student, a bully or a swot, is described. This is the reason why most students can find a character with whom they can identify, which may make reading more interesting and highly motivating for learners.

Moreover, school stories are written in various literary forms. Apart from novels, there are short stories, plays, poems, etc. which all deal with school and school life. Thus, it is easy for teachers to integrate them into the lessons as one does not necessarily have to teach a whole novel to introduce the genre to pupils.

Besides, the genre aims at all school children, which means children and young adults from about six to eighteen. There are school stories that appeal to pupils who enter school and others that are of interest to students who prepare for their final examinations. To put this differently, school stories address readers of various age groups. However, there is no doubt that the teacher still has to find a school story that fits the age group he is dealing with.

Furthermore, when teachers work with contemporary school stories it is positive that normally neither historical nor other specific background knowledge is prerequisite to understand the narratives. Usually, pupils are familiar with the setting, situations and problems that are portrayed in school stories. In other words, a teacher can teach issues, may they be linguistic or literary, without having to explain notions and background information in detail that are necessary to comprehend the plot.

If the school stories are set in other countries, pupils can easily be made familiar with the norms and conventions that are typical of the foreign culture's school system. As students know their own school system they are able to compare it with the one presented in the school story they are reading. One example may be the British system, where many pupils wear school uniforms. Most Austrian students always wear ordinary clothes and are not accustomed to the idea of wearing a uniform at school. A British school story could be the starting point for dealing with this issue in greater detail. Probably attitudes towards wearing a uniform to school are already revealed in the narrative. If not, the teacher could provide his/her students with additional resources that tackle this subject. In addition to the school system probably other topics that are relevant to learning about foreign cultures are covered in the school story.

Readers may gain insights into alien lifestyles, habits, values, norms and worldviews.

In the following chapters a variety of possibilities of how one could teach the school story is presented. As the genre is not restricted to one particular text type an overview about several sorts of school stories, such as novels, short stories, poems, etc. is given. Additionally, these school stories are combined with different methods of teaching that should help to make the literature lesson more effective.

4 School stories in different teaching contexts Theory and practice

4.1 Novels and extensive reading

It is a common belief among many teachers that in order to understand a whole book students must first deal with its parts, namely its chapters, paragraphs and sentences which the book consists of. However, students are able to understand a longer text adequately without comprehending every part of it.[51] Insights from second language acquisition studies emphasise that students have to be encouraged to develop various reading strategies. In order to make that possible students have to be confronted with reading longer texts over time on a frequent basis.

The term 'extensive reading' has been used confusingly by writers and there is a lack of consensus among them on the subject. Some limit the meaning of the term to scanning and skimming activities on longer texts which are read during the lesson. Others specify the quantity of books that have to be read, for instance, 'fifty [books] per year' (Bright and Mc Gregor, 62). Yet others relate it to time, for example, 'an hour per evening' (Krashen, 183). Tricia Hedge tries to give an ideal characterisation, although she stresses that the 'precise nature of extensive reading will vary with student motivation and institutional resources' (Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 202). Defined by Hedge, the term 'extensive reading' means

- reading large quantities of material, whether short stories and novels, newspaper and magazine articles, or professional reading
- reading consistently over time on a frequent and a regular basis
- reading longer texts (more than a few paragraphs in length) […]
- reading for general meaning, primarily for pleasure, curiosity, or professional interest
- reading longer texts during class time but also engaging in individual, independent reading at home, ideally of self-selected material

(Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 202)

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[51] Nuttal, 38.

Julian Bamford and Richard R. Day add another basic element of extensive reading. They claim that after the students have selected what they want to read they should have the freedom to stop reading material if it fails to interest them[52].

Hedge goes further by giving another characterisation of extensive reading. One can also contrast it with the other well-known way of didactisising literature, namely intensive reading. The main difference between extensive and intensive reading is the aim one wants to achieve by teaching literature. A description of extensive reading by Fateh Hafiz and Ian Tudor is:

> […] to 'flood' learners with large quantities of L2 input […]. The pedagogical value attributed to extensive reading is based on the assumption that exposing learners to large quantities of meaningful and interesting L2 material will, in the long run, produce a beneficial effect on the learners' command of the L2. (Hafiz and Tudor, 5).

While extensive reading aims at developing reading strategies, intensive reading focuses on language competence, such as 'using connectives for predicting content or guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words using clues in the surrounding text' (Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 202). Intensive reading activities are usually used when dealing with shorter texts and they involve close study of texts and features of written English. Christine Nuttal points out that the two approaches are not only two contrasting ways of reading but rather an 'infinite variety of interrelated and overlapping strategies' (Nuttal, 38). Hedge agrees that intensive reading is a fabulous way to help students acquire reading strategies, but the learners can only gain substantial practice when they use these strategies on a larger range of material. The illustration on the next page shows how extensive and intensive reading are interrelated.

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[52] Cf. Day and Bamford, *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom,* 8.

Intensive reading lessons programme   Extensive reading

Elements to do   Elements to do   Opportunities to practise
With the text   with the reader   reading strategies and
                                                develop different types of
                                                knowledge

| Developing metacognitive strategies |
e.g. using a dictionary
e.g. making a vocabulary book

| Building knowledge of the language |
e.g. vocabulary development

| Building schematic knowledge of various |
e.g. sociocultural knowledge

| Transferring reading strategies effectively to the L2 |
e.g. previewing
e.g. guessing meaning from context

| Increasing awareness of how texts are organized |
e.g. how paragraph structure develops
e.g. how cohesion works

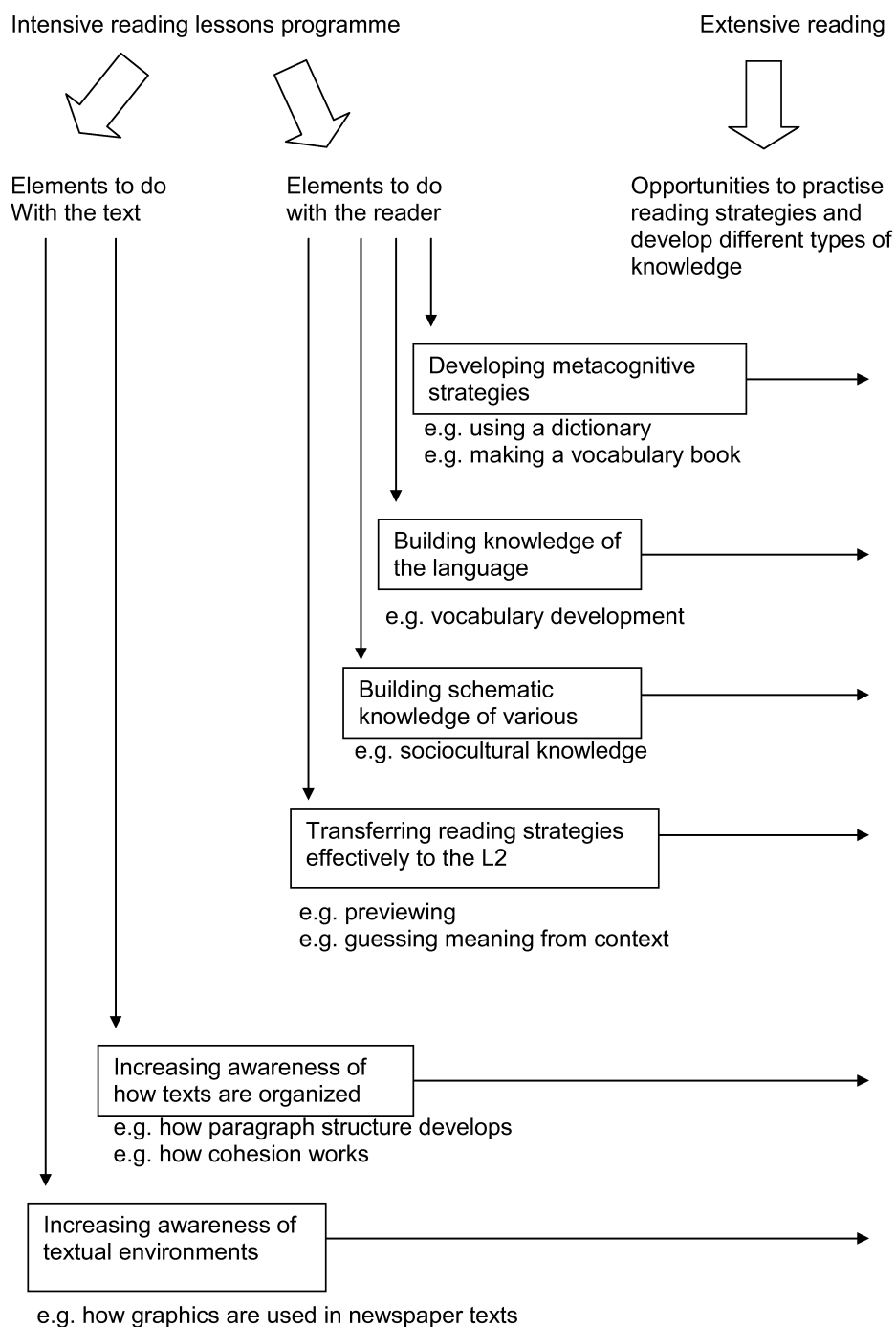| Increasing awareness of textual environments |
e.g. how graphics are used in newspaper texts

Table 1: Intensive and extensive reading Hedge, *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*, 203.

Apart from the role of extensive reading for developing reading ability, there are further arguments in favour of extensive reading that can be added to this. First of all, extensive reading can be a really productive step towards autonomous learning. Since extensive reading is very time-consuming it is most often done at home and individually. In this way the reader has the opportunity to work independently and to find out which reading strategies suit them best and help them most.[53]

In Stephen Krashen's view 'learners need to be exposed to large amounts of comprehensible input which is meaningful, relevant and interesting, in a stress-free environment'. (Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 204). Little children are exposed to their first language constantly and in this way they acquire language, while foreign-language students are usually only confronted with small bits of the target language now and then. 'Acquiring' language is a more passive process than 'learning' a language, which is done quite actively. Thus, extensive reading is a good alternation to the 'normal' methods used in foreign language teaching as it may promote acquiring rather than learning a language consciously. In other words, extensive reading outside class time has value, in as much as it is an input-enabling activity.

A difficulty for a teacher making students read extensively at home may be to check whether and how the individual learners use the input available. Some students might respond emotionally to words and provide themselves with opportunities for depth of processing. This could result in intake of a number of new words. Other pupils may read books quicker than others and do not check many words with the help of dictionaries, which could be beneficial to their reading speed.[54]

However difficult it may be for a teacher to check on the progress the individual students make, extensive reading makes it possible for students to be exposed to English greatly, which is extremely positive, of course. Hedge adds that the strategy is especially useful in classes that do not have many lessons per week.

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[53] Cf. Hedge, *Teaching and Learning*, 204.
[54] Cf. Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 204.

She mentions that pupils' progress is particularly recognisable in expanding the range of their vocabulary. David A. Wilkins observed that through reading learners become more familiar with the right choice of words in relation to particular contexts. He says that

> through reading the learner […] is exposed to the lexical items embedded in natural linguistic contexts, and as a result they begin slowly to have the same meaningfulness […] that they have for the native speaker. (Wilkins, 132)

Another reason why extensive reading is a useful resource in language teaching is that it can be done with learners independent of age. Many scholars have accentuated that extensive reading is more appropriate for advanced and older learners than for younger pupils. Yet, Hedge stresses that the method is a good way of encouraging even young children to think critically and to develop 'positive attitudes towards imaginative experience' (Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 205).

Actually, extensive reading helps learners to make progress in their reading ability, to become more independent learners, to develop their language competence, and to become self-confident and motivated to continue reading. Because researchers have recognised the positive effects of extensive reading, one can observe that many schools now offer their pupils materials for independent reading.[55] This can for example be made possible by having a class library, a collection of books pupils can choose from. In fact, the collection could either consist of a variety of different books with a great range of topics and genres, or there could also be books that concentrate on a specific subject. In this thesis, the compiled list of books comprises school stories only. The other possibility of encouraging students to read extensively is to use a class reader. In this method multiple copies of the same book are used as a class set. It is the more traditional, but still popular method of teaching extensive reading.[56] A more detailed account of both ways of integrating extensive reading successfully into the teaching programmes will be given in the next chapter.

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[55] Cf. Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 200.
[56] Cf. Hedge, *Using Readers,* 78.

What is essential to consider is the best way for a teacher to include longer texts in the classroom, since it is much easier to deal with shorter texts that can be taught in a lesson or two. Hedge mentions that compiling a class library or organising a class reader is not enough. After that the teacher has to make an effort to provide accompanying activities in order to motivate his/her students to use the chosen resources.[57] Carter believes that a combination of, as he calls them, an in-breath and in-depth approach would cater for students' needs best. He says clearly that the ultimate goal of a teacher should be to produce fluent and competent readers and in order to achieve this both approaches have to be synthesised.[58] A possible way to put this into practice is to ask students to read a longer text on their own, but during class time provide them with exercises in which shorter text passages of the book are analysed in more detail. It could also be of great help to the students to get activities that support their reading at home.

In the next chapter a way of integrating extensive reading successfully into the teaching programme will be explained in greater detail.

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[57] Cf. Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 200.
[58] Cf. Carter, 5.

4.1.1 The class library

As already pointed out, a small class library is a very effective way to promote individual reading as the students are allowed to select books according to their own interests, experience, and abilities. They can take the books home, read at their on pace and vary their reading approach according to the way they interact with different parts of a text.[59] However valuable reading individually may be, Hedge emphasises that the students have to be well-prepared before they start with 'unsupported' reading. In order to make extensive reading a valuable activity that helps pupils to develop effective reading habits several strategies should ideally be taught and trained intensively in advance of the class library project.[60]

First of all, the students have to be made aware that constant translation would be too time-consuming and inefficient when reading a whole novel. Instead they should be encouraged to develop fluent reading. To achieve this, students definitely have to be made aware that looking up unfamiliar words in a dictionary should be the final strategy for working out meaning. There are other ways of finding out what words mean. Students could possibly try to use strategies for finding out the meaning of unfamiliar words in their mother tongue. These strategies may be looking at the general context, making guesses from the structure and content of the sentence, seeing if prefixes or suffixes give clues to meaning or simply trying to relate the unknown to similar words. If students are able to apply these strategies, the frequency of them using the dictionary will decrease significantly. In some instances, however, the dictionary is the only way to figure out the meaning of new words. Then it is vital that the pupils have experience in using it properly. The skills necessary for dictionary work are not automatically existent, but rather need to be trained. Actually, there are at least three skills that are required to use a dictionary efficiently.

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[59] Cf. Hedge, *Using Readers,* 76f.
[60] Cf. Hedge, *Using Readers*, 6.

To begin with, what students unquestionably must be capable of is locating words. Being able to find words, knowing the sequence of the alphabet, arranging words by sequence of second, third and fourth letters etc. and using guide words at the top of the page is a must. Furthermore, students have to learn to distinguish among multiple meanings of words given in the dictionary which one fits the particular context. Finally, it should also be ensured that students can exploit information on how to pronounce new words correctly. With the help of exercises in using the pronunciation key this can be trained. It is clear that students need as much dictionary practice as possible in the classroom so that it poses no difficulties for them any more to check meanings of unfamiliar words for themselves.[61]

A further valuable learning strategy that stimulates vocabulary learning is keeping a personal vocabulary log. Its content usually consists of words and phrases learned during reading which the student finds interesting and helpful. Ideally, the new terms are written down immediately after a period of reading so that writing does not interfere with reading. Of course, the teacher has to show his/her learners ways of keeping and structuring a vocabulary log, for example how to arrange words, to decide which terms are useful to write into the books and in which way they could be organised best.[62]

One of the most important considerations a teacher has to make when he or she compiles titles of books for the class library is the choice of resources. There is no doubt that it is vital that pupils are well motivated and that this is best achieved by providing them with books that are of interest to them. Through reading, they develop their knowledge of English, although one must bear in mind that the level of difficulty should be appropriate and not too high. John Haycraft confirms the idea by saying that 'students will only read a lot if they are interested [...] so [one should] give them a book they [do not] really want to put down' (Haycraft, 118).

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[61] Cf. Hedge, *Using Readers*, 71.
[62] Cf. Hedge, *Using Readers*, 71f.

Below is a list of school stories that could be headed 'young adult literature'. Of course, they primarily deal with school life as they are school stories, but they also focus on other topics that play a significant role in a teenager's life, like growing up or falling in love. Therefore, it is very likely that young adults enjoy the suggested readings. The books may be appropriate for students who have already reached level B1, as according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* students at this level should be able to 'read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interest with a satisfactory level of comprehension' (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, 69).

List of school stories for the class library

The Misfits by James Howe
Four students who are the outsiders of the class decide that they are not willing to accept their classmates' bullying any longer.

Belle Teal by Ann M. Martin
During desegregation a young Southern girl tries to become friends with new classmates.

Bloomability by Sharon Creech
When 13-year-old Dinnie Doone is sent to an international school in Switzerland, her life changes completely. She is surrounded by foreign cultures, different traditions and languages. First she desperately tries to hold on to her past life, but gradually she develops new friendships.

Flying Solo by Ralph Fletcher
When their teacher does not show up a group of pupils decides not to tell anyone.

Ordinary Ghosts by Eireann Corrigan

Caramoor Academy has held a tradition of giving a secret master key to one student who proves himself worthy. Emil's brother is in possession of the key and one day 16-year old Emil tries to get hold of the key. Emil, who has been living in the shadow of his older brother for too long, decides to sneak into the school at night. The novel is about willing oneself to appear.

The Skin I'm In by Sharon G. Flake

Maleeka, a black girl who attends 7th grade of a junior high school has had enough of being teased for her skin colour. With the help of an inspirational teacher she gradually learns to accept herself.

The Wish by Gail Carson Levine

Nobody cares about Wilma, an 8th grader at Claverford, the middle school she goes to. One day she is granted a wish and Wilma wishes to be the most popular student at school.

Deadly High School by Jon David Douglas

A fifteen-year old boy has to adjust to life at a boarding school while his parents travel around the world. He discovers that many boys die at the school and he tries to solve the mystery.

The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier

The book gives a portrait of a Catholic private school and its hierarchy. A sadistic headmaster and a group of boys make Jerry's life unbearable until he stands up to the bullying.

The Boy who lost his Face by Louis Sachar

David really wants to be popular. One day he gives in to help his schoolmates to attack an elderly woman. Eventually, he learns that he does not need to be nasty in order to be accepted by the others.

The Demon Headmaster by Gillian Cross

From the first day at her new school Dinah realises that something is really strange there. The children are extremely well-behaved and they even study during break. After a while Dinah gets to know the headmaster's secret.

Flour Babies by Anne Fine

When the annual school science fair comes round Mr Cartright's class takes part in an experiment in which the pupils should learn to take over responsibility. They have to take care of the Flour Babies.

What definitely needs to be added at this point is that in spite of the fact that every student reads a different book there are still ways for the teacher to provide his/her students with exercises that support them in their reading. To illustrate this several activities are stated below.

4.1.1.1 Activities

I. Identify the books

If people read a book in their mother tongue, they have certain ideas in mind that trigger their choice to do so. Usually the triggers are curiosity about a subject or deeper interest. Their world or background knowledge helps to guide the understanding of a book and influence their reactions. Oftentimes, people reading in a foreign language need a kind of introduction to the book they are going to read. This motivates reading because it creates interest in the topic. As one of the principles of extensive reading is to read books that one enjoys the teacher should make sure that students choose novels that are appealing to them. By introducing pupils to all the books that are available the chance that they dislike the chosen book decreases.

There are several possibilities of how to introduce students to new novels. An introductory activity that is appropriate for students as soon as they are able to read English books is suggested by Richard R. Day and Julian Bamford.

Stage: pre-reading

Skills: reading

Aim: Introducing new books to students.

Preparation: The teacher selects ten books that he/she wants to introduce to the class and copies the blurbs of the books on a sheet of paper. The blurbs have to be numbered and the list photocopied for each student. If the title of a book appears in the blurb it has to be omitted on the worksheet.

Description: During the lesson the books have to be arranged around the classroom. They can either lie on several desks or be propped against the wall. The most important thing is that only the front covers of the books can be seen. Students are supposed to examine the novels on display, to look at the title, pictures, cover design, but they are not allowed to pick up the books and look at the back covers. They have to write the book titles on their sheets next to the blurbs describing the novels. After all pupils have finished the task, the teacher picks up the novels one by one and reads the blurbs aloud.[63]

Sample worksheet

Note: The actual worksheet contains ten blurbs. The blurbs below are from the following books:

1. *Flour Babies* by Anne Fine
2. *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier

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[63] Cf. Day and Bamford, *Extensive Reading Activities for Teaching Language,* 21f.

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When the annual school science fair comes round, Mr Cartright's class don't get to work on the Soap Factory, the Maggot Farm or the Exploding Custard Tins. To their intense disgust they get the ------ - sweet little six-pound bags of flour that must be cared for at all times.[64]

THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK IS _____

Jerry Renault, freshman, honest and straightforward, is singled out as sa potential non-conformist by Archie Costello, leader of the Vigils. For this high school Mafia, public victimisation is the name of the game and absolute control is gained by humiliating fellow students into conformity through initiation tests devised by corrupt Archie. When one of the masters enlists the help of the Vigils in a fund-raising event, it becomes terrifyingly clear that Jerry hasn't a chance.[65]

THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK IS _____

II. The reader interview

Stage: while-reading

Skills: speaking

Aims: Supporting pupils in their reading process

Having a short and informal interview with individual students is one possibility to give advice about reading problems or to help pupils finding useful activities that may facilitate their understanding of the text. The teacher's function is asking students to reflect on their reading process by talking about the text they have read and encouraging them to continue reading.[66] There is no doubt that it is valuable to conduct these interviews in the target language as the interview is an opportunity for the student to communicate with another person without the classmates listening.

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[64] Cf. Fine, blurb.
[65] Cf. Cormier, blurb.
[66] Cf. Hedge, *Using Readers*, 95.

In addition, the teacher can check whether the student is able to express himself or herself in English freely and appropriately. It is essential that the teacher has a mental checklist of possible points to cover in the interview. These points could be, for example,

- check how many pages the student has already read and how long it took him or her to read these pages
- ask him or her whether they liked the book and to give reasons for their decision
- make sure that the level of language in the book is adequate for the student's ability to master the language and that he or she comprehends most of the text
- if the student faces difficulties with understanding the book provide help with language exercises or give advice on how to guess meaning from textual clues or how to use the dictionary properly
- ask the student to predict the ending of the novel and encourage him or her to finish the book

III. The reading journal

Stage: while-reading

Skills: writing

Aims: Students reflect upon their reading

Keeping a reading journal is another very helpful way to guide students through the book and to reflect upon their feelings, thoughts and experiences while reading. Eve Bearne and Gabrielle Cliff Hodges argue that students often prefer to keep reading journals instead of presenting their books to the teacher or the class.[67] This reduces the anxieties that may arise from talking in front of a group of people. It is important to add that the journal should be continued until the novel is finished so that the whole reading process is documented. According to Bearne and Cliff

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[67] Cf. Bearne and Cliff Hodges, 263.

Hodges 'the permanence of the writing enables the subtle and shifting nuances of the reading process to be made visible and can lead students to see more clearly the nature and power of written text' (Bearne and Cliff Hodges, 263). Nünnig and Surkamp suggest ways of how to make use of the journal, for example:

- While reading write down your thoughts and feelings.
- Compile a list of questions that concern the text and which you might want to research or discuss with your classmates or the teacher.
- Jot down words or phases that you like and try to find reasons for your decision.
- Does anything in the text remind you of a personal experience you have made? If you want to, describe this scene in a few sentences.
- Are there any characters in the book that you especially love or hate? Could you explain why you think this is the case?
- Do you associate any poster, movie, book or TV series with the novel you are currently reading? Write down what you have seen, read or heard that reminds you of the novel and note where the similarities lie.
- From time to time try to predict the events that will happen next in the book. In order to do this, use the knowledge about the author and the characters that you have already gained. Later on check how close your predictions were to the truth. Are you surprised about the outcome?
- Could you draw a picture of a phrase used in the book that you can 'see' in your head? Make a sketch of one picture and add the words that belong to it.
- In order to visualise locations and settings that play an important part in the novel please draw plans, maps or diagrams.
- If you think of particular scenes and chapters, is there one that really strikes you? If yes, answer the following questions:
  What is interesting about this chapter or scene?

Why does it move you?

What do you like or dislike about it?

- Try to find a line or a feeling that inspires you to write a short story, a scene in a play or your own poem. Then write your own text.[68]

Needless to say, the teacher has to read through pupils' answers to the questions so that students feel that their work was not senseless or superfluous. Many researchers argue that the reading journal offers a great opportunity to assess pupils' achievements, but the question that arises at this point is whether it is beneficial to the motivation of students if they know that they are going to be assessed. On the one hand, evaluating the journal is better than assessing reading off line, which means assessment after the reading process. On the other hand, Beatrice S. Mikulecky and Linda Jeffries argue that extensive reading should evoke pleasure in the students and therefore it may reduce the students' enjoyment of reading tremendously if they know that they are going to be assessed.[69] In other words, supporting the pupils in their reading process without evaluating their work is probably very motivating for them and may even encourage them to read more English books than they are required to. Then they are exposed to the foreign language greatly which eventually leads to fluency, which is the ultimate goal of extensive reading.

After having explained how extensive reading can be realised if every student reads a different book, the next chapter will concentrate on ways of introducing extensive reading if the whole class reads the same book.

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[68] Cf. Nünning and Surkamp, 54.
[69] Cf. Mikulecky and Jeffries, 3.

4.1.2 Using a class reader

If the same book is read by the whole class the choice of the book to be worked with needs to be made carefully. Actually, one should not believe that the reader will suit each and every student, but the subject matter should at least motivate the majority of the pupils. What also requires careful handling is the organisation of class reading. Going through the book in class, with the teacher or students reading aloud may not be the most efficient one, as everyone is obliged to read at the same pace and there is not much time for discussions or other follow-up activities. A more successful approach may be to set most of the reading for homework and to spend the greater proportion of class time on checking reading or working with key passages.[70]

In fact, there is a number of advantages of using a class reader. First it needs to be mentioned that the teacher can prepare students thoroughly for reading the book und thus motivate them a lot. He or she could provide background information of the story or teach students key language so that their understanding of the text is facilitated. During reading it is also easier to support the pupils, for example by studying key passages more intensively. For weaker students, using class readers is beneficial as they receive maximum help. The teacher could, for instance, read parts of the story out loud or explain terms to those who need support. One should note here that through discussions or questions it is likely that creative thinking and critical evaluation are promoted. I designed a varied number of both kinds of exercises, classroom and homework activities that can be adapted to all kinds of books. It is worth stating at this point that I really tried to select activities that form a sensible balance between language-enrichment activities and exercises that should deepen pupils' understanding of the text. In addition, the activities aim at training all four skills, reading, listening, writing and speaking.

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[70] Hedge, *Using Readers,* 109.

The design and procedure of the activities is based on an approach that is called Task-Based Language Teaching. According to Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers TBLT means 'the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching' (Richards and Rodgers, 223). Usually the design of reading tasks involves three principal phases, a pre-, while-, and post-reading stage. They reflect the chronology of a task-based lesson. The main goal is that 'reading is 'taught' in the sense of helping readers develop increasing ability to tackle texts' (Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 209). More traditional approaches did not have this three-phase procedure. Reading was tested by asking the pupils comprehension questions about the text after the reading process. Nowadays it is believed that without the pre- and the while-reading stage the pupils may not be prepared to read the text well and full comprehension may not be achieved.[71]

The intention of the pre-task phase is to encourage learners to 'perform the task in ways that will promote acquisition' (Ellis, 244). Hedge mentions that during the pre-reading phase learners can

> become oriented to the context of the text, for example for what purpose was it originally produced?; tune in to the content of the text; establish a reason for reading; express an attitude about the topic; review their own experiences in relation to the topic; activate existing cultural knowledge; and become familiar with some of the language in the text. (Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 210)

She emphasises that the teacher has to ensure purposeful reading, and with a number of helpful pre-reading tasks the teacher can prepare students in terms of both, schematic and language knowledge.[72]

The purpose of while-reading activities is to make students active as they read. Hedge states that a considerable number of pupils react positively to the usefulness of while-reading activities. Thus more and more teachers try to promote activity, reflection, and response in their students while reading.[73] While-reading activities should make students do the following:

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[71] Cf. Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 209.
[72] Cf. Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 210.
[73] Cf. Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 210.

follow the order of ideas in a text; react to the opinions expressed; understand the information it contains; ask themselves questions; make notes; confirm expectations or prior knowledge; or predict the next part of the text from various clues. (Hedge, *Teaching and Learning,* 210)

Post-reading activities ideally tie up with the set reading purpose. Students should check and discuss tasks performed while reading and they are to make use of what they have read in a meaningful way. Then numerous activities can be undertaken that focus either on the language of the text or on its content. These would for example be debates, role-plays or reading of contrasting or similar texts.[74]

The novel *Flour Babies* by Anne Fine has already been mentioned to demonstrate the introduction of several new books to the class. At this point I will show a variety of possibilities of how a teacher could deal with the same novel when used as a class reader and guide his/her learners through the novel. Of course, the compilation of exercises could be expanded, but below are at least some helpful suggestions of how students can be supported in their reading process.

4.1.2.1 Activities

A. Pre-reading activities

Skills: speaking

Aims: Whetting the curiosity of students and eliciting response of students to the theme they are going to meet in Anne Fine's novel.

Description: Based on the sentence 'Let it be flour babies. Let chaos reign' that is to be found on the cover page of the literary work the class should try to forecast the plot and content of the book. In groups, they discuss versions of possible storylines. Finally, the teacher reads the

real blurb to the class so that they know what the content of the book actually is and to compare whether one group had similar results.

B. While-reading activities

I. Chapter 1

Skills: reading, writing

Aims: Reading for gist, expanding students' vocabulary

Description: For homework students are to read the first chapter. They are told to pay particular attention to the personalities of the two boys introduced at the beginning of the book, Martin Simon and Simon Martin. The worksheet facilitates this first contact with the characters. Ideally, this worksheet is done at home and compared in class, as it might support readers to read confidently for gist.

Which of the characteristics belongs to which character? If necessary, use a dictionary.

huge bright intelligent French-speaking strapping stupid dialect-speaking clever smart clumsy literate unthinking

Martin Simon	Simon Martin
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

II. Chapter 2, 3

Skills: speaking

Aims: The objective of this exercise is to make students aware of the theme of the book. They should learn to be able to think about texts critically and to be able to state their opinions.

Description: This student-centred activity provides an excellent way into the topic of the book, the flour baby project. After having read through the rules of the experiment it would be a good idea to encourage pupils to consider its positive and negative side-effects. With a partner, they may compile a list of pros and cons of the project, which will afterwards be discussed in class or possibly even summarised on the board. Moreover, they are to consider several questions:

- What does Mr. Feltham want to achieve with his project?
- Would you also like to do such an experiment? Give reasons for your decision.
- Have you got a pet? Do you like caring for it? Who in your family is responsible for feeding/ cleaning its cage/ going for a walk with it?
- Do you know the 'tamagotchi', a virtual pet which needs round the clock care?
- Have you ever possessed a 'tamagotchi'? How long did it survive?

By comparing pupils' answers the benefits of the project, as well as the difficulties people who are looking after a baby are confronted with, will become more obvious.

If preferred, the teacher can also set the task to make a list of positive and negative points as homework and compare the results in class.

IV. Chapter 4, 5

Skills: writing

Aims: Pupils should be able to write informal diary entries based on information given or ideas presented in the book.

Description: Assuming that all pupils have read some flour baby diary entries in chapter 4 and 5, they are supposed to create an entry by themselves. Through reading, they have certainly come across problems that arise when one has a young child. Now students are invited to use that knowledge in order to produce a piece of written work in the form of a diary entry. They should either imagine that they have to look after a flour baby or that they are to care for a little brother/sister. If necessary, the teacher can pre-teach useful vocabulary and format of a diary entry.

V. Chapter 1-7

Skills: speaking, reading, listening

Aims: Pupils get a better understanding of specific parts of the narrative they have read.

Description: The teacher selects several passages of the novel that contain mostly dialogue and quite little description. According to the number of people involved in the different dialogues the class is divided into small groups. Each group gets a card on which one particular dialogue is written. Then the groups have time to read through the dialogue again and find out what the context of the situation might be. Questions that could help them are, for example: "Who are the speakers in the dialogue?", "What happened immediately before that scene?", "Why do the speakers meet?", "Where are they?", "What is happening at the moment?" If they can absolutely not remember the passage it is suggested that they look it up in their books again.

Subsequently students are meant to act out the respective dialogues by withholding information about the characters they are imitating. While performing their observing classmates are instructed to make up their minds and guess which characters are portrayed in the sketch. This is followed by thinking about the situation in which the dialogue takes place in the story. Below is an example of a dialogue that may be interesting to be performed by learners:

"Can we go home now, please?"
Over and over, the same answer floated up from the court.
"Be patient, Simon. We're nearly finished."
He'd sit there for what seemed another fifteen hours, bored out of his skull, and then ask: "Can I go ahead, Mum?"
"Simon, please! I won't be much longer. This is the last game."
[…]
"Why can't I stay home by myself?"
"Soon, sweetheart. As soon as you're old enough."
"I could have a babysitter."
"Simon! It's once a week! For one hour! You know this is practically the only time I ever get to go out. Now don't be a pain!"
(Fine, 49 f.)

VI. Chapter 7

Skills: reading, writing

Aims: The exercise shall enrich pupils' range of vocabulary. In addition, students learn to read for detail.

Description: What is important in this exercise is that the students try to read for detail. They have to find out several expressions that are used to depict a particular character in the novel. It should foster the learners' understanding and appreciation of words used to describe people and their looks.

Find out how Simon imagines his father he doesn't know. Fill in the grid:

hair	
voice	
expression on his face	
eyes	
hands	
talent	

VII. Entire novel

Skills: reading, writing

Aims: The activity aims at providing pupils with a general overview of characters that appear in the novel. As reading progresses students have a handy visual checklist of all characters to fall back on.

Description: First of all, a large flower with some petals must be drawn on a sheet of paper by each learner. Into the middle of the flower the students write 'pupils in class 4C'. After this a name of a pupil attending Mr Cartright's class is written into each petal. Personal traits of the particular characters can be added as they are revealed in the course of reading. Additionally, more petals can be drawn according to the number of young characters presented. Alternatively, a flower containing the names and characteristics of all the teachers mentioned in the book could be drawn.

VIII. Chapter 8

Skills: reading, writing, speaking

Aims: The aim of the exercise is partly linguistic as students' vocabulary should be expanded and partly literary as learners become aware of the way a theme is presented by the author. In addition, they learn to deal with rhyme and structure of a poem.

Description: Before the protagonist's father left him he had sung a song. Learners' first task is to fill in the correct lines that are missing. Then they are supposed to pick the appropriate words and fill them into the blanks. Finally, the meaning of the last two lines of the song 'Others may settle to dandle their babies, my heart's a tall ship, and high winds are near' should be found out by students in pairs.

Unfurl the _____, lads, and let the winds find me
Breasting the soft, _____ blue rising main

_____
_____

Sail for a _____ that burns with new maybes,
Farewell my _____ ones and be of good cheer.

_____
_____

Others _____ settle to dandle their babies
Vow I'll not carry those _____ again.
My _____ a tall ship, and high winds are near.
_____ all my burdens and woes clear behind me
75

| Toss sails sunny loved sunrise may cargoes heart's |

IX. Chapters 9, 10

Skills: writing, speaking

Aims: The exercise helps students to understand the content of the last
chapters.

Description: While reading the last two chapters at home the class is
requested to write down three or four questions related to the story. At
school the teacher collects all questions and forms small teams of
pupils. The teacher acts as the quiz master and asks the groups a
number of questions. The group that answers the most questions
correctly is the winner. This group could be rewarded for their success
in various ways by the teacher. As the questions are written by students
themselves and the activity has the character of a game learners'
motivation might be increased considerably.

C. Post- reading exercise

Skills: speaking

Aims: The activity's purpose is to elicit and crystallise learners' overall
  response to the book they have just been reading.

Description: Students are asked to imagine that the novel *Flour Babies* is
  made into a film. They have to create a trailer, which is a short clip that
  aims at advertising a film or a television programme. Needless to say, it
  may be of particular help to learners to watch a number of other trailers
  before designing their own. It needs to be emphasised that the film
  sequence pupils produce should not exceed a time limit of two minutes.
  Probably the activity works out best if students are put into groups of
  about 5 or more people. One of them has to write a plot summary that
  may appeal to people who do not know the novel. Of course, the writer
  needs to be reminded that he/she is not supposed to give away the
  ending of the book. The other members of the group have to decide on
  several moments of the narrative's action that are important for the
  general understanding of the story or that are especially spectacular.
  After having decided on a speaker and the actors the pupils' task is to
  create the trailer. Of course, they have to make sure that all props and
  accessories that are required to perform are available on the day the
  trailers are made. Besides, if students struggle with the technical
  equipment the teacher should be able to help them. When all trailers
  are finished students are allowed to watch them. Springing from the fact
  that the groups produce different interpretations of the book's most
  dramatic moments interesting discussions may be generated.

After having presented a number of exercises that are useful when having a
class library, as well as activities that are of great help when all pupils read the
same book, the next chapter shows ways of teaching a modification of the two
methods already mentioned.

4.1.3 An extensive reading programme: bullying at school

Since a vast number of school stories tackle the issue of bullying, it is possible that students can choose between several books on the same topic. Each student reads the novel that appeals to him/her at home. Nevertheless, during class-time the subject is covered generally, which will help pupils to get a better understanding of the problems related to bullying. In this way, students get the chance to reflect on a topic and look at it from various perspectives and viewpoints. In addition, pupils can exchange their experiences with the particular novels, which might arouse pupils' curiosity about the books their classmates have read. Books that portray the difficulties young people face when they are bullied are for example:

- *Names Will Never Hurt Me* by Jaime Adoff
- *Bullies at School* by Theresa Breslin
- *Tell me no Lies* by Malorie Blackman
- *The Misfits* by James Howe
- *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier
- *The Bully* by Paul Langan
- *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson
- *Alt Ed* by Catherine Atkins
- *Please Stop Laughing at Me* by Jodee Blanco
- *Walking Naked* by Alyssa Brugman

The books' levels of difficulty vary, but it needs to be emphasised that all of them aim at pupils at level B1 to B2.

In order to control and support students' individual reading the teacher could guide them by providing them with the following exercises:

A. Pre-reading stage

I. Choose your novel

Skills: speaking

Aims: Pupils' interest in the topic is to be evoked. They should get an idea of the kinds of literature that exist on the issue. Students shall learn to reflect upon their language proficiency and be able to argue their decisions.

Description: Students have a look at the various books and decide which one suits their interest and level of competence. It is important to add that there should be enough time to engage with the different books, to read the blurbs and to look at the covers. After having decided for a particular text they are supposed to talk about the reason for their choice. Besides, this activity is prerequisite for a subsequent exercise.

B. While- reading stage

I. Bullying in fact and fiction

Skills: listening, speaking

Aims: Students should be able to understand an authentic news report. They are encouraged to link the information provided by the video with the novels they are currently reading and find similar aspects.

Description: First of all, an authentic video clip broadcasted on ABC News is shown to pupils.[76] Basically, it covers general information on bullying, as well as one particular example of a boy being bullied at school. Students are asked to compare the clip with their reading material. They should become aware if there are any similarities between the two

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[76] Cf. Youtube, 6 Apr. 2009 (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Wcx2qM5C4g)

resources. The next assignment is to try to recognise all the forms of bullying that are mentioned in the video. Then they have to consider which other forms of bullying they have come across in their books up to that moment.

A further activity that can be added to the previous exercises is a group discussion that focuses on possible ways the protagonist's suicide could have been prevented.

Questions to the pupils:

Compare the clip with your book. Are there any similarities? Which forms of bullying can you recognize? Which other forms of bullying have you found in your books so far?

As some terms that are used in the video might be difficult to understand for the pupils the teacher could provide them with a list of vocabulary:

to lure – to persuade someone to do something by making it look very attractive

to badger - to try to make someone do something by asking them many times

to conduct a study - to do some research

devoted - loving someone very much

disability - a condition in which someone is not able to use a part of their body or brain properly

to tease - to say something to someone in order to have fun by embarrassing or annoying them

pen pal - a person you get to know by frequent friendly correspondence (letters or e-mails)

courageous - very brave

to contribute to sth. - to be one of the things that help to make something happen

II. Letters to an agony aunt

> Skills: writing
>
> Aims: Learners should be able to produce a letter or an e-mail based on the problems raised in the stories. Furthermore, students are asked to write a text from a different angle.
>
> Description: After having read the first few chapters of the books, pupils are supposed to write a letter to an agony aunt from the perspective of the bullied character. In this letter they may express the character's problems, feelings, thoughts and fears. Before this, the teacher has to make sure that pupils are familiar with the general conventions of letter writing. If they lack these basic abilities they should get accustomed to the norms. Additionally, the teacher might present several sample letters addressed to an agony aunt. What is more, a more modern alternative would be writing an e-mail to the agony aunt.

III. The agony aunt's reply

> Skills: writing
>
> Aims: Generating solutions for problems that are not explicitly stated in the respective novels.
>
> Description: A suitable follow-up activity would be writing the agony aunt's reply. In order to challenge pupils the different problem letters ought to be distributed in class. Each student picks one letter and needs to offer a number of appropriate solutions to the person concerned.

C. Post- reading activities

I. Presentations

Skills: speaking, listening

Aims: Reflecting on the whole book the student has read. Summarising the plot and verbalise one's thoughts about a text.

Description: Each learner briefly presents the book's content and tells the classmates whether the book met his/her expectations. It is important that the teacher reminds them of the reasons why they chose this particular novel (compare with exercise 1) so that reflecting on the book is facilitated. While listening to their classmates' presentations it might enhance other pupils' attention if they have to rank the books according to their particular interests. In other words, they ought to compile a list of novels they would probably like to read in future.

II. Letters to the authors

Skills: writing

Aims: Being able to express one's opinion about a literary text.

Description: After having finished the novels students are asked to write a letter to the respective authors. The students' task is to express their general impression of the book, whether they were able to identify with one of the characters and their feelings and thoughts that came up while reading the novel. Incidentally, to increase the class' motivation the letters could really be sent to the various authors. This would raise the task's relevance and authenticity. If an author's address or contact details cannot be found out, the letters could also be posted in a literature forum about young adult literature on the internet.

Apart from novels, schools stories often appear as short stories. This literary form has many advantages in comparison to novels. The next chapter deals with three different approaches to how short stories could be taught at school.

4.2 Three approaches to using a short story with the foreign language learner

Many foreign-language teachers claim that short stories are an excellent way of introducing students to literature. They offer some striking advantages, which should definitely be considered.

Obviously, a short story has the advantage of being short and self-contained. They can easily be read entirely within a few lessons. Thus, students get the feeling of achievement at having read a whole work sooner than when reading a novel. Moreover, the teacher is able to control the class as he/she is present during the reading process. In this way reading is facilitated as the teacher can help the students while working on the text.

Although their brevity makes reading short stories a delight, the teacher has to be careful to make them involving for the reader. Longer works have the advantage that the reader is easily drawn into the narrative, whereas short stories that are very compressed lack this benefit. This compression often makes it difficult for the readers to appreciate a work fully and to overlook the language and imagery that is used. For this reason, preparation and help is needed so that the value of the short story is revealed.[77] There are various ways of putting this into practice. In what follows, three possible approaches which a teacher could draw on when using short stories with his/her students are presented. In addition, the short story *The Catechism Examination* by the Irish author Eilis Ni Dhuibhne is used to show some activities and exercises that are related to the particular approaches.

4.2.1 A language-based approach

The language-based approach is a very wide approach that implies a great range of various goals and procedures. However, the general underlying

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[77] Cf. Collie and Slater, 196f.

methodological assumption of the approach is that language and literature should be integrated in order to achieve an improvement of students' knowledge of, and proficiency in the foreign language. When a literary text is analysed in great detail meaningful interpretations or informed evaluations can be made by students. What is more, pupils' awareness and understanding of the foreign language will be fostered or increased.

Proponents of the approach have not reached an agreement on its ultimate goals yet. Some supporters of the approach only use literature as a resource that provides a number of language activities. In other words, their main aim is to focus on the way literature can be exploited as far as language is concerned.[78] On account of this it is clear that literary texts are only seen as a resource among other types of texts. If one uses literary texts for language activities several advantages can be noted. First of all, in literary texts a range of different styles and registers is used. Furthermore, literary texts can be interpreted in many different ways and hence act as stimuli for classroom discussion. Besides, literary texts may be very motivating and interesting if the teacher chooses the texts according to students' interests.[79]

A language based-approach to using literature could also concentrate on the study of the literary text itself. Pupils are to be made aware of the tools one needs to interpret a text and to think about it critically. A method that is often adopted is stylistics or stylistic analysis, which 'involves the close study of the linguistic features of a text in order to arrive at an understanding of how the meanings of the text are transmitted' (Lazar, 27).

Another group of proponents of a language-based approach argues that stylistic analysis of a text may be far too difficult for the majority of the pupils, but that 'certain language-based study skills can act as important preliminary activities to studying literature' (Lazar, 28). A procedure that exemplifies this may be inviting students to make predictions about what will happen next at key points

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[78] Cf. Lazar, 27.
[79] Cf. Duff and Maley, *Literature,* 6.

in a text.[80] This exercise shows how language study and the development of more literary-based skills can be connected.

To sum this up, the approach is beneficial in as much as it helps students to develop a response to literature by examining linguistic features of a text. It also provides them with analytic tools they need to interpret literature. In addition, grammar and vocabulary are presented in new and interesting contexts. Thus the approach improves the pupils' knowledge of the language. However, the approach is not only positive, but has disadvantages as well. If the analysis of a text is applied too rigidly and each and every feature is discussed the approach can very easily become demotivating.[81] Besides, if a literary text is only used as a source for language activities and themes that the story contains are completely neglected, students may lose their pleasure in reading literature. Finally it needs to be mentioned that the approach does not pay sufficient attention to a text's political, historical or social background that would support the students in interpreting what they read.[82]

In order to make the approach more concrete several language-based activities for exploiting literature with the foreign-language learner are shown. As already mentioned the Irish short story the exercises are based on is called *The Catechism Examination,* written in 2003 by Eilis Ni Dhuibhne. The short story may be appropriate to be read by upper-intermediate or advanced students.

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[80] Cf. Brumfit and Carter, 111.
[81] Cf. Lazar, 25.
[82] Cf. Lazar, 25.

4.2.1.1 Activities

I. Exercise 1

Skills: writing

Aim: Extending pupils' knowledge of descriptive vocabulary and revision of a grammatical item.

Description: Pupils are given a section of descriptive writing from which all adjectives and adverbs have been removed. Their task is to fill in the appropriate adjectives and adverbs in their correct forms without looking at the narrative.

Mary Doyle is wrinkling up her face and moving her arms about _____ (wonderful, doubtful, dangerous). Stupid Mary Doyle. She can't learn, it seems, and she looks _____ (terrible, brilliant, belligerent). _____ (tight, small, merry), _____ (scrawny, bald, happy), with thin blonde hair. Her face is _____ (maroon, white, azure blue) and sprinkled with freckles. Her gymsuit hangs on her _____ (naked, pretty, bony) body.[83]

II. Exercise 2

Skills: writing

Aims: Students should revise reported speech and pay attention to different verbs of reporting.

Description: The dialogue in the short story is to be rewritten in reported speech by pupils. It is important that several verbs are used, for example ask, wonder, mumble or feel.

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[83] Cf. Dhuibhne, 46.

Put this dialogue into reported speech:

'What is the meaning of the fourth commandment of the Church?'
Mary begins: 'The meaning of the fourth commandment of the church is…' Then she stops. Miss O'Bryne repeats the question.
Mary repeats: 'The meaning of the fourth commandment of the .. of the… of the…' […]
'Stand out,' orders Miss O'Bryne. […] 'Put out your hand.'
(Dhuibhne, 48)

III. Exercise 3

Skills: speaking

Aims: Pupils should learn to read effectively for gist.

Description: After having read the short story the students are presented with three different summaries of the short story. They have to decide which the most accurate is and give reasons for their decision.

4.2.2 Literature as content

In this approach literature itself is made the content of the course. Areas that are examined are, for example, the social, historical or political background of a text, the biography of the author and its relevance to his/her writings, the genre of the text or the relationship of a text to the literary movements of its time.[84] Parkinson and Thomas argue that the rationale behind the approach seems to be that it 'help[s] to widen cultural horizons [and] to reduce the imprisonment of learners in the worldview and values of their own time and place' (Parkinson and Thomas, 31). Although a considerable number of scholars are of the opinion that the type of approach is only successful when applied with learners who are very interested in the study of literature, it can still be a part of secondary education as it may enhance the understanding and enjoyment of a text tremendously. The danger that arises with respect to the approach is that most work is carried out by the teacher.[85] He/she has to clarify, explain and provide students with background information, resulting in very little student

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[84] Cf. Lazar, 35ff.
[85] Cf. Lazar, 25.

participation. A possible solution to the problem is to carry out a research project, in which pupils look for the information themselves (in books or on the internet) and present their findings in different ways.

4.2.2.1 Activities

I. Exercise 1

Skills: listening, writing

Aims: By listening to a recording and filling in the grids students' background knowledge about the novel should be expanded. In addition, pupils learn about a new text type, namely the biography.

Description: Before teaching, the teacher looks for a biography about Dhuibhne and reads it loudly while recording it on CD at home. Then he/she prepares a worksheet with several blanks where the students have to fill in the missing parts. One sample worksheet is shown below:

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne was born in _____ in_____, where she still lives.

She went to _____ at Scoil Bhríde, then in Earlsfort Terrace; St Mary's, Haddington Road, and Scoil Chaitríona, Eccles Street. In _____ she won the English _____ in the University College Dublin entrance scholarship, and began to attend UCD, where she was awarded a BA in Pure English in 1974. She then studied for an M Phil in_____, and finally worked on a Ph D. Her doctoral dissertation, "With His Whole _____", was an investigation of the history of a folktale found in international _____ tradition and literature and best known as Chaucer's "The Friar's Tale". She was awarded her Ph D doctorate in_____, from the _____.

As an M Phil student, she worked as a tutor of Old English in UCD, and also as a _____ in the Department of Irish Folklore there. In 1976 she began to work as a _____in the Civil Service Commission, and within a year moved to the _____ Library, where she began work as an Assistant Keeper. In 1978 she left the library to take up a research scholarship awarded by the _____ government. She spent the following year in_____, where she learnt to speak Danish_____, carried out research on her doctoral dissertation, and attended courses at the Folklore Institute at the University of Copenhagen. When she _____ to Ireland in _____ she got a job as a _____ on the Urban Folklore Project, which was run by the Department of Irish Folklore. For _____

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she interviewed people all over Dublin and collected a great deal of memoirs, lore and _____. A new _____ arose in the National Library at that stage. She re-applied, got the ____ and has worked there ever since, on a _____ since 1990. (EilisNiDhuibhne. 22 Feb. 2009 <http://www.eilisnidhuibhne.net/>)

II. Exercise 2

Skills: reading, listening, writing

Aims: Students are supposed to gain background information on the text.

Description: The class is divided into some groups (according to the number of pupils in class). Each group has to do some research on a particular topic with regard to the particular short story. The topics could for example be

- Biographical information about the author
- Geographical information about Ireland
- Stereotypes of the Irish
- Information about the Irish schools the author went to
- Information about catechism
- Information about the genre of the short story

After having gathered the information new groups are formed. In each group there must be at least one 'specialist' of every research area. In other words, in the newly formed groups students of all former groups must be present. Now every student tells the others what he/she found out about his/her topic. The others have to write the results on a sheet of paper. In the end each pupil should know some facts about all topics covered. It is essential that the teacher controls the outcome of the project.

4.2.3 Personal approach

The personal approach aims at involving the learner as a whole person and to elicit his/her personal reactions to literature. In this approach literature serves as a trigger for encouraging pupils to draw on their own feelings, opinions, believes

and experiences.[86] Pupils are asked to express their reactions to the text and also to look for clues in the text that may have caused their response. It is essential to add that teaching theory shifts the emphasis 'from analysing to responding to literature' (Bushman, 50). In this student-centred method the reader plays an active role and reading is viewed as an active process. Bushman explains the approach in the following way:

> Literature is much more than a subject that produces information and knowledge; it is a means that, when fully developed, promotes personal growth and, in the process, aids students in making their own knowledge, knowledge that prepares students to become lifelong readers because they will have gained the confidence to read and discover on their own. (Bushman, 51)

This quote shows what the main object of the personal approach is, namely to prepare students to become lifelong readers. Responding to literary texts in a personal way should awaken love and appreciation of literature. Another positive aspect of the personal approach to literature is that it leads to personal growth when texts that deal with topics the students can relate to are read.[87]

There are numerous benefits of the approach, but some disadvantages must also be mentioned. The first one is that personal response from students is demanded without helping them much in coping with linguistic intricacies of the text. As the focus is on cueing students into the text to make it more relevant to their own experience working on linguistic features of the literary work is often neglected. Nevertheless, pupils are supposed to understand the text and to respond to it, which can be extremely difficult without having dealt with the language used before.

A further negative aspect is that there are texts that are extremely remote from students' world and thus pupils have problems in responding personally to them. Therefore the teacher must select the texts carefully. In this approach it is vital that the chosen material is in line with the major interests of the pupils. Needless to say, this limits the range of literary texts that can be read in the foreign-language class tremendously.

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[86] Cf. Lazar, 39; Carter and Long, 46.
[87] Cf. Bushman, 51.

Additionally, some students may not feel very comfortable when they have to express their feelings. It could be helpful to encourage students to work in groups rather than force them to speak about their opinions to the whole class. In this way students may be more forthcoming and it is not this threatening to talk about one's personal feelings in a group of only a few pupils. Another option of dealing with shy students is to ask them to reveal their reactions in a written piece of homework, which is then read only by the teacher.[88]

4.2.3.1 Activities

I. Exercise 1

Skills: writing

Aims: The exercise aims at making students respond personally to the characters in the story.

Description: Students are encouraged to write a letter of advice to one of the pupils in the story who are terribly afraid of their examination. They are free to choose the character who they want to address the letter to. Questions that may help pupils to have ideas might be, for example: Have you ever been frightened before a test? What did it feel like? Why were you so frightened? What did you do? Do you know how others cope with their fears?

II. Exercise 2

Skills: writing

Aims: The main aim of the exercise is to relate pupils' own experience to the information they encountered when reading the short story.

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[88] Cf. Lazar, 25.

Description: Together with a partner pupils have to write a dialogue between a mean teacher and a shy student. In the short story they can find many instances where such situations are explained.

The next chapter, which aims at demonstrating the teaching of poetry, deals with a pupil-centred, creative use of the literary texts. Again, several exercises which illustrate the theory are designed.

4.3 Action and production orientation in teaching poetry

Poetry and figurative language are often viewed as being quite difficult for foreign language learners to cope with.[89] The reason might be that most poems differ linguistically from more standard forms of English in several ways. As Lazar puts it

> [p]oetry reorganises syntax, invents its own vocabulary, freely mixes registers and creates its own punctuation. Poetry draws creatively on a full range of archaisms and dialects, and generates vivid new metaphors. It patterns sounds and orders rhythms. (Lazar, 98)

Henry Widdowson also mentions that poetry deviates from the norms of language. He mentions that

> a poem […] proclaims its indepencence of contexts which normally condition our understanding of discourse. […] It realizes speech acts which have no validity in ordinary language interaction. (Widdowson, 160)

However, there is one approach to teaching literature that emphasises that poetry in particular should be taught. The approach considers poetry as the genre that stimulates critical thinking and interpretation best. This approach is called action and production orientation. It aims at a pupil-centred, creative use of literary texts in teaching.[90] The origin of action- and production-oriented language learning goes back to the insight that mere studying of vocabulary and grammar rules does not enable pupils to use the foreign language in real life situations. Instead of learning words by heart in an isolated way pupils have to get to know language in meaningful contexts so that they can communicate appropriately. For example, when the teacher asks the question 'Where is the duster?' and it is immediately in front of him/her this question is unnecessary and does not prepare students for real communicative situations that require more than the mere construction of a linguistically correct sentence.[91] Therefore, action and production orientation focuses less on analytic methods,

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[89] Cf. Hill, 96; Nünning and Surkamp, 83; Lazar, 100.
[90] Cf. Haas, 45.
[91] Cf. Surkamp, 89.

such as reading texts and construing them into their constituents, but rather on dealing with texts in a productive and creative way. Activities could, for example, be rearranging, converting and reshaping texts, transforming a text into another text type, miming and acting out a text or drawing pictures about the text.

The two concepts, action orientation and production orientation, still need a more detailed explanation. While action orientation emphasises the active use of all senses when working with literature, production orientation aims at creating new texts. To put this differently, action-oriented activities are more artistic, while production oriented exercises lay more stress on the cognitive abilities of the learners. However, the two concepts are not always easily separable and there are exercises that are mixed forms of both methods.[92]

In comparison to analytic, traditional methods of teaching literature, the action- and production-oriented approach pursues quite different goals. While traditional literature teaching aimed at studying facts about the author, an epoch or a literary text, action and production orientation wants the learners to become actively involved in the text. Students should be encouraged to ask questions about the text, to read intensively, to react and interpret the text. In the literature lesson pupils ought to be assured that literature has something in common with them and their lives. Besides, the difference among learners and their individual reactions to the texts are deliberately taken into account.[93]

However useful the approach may be it still implies several dangers. One point of criticism that is mentioned very often is that the action- and production oriented approach bears the danger of losing sight of the literary text itself. A possibility of preventing this is to combine action- and production oriented methods with analytic methods. It needs to be stated that for many creative tasks a solid knowledge of the text is prerequisite, which can be built up with analytic methods. It is often the case that a combination of both kinds of approaches enables the reader to deal with literary texts best.[94]

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[92] Cf. Surkamp, 93.
[93] Cf. Surkamp, 98f.
[94] Cf. Surkamp, 101.

Furthermore, sometimes action- and production-oriented methods are planned by the teacher without reflecting about the aims that should be achieved with the activities. Very often, the teacher's only intention when the class is encouraged to do creative tasks is that they should have fun, which is definitely not the main objective of the approach.[95]

Another danger that is to be avoided is the fact that action- and production-oriented activities are not taken into account in assessment. There is no doubt that assessing the outcome of creative tasks is more difficult than for example a summary or an essay. Still, these exercises have to be taken seriously so that the analytically less gifted students do not face any disadvantages when they are being assessed. The teacher has to find possibilities of how to assess the product of action- and production-oriented tasks. Klaus Hinz recommends that in action- and production oriented tasks 'content' (originality, variety of ideas, etc.) and 'relation to the literary text' (reference to the text and its constituents, for example point of view, atmosphere, setting, characters etc.) are the two points that need to be taken into consideration when assessing the students' products.[96] In addition, what has to be regarded are the aspects of language, style and composition.[97]

As already mentioned before, poetry is a genre that is suited perfectly well for action- and production-oriented methods. Because of the numerous information gaps poems call for consideration, building of hypotheses and completion of thoughts. The students are requested to think about the poem, about the reason why several thoughts are articulated in a very artistic language and why other thoughts are left out. They are required to 'read between the lines' and to engage with the text intensively. A couple of action- and production-oriented activities that deal with poems about school are shown below.

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[95] Cf. Surkamp, 102.
[96] Cf. Hinz, 355.
[97] Cf. Surkamp, 103.

4.3.1.1 Activities

A. Action-oriented activities

I. Exercise 1

Skills: reading

Aims: Students should become aware of rhyme, rhythm and the structure of a poem.

Description: The poem *Class Pest* by Kathy Kennedy-Marshall is cut into pieces. Students are only told the first line of each stanza. They are supposed to rearrange the poem. The activity is ideally being done in pairs or in groups. Then the poem is read aloud rhythmically by several students.

Class Pest

by Kathy Kenney-Marshall

1. The boy who sits behind me…

2. He tries to steal my pencils…

3. He cheats on every spelling test…

4. He talks too loud, his laugh is weird…

I think he's kinda cute.
Is really, really mean.
I wish he'd let me be.
I wish his folks would move away.
I smell like a sardine.
And blames it all on me.
He always pulls my ponytail.
And lock him in the zoo
He tells me I have cooties and

> I wish that he were mute.
> But the worstest[98] thing about him is…
> And my favorite crayons, too.

II. Exercise 2

> Skills: speaking, listening
>
> Aims: Pupils are supposed to learn how to read and play various texts by using different modes of speaking, gestures and mimes.
>
> Description: The class is divided into small groups. Each group works on a different poem and chooses a 'speaker' who recites the poem while the others try to perform the actions and play the poem. The other pupils listen to the various poems and their interpretations.

Poems about school can be found in the appendix.

B. Production-oriented activities

I. Exercise 1

> Skills: reading, writing
>
> Aims: Pupils are invited to take on a character's perspective and write a diary entry or an inner monologue. They should learn how to adopt another person's viewpoint and to understand his/her feelings and thoughts.
>
> Description: On the webpage http://www.gigglepoetry.com a vast number of poems about school can be found. The students ought to choose one poem from the website themselves. Then they are supposed to write either a diary entry or an inner monologue from a character's perspective.

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[98] The teacher may hint at the fact that 'worstest' is grammatically incorrect. He/she could also encourage the pupils to spot the 'mistake' in the poem.

II. Exercise 2

> Skills: Reading, writing
>
> Aims: The aim of the activity is that students should learn the differences between various text types and be able to produce them.
>
> Description: Again, students choose a poem from the website stated above. Then they ought to rewrite the poems into another text type. They could, for example, write a newspaper article, a short story or a comic. The most important point is that they should stick to the poem on the one hand, but on the other hand they must also be creative and turn the poem into another text sort.

After having provided a considerable number of exercises for learners that have already reached a certain level of proficiency in the foreign language, the next chapter concentrates on beginners. Picture books and graded readers, as well as listening to school stories are taken into consideration.

4.4 Teaching the school story to young learners

4.4.1 Picture books and graded readers in foreign language teaching

Picture books are only gradually integrated in foreign language teaching. For a very long time they have been viewed as being nothing more than 'vehicles of childish entertainment' (Arizpe and Styles, 21). However, more and more scholars and teachers acknowledge the value picture books can have for teaching.

Before exploring several definitions of what a picture book really is it needs to be mentioned that there is gradually developing a trend of introducing picture books in foreign-language teaching. If picture books are used in foreign language teaching they have a vast number of advantages. They are of particular help when they are used with primary school children as this is the age group a considerable number of picture books is aimed at, but they can also be integrated very successfully in foreign-language teaching at the beginning of secondary education.

Firstly, today it cannot be taken for granted that children are able to listen to stories quietly and to concentrate on the narrative so that later on a conversation about the book is possible. Eva Burwitz-Melzer states that parents, kindergartens and primary schools often miss to teach children a 'reading culture', which means that they should be acquainted with reading and listening to stories. Instead, this oftentimes has to be done at the beginning of secondary education now, and Burwitz-Melzer emphasises that picture books are a very useful resource to teach students a 'reading culture' as they are usually the first books children encounter in their lives.[99]

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[99] Cf. Burwitz-Melzer, 124.

Furthermore, picture books offer a great way to confront young foreign language learners with English literature. It is often the case that pupils who have only got a rudimentary knowledge of English are not willing to read if they do not understand each and every sentence. Picture books are a great help in this context as they normally provide the reader with visual input that supports the written texts and therefore facilitates understanding the language. Especially younger children tend to be impatient when they read and do not get a translation of some unknown words immediately, but if they read picture books they may gradually be familiarised with grasping a new word's meaning just by comparing the verbal and visual context of the vocabulary.

Lynne Cameron mentions that children's literature and in particular picture books often contains repetitive linguistic key structures that help young pupils to listen to or to retell a story, to answer questions to a text or to read a book themselves. The key structures are based on the patterns 'prediction vs. surprise' or 'repetition and sudden change'.[100] Cameron claims that the patterns provide a natural framework to learn new words and phrases, as well as grammatical structures. According to Burwitz-Melzer children's literature can be extremely beneficial for training listening, reading, writing and speaking, all skills that are important in language learning, if the book that is dealt with in teaching is accompanied with adequate and helpful exercises.[101]

Apart from expanding pupils' range of vocabulary and making them aware of new grammatical structures picture books can be used to confront pupils with the foreign culture in a way that is suitable for children. The American psychologist Ellen Handler Spitz emphasises in her book *Inside Picture Books* again and again the importance of parents reading to their child, which is, according to her, the ideal situation of introducing one's own culture to a child for the first time. For her, the cultural value of the pictures and the text is beyond debate. By talking about the pictures and the text in a child–oriented manner adults are able to enhance their children's understanding of cultural details tremendously.[102] Burwitz-Melzer argues strongly that Spitz' argument can also

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[100] Cf. Cameron, 163f.
[101] Cf. Burwitz-Melzer, 125f.
[102] Cf. Burwitz-Melzer, 126.

be related to the foreign-language class. In the same way as toddlers learn to gain access to their culture by talking about picture books with their parents, older children, like pupils who are between eight and twelve years old, can learn a lot about foreign cultures by treating picture books at school. In this case the teacher adopts the role of being the linguistic and cultural mediator between the book and the students.[103]

If picture books are integrated in teaching literature they should not only be used for looking at the foreign culture from an external perspective. Instead, the students could be encouraged to try to change their perspective and to look at a topic from a different angle. They should also learn to identify with a particular character and to comprehend the situation of a foreigner. For example Raymond Briggs' picture book *The Snowman* is about exploring a foreigner's world. In the book a snowman and a small boy learn about their different situations and lifestyles. In more detail, a small boy learns that a fireplace or a stove is dangerous for a snowman, but that a freezer is a wonderful place for him. This book is an example of a picture book that may encourage change of perspective, empathy and emotions in its readers.

Picture books consist of two systems, a text and a picture system which are interrelated. The teacher needs to talk about both systems with his/her students so that gaps in the systems that are necessary to be understood to grasp the story's meaning are not overlooked. It is only possible to make students aware of the interaction between pictures and text if the relationship between them is talked about explicitly.[104]

In addition, it needs to be stated that because of the short length picture books usually have they can quite easily be integrated in teaching. This is positive as they can be read rather quickly and then there is more time to make students work on the story by providing them with exercises and activities.

A definition of what a picture book is and how it functions is offered by Barbara Bader in the opening to *American Picture Books*:

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[103] Cf. Burwitz-Melzer, 126.
[104] Cf. Burwitz- Melzer, 141.

> A picture book is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and foremost, an experience for a child. As art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning of the page. On its own terms its possibilities are limitless. (Bader, 1)

Bader emphasises that picture books are compelling narrative texts, which carry cultural, social and historical messages. In addition, they are at the same time art objects and literature, which means that the reader has to be able to grasp the interconnections between word and image to understand the picture book. Lewis adds that picture books are not written in a fixed style and they are no real genre themselves. According to David Lewis

> […] the words and the pictures come from outside the picturebook; there is no picturebook house style or fixed approach, no set of genre conventions, no preferred form of text. The picturebook is thus emphatically not itself a genre. It is an omnivorous creature, ingesting, absorbing, co-opting pre-existent genres - or other ways of speaking, writing, picturing - in order to make its texts, and as these genres change and mutate within society, so does the picturebook. It constantly renews itself by adapting to whatever languages and images are available to it and this gives the form an open - ended quality. We can never be sure exactly what the picturebook will do next as it is forever becoming and never completed. (Lewis, 74)

There have been various attempts to define picture books as literary texts. Scholars have argued that in picture books prose and lyric are used. However, this claim does not always hold true as these text forms often appear in hybrid variants, which impede and complicate a definite categorisation. In addition, this categorisation neglects the pictures of the book, which means that an elementary part of the book does not go into the definition.[105]

Another way to categorise picture books is by concentrating on the two systems which constitute a picture books: the text and the picture system. Their relationship has induced scholars of literature to create taxonomies that define exactly how texts and pictures work together in order to create meaning. The unique relation between text and pictures determines the binary character of the

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[105] Cf. Burwitz-Melzer, 128f.

picture book. For the reader this relationship between the two systems can make picture books challenging. In addition to understand the narrative and rhetoric devices, like change of perspectives, chronological gaps, metaphors etc. in the text system, the "grammar" of the pictures needs to be decoded. The reader of a picture book moves - different than the recipient of a novel or a short story - not only in the written part back and forth, but he or she moves between text and pictures in a continuous motion in order to compare information the pictures convey with information the other system provides. This concept can be referred to as 'cyclic reading'.[106] Perry Nodelman describes the relationship between words and pictures in the following way:

> Pictures can communicate much to us, and particularly much of visual significance- but only if words focus them, tell us what it is about them that might be worth paying attention to. In a sense, trying to understand the situation a picture depicts is always an act of imposing language upon it- interpreting visual information in verbal terms! It is not accidental that we speak of 'visual literacy', of the 'grammar' of pictures of 'reading' pictures. Reading pictures for narrative meaning is a matter of applying our understanding of words - words like mine throughout this book; in applying such words to pictures, we are engaged in the act of turning visual information into verbal, even if we do not actually speak the words aloud. (Nodelman, 211)

Nikolaeva and Scott emphasise that if a picture book is read this process is called a hermeneutic circle. This means that 'the reader starts with the whole, looks at details, then goes back to the whole picture, as the process begins anew' (Arizipe, Styles, 21).

> Whichever we start with, the verbal or the visual, it creates expectations for the other, which in turn provides new experiences and new expectations. The reader turns from verbal to visual and back again, in an ever-expanding concentration of understanding. […] Presumably, children know this by intuition when they demand that the same book be read aloud to them over and over again. Actually, they do not read the same book; they go more and more deeply into its meaning. Too often adults have lost the ability to read picturebooks in this way, because they ignore the whole and regard the illustrations as merely decorative. This most probably has to do with the dominant position of verbal, especially written, communication in our society, although this is on the wane in generations raised on television and now computers. (Nikolaeva and Scott, 2)

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[106] Cf. Burwitz-Melzer, 130f.

Generally, it can be said that reading picture books can be quite demanding and challenging for the reader. Thus, picture books could and should be introduced in teaching a foreign language as long as they are accompanied with exercises that help the pupils to make sense of the books.

The picture book *Caroline and Miss Pim go to School* by Dagmar Geisler is a graded reader, which means that it is written for language learners who have reached a particular level of mastery of the foreign language. At the cover of Geisler's book it is stated that the picture book is aimed at beginners. Thus, the book can perfectly be used for teaching at primary level or in the first form of secondary education. There are some researchers who argue that graded readers should not be integrated into foreign language teaching. They claim that solely authentic material is beneficial for the learning process. However, especially if the learner is a beginner reading authentic material will mostly be far too challenging.[107] The readers get frustrated easily and even at an early age children may develop an aversion to reading and literature. Therefore it may often be better to confront young learners with graded readers first so that they develop competence and confidence in reading in the target language and then gradually try to introduce authentic texts from time to time. Hedge mentions that graded readers are a valuable source for teaching as they can help to 'develop students' knowledge of language, at the levels of vocabulary and structure and at the level of textual organisation' (Hedge, *Using Readers,* 22). Michael West comments on the vocabulary used in graded readers:

> [The graded reader] reviews and fixes the vocabulary already learned, it stretches that vocabulary so the learner is enabled to give a greater width of meaning to the words already learned. (West, 188)

Hedge argues that new words can be taught through various course materials, but the best way for a student to master and control a progressively expanding vocabulary is through reading. If the student is confronted with words in different

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[107] Cf. Day and Bamford*, Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom,* 56.

textual contexts, he/she will gain a more complete comprehension of the words' different uses and meanings.[108] David Wilkins makes the following point:

> Through reading the learner […] is exposed to the lexical items embedded in natural linguistic contexts, and as a result they begin slowly to have the same meaningfulness for him that they have for the native speaker. (Wilkins, 132)

The question that springs most readily to mind is whether graded readers provide 'natural linguistic contexts' (Wilkins, 132). It is sometimes argued that only by reading authentic texts learners will grasp all the subtleties of meaning. According to Hedge, however, there is no doubt that graded readers 'offer wider exposure to English than the more limited material of general course book' (Hedge, *Using Readers,* 23). She mentions that graded readers provide an important step on the way to good mastery of vocabulary.[109] In other words, graded readers may not provide the learner with natural linguistic contexts, but especially for beginners they are extremely helpful to build up, widen and foster vocabulary.

Apart from vocabulary learning, graded readers consolidate the structures the students are already familiar with. Another positive argument for using graded readers in class is that they help the students to realise how words and structures are actually used by writers to express ideas and information[110]. Graded readers are not only a great help to support learning, but they can also encourage good reading habits. Due to the fact that the majority of the structures and the vocabulary used is familiar students may read more fluently and thus build up confidence while reading.[111]

Reading the school story *Caroline and Miss Pim go to School* could be very motivating for beginners. Their mastery of the English language is very low and thus being able to read a whole book might be very rewarding for the children. They may feel that they have already learned a lot since the beginning of the school year and that they can understand a longer text.

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[108] Hedge, *Using Readers*, 23.
[109] Hedge, *Using Readers,* 23.
[110] Hedge, *Using Readers,* 26.
[111] Hedge, *Using Readers,* 62.

The following exercises designed to accompany the school story *Caroline and Miss Pim go to School* are presented in a game format. Research in psychology and game theory suggests that children naturally and universally enjoy playing games.[112] In playing games with each other children interact und thus they develop language skills. Julia Khan provides a definition of what a game is:

> Games are activities governed by rules, which set up clearly defined goals. The achievement of these goals signals the end of the game. Games involve a contest either between players or between the players and the goal, and games should lead to having fun. Games are for playing, and this element of play is crucial. (Khan, 142f.)

Games are challenging and there is competition involved. As the learners want to win the game it is clear that games are motivating. In pedagogical discussion of motivation for foreign language learning the difference between 'instrumental' and 'integrative' motivation is often stressed. A learner who is instrumentally motivated tries to study the language, for example in order to pass an exam or to improve job prospects. A learner who is integratively motivated is concerned with 'establishing closer links with the language community within which the language is used (Khan, 143). According to Khan, for the mature learner both kinds of motivation can lead to success in language learning. However, she emphasises, for the young learner motivation created by events in the classroom is much more effective than motivation deriving from factors outside, like parental attitudes. In other words, children have to be excited and involved in order to learn a foreign language effectively. This is the reason why integrating games or fun-activities in the foreign-language classroom from time to time can be of great help to the learners.[113]

I also want to mention that there are not only positive comments about the use of games in language teaching. There are numerous misapprehensions about integrating games in the classroom. Critics argue for example that 'games are not serious and can therefore not be treated seriously as part of a methodology for teaching English' (Khan, 151). Another critical comment is: 'Games can only

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[112] Cf. Khan, 143.
[113] Cf. Khan, 143f.

ever be decorative extras - time-fillers perhaps' (Khan, 151). A counter-argument to these statements may be that if activities are perceived as being fun the learners become involved more quickly. In addition, using language in order to win the game is one of the most profitable ways to develop language competence. Therefore, games should not only act as time-fillers in the lesson. They can be seen as a serious methodology for teaching a foreign language.[114] At this point it is vital to state that teaching must not only consist of games and fun-activities. Nevertheless, as play is in the nature of the child, it is helpful to include games in teaching from time to time.

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[114] Cf. Khan, 151.

4.4.1.1 Activities

A. Pre-reading exercise

I. Vocabulary memory

Skills: reading, speaking, listening

Aims: Students are introduced to new vocabulary.

Description: Before the lesson the teacher prepares several sets of memory-cards. The sets consist of cards with the words written on them and cards with pictures that match with the words. When students play the game in pairs or in groups all the cards are turned upside down. Then one student turns two cards around. If they fit together (a word and a picture) he/she is allowed to keep this pair of cards. If not, the cards have to be put back to the others. In addition to finding the correct pairs students are also supposed to say the words loudly. The aim of this is that learning the new words is facilitated for children who are auditory learner types. The winner of the game is the player who found the most vocabulary pairs.

B. While-reading exercise

Skills: reading

Aims: Students become aware of correct pronunciation.

Description: The teacher chooses a passage of the book or several pages. These pages are read by pupils in the following way. One student starts reading aloud. He/she is allowed to go on reading as long as he/she makes no mistake. Then the next student continues. The winners are

students who read until the teacher stops them. These pupils may be very proud for not having made any mistakes. In other words, the competitive ludic principle of the game may make reading seem to be more fun to students.

C. Post-reading exercise

I. Matching the pictures with the text

Skills: reading

Aims: Students are to become aware of the sequence of events that happen in the story.

Description: In the picture-book each passage of text is accompanied by a drawing. The teacher must copy all the drawings and text passages and cut them out. Then students are asked to work in teams. The teams should not be too large so that all pupils can participate in the activity. Each team gets all pictures and text passages and the team members are invited to match the pictures with the right text. After that they have to find the correct sequence of the pages. The group that is fastest wins the competition.

II. Verb-Bingo

Skills: listening, speaking

Aims: Expanding students' vocabulary.

Description: In the book there is a considerable number of verbs, mostly action verbs. Some verbs may be familiar to students, but others are new to them. Firstly, the teacher could summarise some verbs that appear in the book on the board. He/she asks students about the meaning of the words. Then students are put into groups. Each pupil has to take a sheet of paper and write down a particular number of verbs. Then a learner reads one verb after the other until a player has crossed out all words that

have been mentioned by the 'speaker'. This player is the winner of the game and is allowed to be the next 'speaker'.

The next chapter is still focussing on young learners. It describes a teaching method of how to familiarise beginners with listening to stories.

4.4.2 Teaching listening to young learners by using the TPR approach

Studies of classroom interaction have shown that children spend a substantial amount of time listening. They either listen to the teacher, to pre-recorded material or to each other.[115] Every time the teacher explains, gives instructions, praises somebody or tells a story he/she demands that the pupils listen carefully. However, students can only cope effectively with these demands when the teacher explains them how to listen. Brewster suggests that teachers have to develop of greater awareness of the different kinds of listening demands they make on the students.[116] There are various ways to set up a learning environment that makes listening for children easier. One way is to make explicit the reasons for listening to a text. If it is clear which tasks learners are expected to perform while or after listening it is easier for them to focus on a particular part of the message or to listen for gist. Furthermore, if the teacher is aware of the most common listening demands he/she makes on his/her students various strategies for different listening purposes can be trained, for example listening to follow instructions or descriptions. Besides, when children are aware of the fact that they do not have to understand every word of the spoken message their confidence in listening can increase tremendously. Finally, teachers should encourage learners to exercise 'intelligent guesswork', which means using context clues and background knowledge in order to understand and make sense of what they hear (Brewster, 159). To summarise, it is the teacher's task to support his/her pupils' understanding of the spoken message and to equip them with strategies on which they can draw when listening to a text.[117]

If texts to listen to are integrated in foreign language teaching many positive effects can be found. It needs to be added that the definition of radio-play in many books, articles and in this paper includes original radio plays, but also

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[115] Cf. Brewster, 158.
[116] Cf. Brewster, 158.
[117] Cf. Brewster, 159.

recordings of modern and classic drama, recordings that have especially been made for foreign language teaching, dialogues of books intended for teaching a foreign language and recordings produced by the students.[118] According to Nünning and Surkamp advantages of radio plays are, for example:

- Generally, if many different media are part of the foreign-language literature class teaching gets more lively and varied. In radio plays speaking and acting people appear and thus the foreign language is represented as living language, which may be motivating for learners.
- Similar to short stories or picture books radio plays are perfect for teaching as they are usually rather short in length. It is essential to note that the listener's attention span is limited and that children's attention span is even shorter.
- Radio plays are beneficial to students' communicative competence as they have to learn how to listen generally and for detail.
- Radio plays present language as everyday language, which can be arranged in an artistic way, but is usually more similar to spontaneous spoken language than in written literary texts.
- Listening to texts is beneficial as learners really have to concentrate in order to grasp the meaning of the text. The recipients only hear the words and the voices of the speakers and have to do without looking at facial expressions and gestures. Training pupils to listen attentively is valuable as it counterbalances the superior role pictures and visual images play nowadays.
- The lack of visual signals enables learners to realise the importance of nonverbal communication, like voice and intonation for getting messages across.
- The listening phase can lead to other language activities for learners. They could for example be encouraged to retell the text listened to or to write the text from another person's perspective.
- The radio play can also be used as a means of interpretation in the literature lesson. This means that a written text is recorded by students. By doing this they do not only have to read their roles, but also interpret

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[118] Cf. Nünning and Surkamp, 279f.

them. They have to put feeling into the text and have to find out why and how the characters act and talk in the particular situations.[119]

In order to support students' listening the teacher should be aware of some basic knowledge about the listening process. Two basic sub-skills can be identified that are required in order to be a mature and successful listener. One set of sub-skills is called 'bottom-up' skills (Annamaria Pinter, 46). These help the listener to 'build up the language from constituent parts' (Pinter, 46). Because of the listener's knowledge of the linguistic system he/she is capable of using bottom-up skills to segment the speech listened to and to make sense of it. The rule system of the foreign language could, for example, help a learner to identify the unstressed grammar words in a sentence without listening to each and every word. This processing is difficult, but smaller children may have even greater problems with this. If they have only been taught English for a short period they might not be familiar with the abstract rule system of the foreign language and thus it may be especially hard for them to 'manipulate the system from bottom up' (Pinter, 46). Apart from 'bottom-up' processing, competent listeners also do 'top-down' processing. This can be explained in the following way:

> [The listeners] rely on their schematic knowledge, i.e. their mental frameworks for various topics and their world knowledge to fill in gaps in their understanding, make guesses and interpretations as they follow the listening text. (Pinter, 46)

In other words, the listeners' general world knowledge helps them to make sense of and to understand the utterances they listen to. Undoubtedly, the younger the children the less developed is their schematic knowledge about a considerable number of topics. Therefore guessing and inferring meaning is much more difficult for children than for adults.[120]

In order to assure that children get support with both bottom-up and top-down work, the teacher has to provide them with listening tasks which are meaning driven and support them in developing these strategies slowly. With regard to

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[119] Cf. Nünning and Surkamp, 277ff.
[120] Cf. Pinter, 46.

top-down processing, it is important that listening is embedded in the 'here-and-now context of familiar games and routines such as stories and action rhymes' (Pinter, 46). The reason for this is that children do not need to infer the topic or the context for themselves. What is also helpful is to use visuals and gestures. In order to encourage bottom-up processing it is necessary that the teacher selects tasks that are not too demanding. To put this differently, children should not be given exercises that require them to manipulate language features they have not learned yet or that are uninteresting for them, such as translating or analysing the constituents of phrases or sentences. Pinter suggests that children should rather start with easier 'listen and do' activities (Pinter, 46). She states that in coursebooks there are many activities that ask pupils to 'listen and read', which means that they can follow the text in their books while listening, which helps with bottom-up processing.[121]

As already mentioned, listening is particularly demanding for young language learners. Therefore many researchers initially recommend mainly activities and exercises that require the children to respond nonverbally.[122] One such activity may be to listen to a story and to mime the actions instead of immediately producing language. This general approach to foreign language teaching is called 'the Comprehension Approach'. Its basic principle is that children have the opportunity to absorb the language before they have to talk themselves. The method is very different from other approaches to language teaching and learning, which mostly focus on pupils speaking the target language from the first day. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, research showed that language learning should start with understanding and only later proceed to production. Speaking will appear spontaneously after a learner has internalised a great number of features of the target language. Of course, at the beginning the learner's speech will not be flawless and perfect, but gradually speech will become more similar to the target language. Diane Larsen-Freeman emphasises that this method is exactly how a child acquires its native tongue.[123] Before an infant ever says a word it spends a long time only listening to people. It has enough time to identify and make sense of the sounds and utterances it

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[121] Cf. Pinter, 46.
[122] Cf. Pinter, 50.
[123] Cf. Larsen-Freeman, 107.

listens to and it chooses to speak when it is ready to. These observations are put into practice today in many different teaching methods.[124] One attempt to apply the observations is Total Physical Response (TPR), a method to language learning originally developed by James Asher. TPR is an approach that 'links learning to physical actions and ensures that learners will hear a lot of natural English in meaningful contexts without having to respond verbally' (Pinter, 50). In fact, the main objective of TPR is to 'reduce the stress people feel when studying foreign languages and thereby encourage students to persist in their study beyond a beginning level of proficiency' (Larsen-Freeman, 113). Teachers who use the method believe that it is highly important that their pupils enjoy learning to communicate in the target language. According to Asher, the best way to achieve enjoyment in students is to base the learning of a foreign language upon the way infants acquire their native tongue.[125]

There are many different listening exercises that are based on the TPR method. One example would be the so-called 'listen and respond' games like 'listen and clap your hands' or 'Simon says'. In these games the children are required to understand messages, decide whether the messages are right or wrong and then act accordingly. Other activities may be 'listen and draw the picture' or 'listen and colour the classroom or the girl's clothes' etc., which include drawing or colouring. Yet in other activities some writing is done, such as ticking or circling the right answer. Many of the exercises are focused 'listen and do' activities, which have an end product, like a drawing, a nicely coloured picture or a clown mask to take home and show parents. Pinter argues that due to the focused nature of the exercises the teacher can easily monitor how much the pupils have understood from the listening text.[126] She adds that the tasks not only give great listening practice but also 'offer opportunities for incorporating into the English class multiple intelligences through sticking, colouring, and making simple objects (Pinter, 51).

Some tasks and exercises which are associated with Total Physical Response and which support listening to a school story for beginners, are shown below.

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[124] Cf. Larsen-Freeman, 107.
[125] Cf. Larsen-Freeman, 113.
[126] Cf. Pinter, 51.

The story the pupils listen to is called 'Pets in class', it is the 12th track on the CD *Leselöwen - Stories about School*, and it is four minutes and twenty-two seconds long. At the beginning new vocabulary is introduced and immediately after this introduction the story follows. It is a story about a special lesson in which the pupils are allowed to bring their pets to class. The situation runs out of control and the teacher is desperate.

4.4.2.1 Activities

A. Pre-and while-listening

I. Exercise 1

Skills: listening, (speaking)

Aims: Expanding students' range of vocabulary (word field: pets).

Description: Before the lesson the teacher prepares pictures of all the pets that are mentioned on the CD-track. He/she puts them up in the classroom. It is important to add that the areas the pictures are put to should be quite diverse. The posters can for example be stuck to the board, to the windows, to the wastepaper basket or to the lamp. The teacher plays the introduction of the new vocabulary on the CD. First, the teacher walks and points to the matching pictures as the CD is played. As they become confident pupils join in. If they want, they can also say the new words while listening. After that introductory exercise pupils are asked to listen to the story and each time a new term is recognised they are supposed to walk and point to the correct picture.

B. While-listening

I. Exercise 1

> Skills: listening, (speaking)
>
> Aims: Pupils' range of vocabulary is expanded (topic: action verbs).
>
> Description: While listening to the CD-track again the teacher mimes various action verbs when they occur. With support from the teachers' gestures the new language is introduced and thus the meaning of the words can be grasped more easily by the children. Then pupils join in with the action. Whether pupils want to say the words as well should be optional. Pinter states that usually children want to join in and utter the corresponding words.[127]

II. Exercise 2

> Skills: listening, writing
>
> Aims: The activity requires students to listen for detail.
>
> Description: As students listen to the CD they are told to link the children's names with their pets. In addition to that they are also asked to find the pets' names and match them with the correct pictures. They may need to listen to the CD twice or three times.

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[127] Cf. Pinter, 50.

pupil	pet	picture	pet's name
1 Marcel	Saint Bernard dog		Schnurri
2 Svenja	mouse		Piepsi
3 David	cat		Tinchen
4 Kathrin	parrot		Bubu
5 Miriam	guinea pig		Joko

C. Post-listening

I. Exercise 1

Skills: listening

Aims: Students mentally reconstruct what they have listened to and use this knowledge to be creative.

Description: After having listened to the CD several times learners should try to remember and imagine a scene in the story and draw a picture of this particular scene. If some learners do not like drawing, an alternative

possibility would be to make students create a collage. In order to make this an option the teacher has to bring magazines, which contain pictures of children and pets, to class.

After having mentioned listening and the TPR approach, the next chapter will concentrate on intercultural competence and a teaching method which is called open-learning environments or work-stations.

4.5 Teaching intercultural competence in an open-learning environment

In the age of globalisation, mass migration and the exchange of information, which is continuously getting more rapid and complex, foreign language teaching faces new challenges and problems. One new objective of language teaching is to prepare students for being able to communicate and deal with other cultures, which is termed intercultural competence. At this point the question arises what this term exactly means. Apart from geographical facts and linguistic qualifications intercultural competence includes knowledge about behavioural patterns and communication strategies of foreign cultures. Communication patterns are for example recognisable in the way people speak to each other, how they address themselves, how they behave while eating and drinking, in gestures and facial expressions. This cultural knowledge should be part of education now, which aims at making pupils more sensitive to everything differing from the culture they are familiar with, helping them to reflect on their own culture, and to make them more empathic and tolerant towards foreign cultures.[128]

Laurenz Volkmann formulated several specific goals the teaching of intercultural competence pursues. First of all, he mentions that learners should become aware of the fact that people are characterised by diverse behavioural patterns and ways of thinking which depend on their particular culture. In addition, they gradually need to develop an understanding of the fact that social variables like age, gender, social class and environment influence the behaviour and way of thinking to a great extent. Moreover, intercultural competence means knowing more about conventionalised and typical behaviour of the target culture. Learners are also sensitised to cultural connotations of vocabulary and expressions of the target language. What is more, learners are to develop the ability to think critically about generalisations concerning the foreign culture.

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[128] Cf. Volkmann, 7.

These may be stereotypes, clichés and prejudices which should definitely be treated with care.[129]

An effective way of integrating cultural studies within foreign language teaching is to use authentic texts written by native speakers of the target language. According to Michael Byram

> […] language pre-eminently embodies the values and meanings of a culture, refers to cultural artefacts and signals people's cultural identity. Because of its symbolic and transparent nature language can stand alone and represent the rest of a culture's phenomena - most successfully in the literary use of language […] (Byram, 41).

An authentic school story which was written by an English native speaker and which represents several British customs and traditions is *Harry Potter*. The *Harry Potter* series, written by J.K. Rowling, consists of seven books and five of them have already been turned into films, as well. After pupils have either read the first volume or watched the first Harry Potter film the teacher may lay emphasis on cultural issues that are part of the story. One way to encourage pupils to explore cultural phenomena that differ from their own culture is to have numerous work stations. This approach to teaching needs to be explained further.

The approach was invented by Helen Parkhurst in 1920. In her 'Dalton- Plan' she developed a student-centred teaching method that enabled pupils to work individually on different tasks about a specific topic.[130] This was the origin of the so-called work-stations or open-learning environments.

Generally, the approach is applicable to all subjects. However, there are some aspects that define the teaching method. First of all, the teacher has to choose a topic from the curriculum, which is divided into several sections. Every section of the topic makes up one work-station. These stations are located in several areas of the classroom and students are supposed to walk around and do the tasks that are connected to the various topics. All the stations have to be prepared in a way so that no direct support from the teacher is needed by

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[129] Cf. Volkmann, 43.
[130] Cf. Van der Gieth, 13.; Potthoff, 91.

students while they are working on the tasks. Usually, the instructions are written down on the task sheet, but sometimes the exercises are self-explanatory. Normally, there is no fixed sequence in which the various stations have to be explored. In addition to the tasks, a key to the exercises is often provided in order to make it possible for students to check whether their answers were right or wrong. Besides, it is advisable to try to design activities that appeal to different learner-types.[131] It also needs to be mentioned that there should be a variety in the way the exercises have to be carried out. In other words, one exercise could for example have to be performed with a partner, another one in a group or individually. In some activities it may even be up to the student to choose whether he/she wants to do the task on one's own or together with a partner.[132]

Some suggestions of how the *Harry Potter* book or film could act as a starting point for exercises that are related to British customs and traditions is shown below. Altogether, there are four work stations that focus on several cultural issues. The exercises do not have to be done in a particular sequence.

4.5.1.1 Activities

I. Station 1 (Topic: Halloween)

Skills: reading, writing

Aims: The exercise provides students with some background knowledge that may help them to think about a particular event in the book critically.

Description: First learners must think about a terrible event described in the book that is dated on Halloween. Then they have to check whether they were right and look at page 65. The next question learners should try to solve is why Rowling chose this date as the day of Harry Potter's parents' death. For doing this they are invited to do an online-quiz about

Halloween on the computer[133]. This quiz can either be done with one or two players. It is important to write down pupils' answers on a sheet of paper and turn the sheets upside down, because after having completed all the tasks at the work stations they can read what the others have written.

II. Station 2 (Topic: English breakfast)

Skills: reading, listening

Aims: The exercise aims at teaching students about stereotypes.

Description: The pre-reading activity is a matching-exercise which requires students to match difficult words that are prerequisite to understand the text they are going to read. The text students have to read is a radio interview about English people and their habits of having breakfast. It is really realistic as it does not portray the traditional English breakfast as the typical meal that every common person eats in the morning. As an alternative to having learners read the text, the teacher could also record the interview together with some other people on CD. Then it would be a listening instead of a reading task. The post-reading/listening task is to compare the English breakfast as it is described in the interview with the scene in the film when Harry eats breakfast. The learners are asked to find out whether Harry eats a traditional English breakfast and what is missing or different in the film. Besides, the teacher may provide students with the solution to the exercises so that they can check their results on their own and do not have to consult the teacher.

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[133] Cf. British Council. 28 Mar. 2009 <http://www.britishcouncil.org/kids-games-quiz-halloween.htm>

Match the words with the correct definitions:

cereal	to be exactly what is wanted or needed
a muffin	another way of saying a fried breakfast
a fry up	breakfast food made from grains (cornflakes etc)
a greasy spoon	a sweet cake or bread
muesli	the unpleasant feeling the morning after drinking a lot of alcohol.
hangover	a colloquial term for a cafe which serves mainly fried food
to hit the spot	dry breakfast cereal made of toasted oats, nuts and dried fruits and eaten with milk

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III. Station 3 (Topic: School uniforms)

Skills: reading, speaking, writing

Aims: Students learn to state their opinion about a particular topic.

Description: This station consists of three exercises. In the first exercise students are encouraged to try to identify any differences between Harry and Hermione's school uniforms in pairs. This is followed by reading some opinions of British teenagers about school uniforms. Students are asked to answer several questions about the speakers. The last exercise consists of a number of statements about wearing a uniform and students should discuss whether these statements are in

favour of or against wearing them. Furthermore, they have to tick the opinions they agree and don't agree with and give reasons for their choices.

IV. Station 4 (Topic: Christmas)

Skills: reading, writing

Aims: Students learn about customs and traditions.

Description: The exercise consists of two parts. The first one is a text about some Christmas traditions with some blanks for students to fill in the correct words. Then they are asked to compare the book with the text they have just read and to answer questions about how Christmas is presented in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.* This activity can either be carried out individually or in pairs. If the pupils in the class have different religions the exercise could be expanded. After all students have finished the exercises at the work stations some volunteers could present how Christmas or other feasts are celebrated in their religions.

5 <u>Teaching the school story: A practice report</u>

In order to find out about the teachability of the school story I conceived lesson plans for four lessons. The project was carried out in a Hauptschule[135] in Upper Austria. It was set to take place in the course of the Wahlfach, which is an additional optional English course that lasts 100 minutes (two lessons) every week. The pupils were in the 4th grade, between 13 and 14 years old and had been taught English for four years. What was striking was that only girls attended the course although the school is a mixed one.

I had several aims in mind when planning the project. First of all, I wanted to familiarise the students with the genre of the school story. Secondly, my intention was to find out whether some theoretical approaches and methods are as useful in practical teaching as they sound in theory. A further aim was to teach poetry as I had read that this is a literary genre that is often neglected at school. Before I started approaching the project I had talked to the teacher and she justified my assumption about the minor role poetry plays in many EFL classrooms. In addition, I also tried to teach some cultural issues. Including all these different aspects into four lessons was no easy task. However, after a long time of preparation the project could finally be realised.

5.1 Lesson plan 1

<u>Date:</u> 27.01.2009

<u>Time:</u> 12:55 – 14:35

<u>Number of pupils:</u> 15 pupils (girls)

<u>Level:</u> intermediate

<u>Topic:</u> school and the school story

<u>Aims:</u> After the lessons the pupils should be able to talk about school, their subjects and their typical school days. In addition, they are supposed to become

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[135] The Hauptschule is an Austrian kind of secondary modern school which lasts four years.

aware of the structure of a poem and to be able to read poems that rhyme aloud.

Skills: speaking, reading, listening

Aids and materials: board, handouts, poems (cut into pieces)

The class is 100 minutes in duration (2 lessons).

Procedures	Interactions	Aids and materials	Approx. timing
Introduction of myself, the project and the topic (school)	Teacher's instruction		7 min
Collection of students' associations with school on the board	One student after the other	board	5 min
The students are supposed to ask their neighbour about his/her typical school day.	Pair-work	Handout 1	7 min
Some pupils shall present the neighbour's typical school day.	One student after the other		5 min
Compiling a list of all the subjects (that came up in the last activity) on the board. In addition, subjects that were not mentioned may be added. The students should write the subjects into their exercise books.	Students and teacher	board	10 min
Introduction to the genre of the school story. The students are asked to do the pre-reading exercise (match the words with the correct definitions).	Individual work	Handout 1	7 min
Comparison of their results.	Students and teacher	Handout 1	3 min
Then the pupils should work in	Group work	Poem -	7 min

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groups of three. Each group gets the same poem, *Class pest,* which has been cut into pieces, and they have to arrange it in proper order. They only get the first line of each stanza. The group that is first is the winner of the competition.		cut into pieces	
Some volunteers read the poem aloud. The teacher may need to help them so that they focus on stress and rhythm.	One student after the other	Poem - cut into pieces	8 min
Now each group gets another poem. They are required to read them silently first. If they have any questions they are allowed to ask the teacher.	Individual/ group work	Several poems	5 min
Then the students of each group have to choose one of them who reads the poem. The others act it out while he/she is reading. The groups get ten minutes to rehearse.	Group work	Several poems	10 min
The chairs are put into a circle and in the middle of the circle one group after another performs their poems.	Group work	Several poems	20 min

5.1.1 Reflection

The first teaching unit was set after the students' lunch break and I expected them to be tired and not particularly motivated to participate in the lesson. Fortunately, it turned out that they were very excited when they saw me entering their classroom with their regular teacher. All of them stood up and some girls whispered that it was cool to have another teacher today. Then it was completely silent and I started to introduce myself. I told them that they could ask me further questions, but they seemed to be too shy to speak to me at first. It needs to be added here that in this region of Upper Austria it is not so common to have students teaching lessons. I think that this was the reason why they were really motivated despite the demanding temporal circumstances of the session.

The first activity of collecting ideas and associations with school was helpful as it supported the students in activating prior knowledge about the topic. Many pupils came to the board and wrote words like 'friends', 'English', 'teacher', 'marks' etc. This helped to create an atmosphere that was more relaxed and friendly. The next step was the speaking exercise. The girls were supposed to ask their neighbours about their typical school days. It seemed to me that they liked the activity very much. They talked a lot and after the activity some of them volunteered to present their classmates' typical school days. The exercise led directly to the next activity, which required the learners to collect all subjects they have at school on the board. At first I wanted the students to write the words down themselves, but as the last activity took them longer than expected, I decided to compile a list on the board. While I was writing they copied the text into their exercise books. Nevertheless, I asked them for the English words and did not provide them with the solutions first.

After these introductory exercises the work with the actual school stories followed. I mentioned that the school stories they would be dealing with were poems. Some eyed me with deep distrust when I said this. As a pre-reading exercise I chose to let the students match some vocabulary which might be new

to them with the German translations. Obviously I did not explain that activity properly, because when I went around in the classroom it turned out that some girls did not know what to do. I had assumed that they knew such kind of exercises, but in this case I gave them the instruction to the task again. The ensuing activity was to bring a poem that had been cut into pieces before into the correct order again. I told them that this was a competition and they were really eager to win the contest. In retrospect, I am of the opinion that it was a good idea to provide them with the beginning line of each stanza, because otherwise the activity may have proved to be too difficult. The group that won made a lot of noise and it was hard to keep them quiet while the others were still working on rearranging their poems. When they read the endings of the poems they laughed, giggled and said that they found it very cute. At the next step some pupils should read the poem aloud. This was not a great problem for them. I had to help some of them with stress and rhythm, but they learned to read the poem quite quickly.

When I told them that they could stay in their groups for the next exercise they seemed to be quite happy. Each group got a poem and I told them to read the poem and to ask me if there were problems with understanding them. Most groups had several questions, but in general they had no severe difficulties with grasping the meaning of the poems. They needed a lot of time to rehearse the poems afterwards and not all groups could perform their poems in front of the class. However, when they heard that the others were allowed to act them out in the next lesson they were relieved. The performance of their classmates was observed attentively by the pupils.

Generally, I believe that the lesson was very successful. Afterwards, the teacher told me that it had seemed to her that the girls liked the poems a lot and that she believed that the girls might not view poetry with such deep distrust any more.

5.2 Lesson plan 2

Time: 12:55 – 14:35

Number of pupils: 16 pupils (girls)

Level: intermediate

Topic: poems and films about school

Aims: After the lessons the pupils should be able to respond to poems about school in a personal way. They are encouraged to take on a character's point of view and to write a diary entry from his/her perspective. In addition, they get to know another type of the school story, namely the film *Harry Potter 1*. The students should be able to answer questions about and beyond the film. Besides, they are requested to talk about their opinions concerning school uniforms.

Skills: speaking, reading, listening, writing

Aids and materials: film, DVD-player, 'Jelly Beans', handouts

The class is 100 minutes in duration (2 lessons).

Procedures	Interactions	Aids and materials	Approx. timing
Asking the students what they remember from the last lesson.	Classroom discussion		5
Making five piles of poems in the classroom. Each student can choose a poem (either one that they have already read or another one). The students are supposed to write a diary entry. The teacher has to make sure whether the students know how to write a diary entry and what it looks like. Otherwise he/she has to explain this.	Teacher's instruction Individual work	Various poems	15

As a next step the teacher tells the pupils that school stories do not always have to be books or poems, but that they can also be films. Asking them if they know films about a school. Probably one of them says *Harry Potter.* If not, the teacher may help them by saying that there is one film about a magic school which magicians and witches go to.	Teacher and students		5 min
Having one or more students explain the beginning of Harry Potter (who he is, where the story takes place, how old he is, how he gets to know that he is a wizard etc.).	Students		8 min
Showing them a 10-minute sequence (0:28-0:38 min) of *Harry Potter 1.* While watching the students are supposed to answer several questions about the film. Presumably they will need to watch the scene twice.	Individual work	Film, DVD-player, handout 2	20 min
Comparing the pupils' answers.	Classroom discussion	Handout 2	5 min
As one of the questions deals with 'Bertie Bott's Beans' the teacher may bring 'Jelly Beans' to the class and allow the students to taste them. Probably it is a good idea to go through all the flavours that are written on the back of the package before the students try the beans.	Teacher to students	'Jelly Beans'	5 min

After watching the film the students' personal reactions should be talked about. Questions like: "Which character did you like best? Why?" etc. may be helpful.	Teacher to students	Handout 2	7 min
As a post-viewing activity the students are requested to think about school uniforms (the pupils in Harry Potter wear them). They are for example asked whether they found them pretty and whether they found differences between Hermione's and Harry's uniform.	Classroom discussion		5 min
Finally, the students are supposed to read some opinions of British teenagers about school uniforms. They have to divide the opinions into For or Against. Then they should tick the opinions they agree and they do not agree with and give reasons for their choices.	Pair work	Handout 2	10 min
Comparison of their results.	Students and teacher		5 min

5.2.1 Reflection

In the second unit the atmosphere was better from the beginning as the students already knew me and what I was doing at their school. They immediately answered my question about what they remembered from the last lesson. Some asked what we were going to do today, which gave me the feeling that they were really interested in the content of the project. I answered that we would first deal with the poems again and then proceed to watching a film. When I said this they cheered loudly. They got back into their groups and

those who had not performed their interpretation of the poem acted them out now.

The next step was that the girls were allowed to choose one of the poems they had heard either in the previous or the actual lesson. Each of them got a printed version of the poems. Then they were supposed to write a diary entry from the perspective of one of the characters. When I asked them whether they knew how a diary entry was written they answered that they had already done this several times. As the last few exercises that dealt with school poems had been action-oriented I decided to try out a production-oriented exercise, as well. It turned out that both methods were really effective and it seemed to me as if the students enjoyed this way of teaching that deviated from their regular teaching a bit.

Then I continued with explaining to the class that school stories do not always have to be poems or novels, but that there is also a considerable number of films about school. I asked them whether they knew films about school and one girl told me that within the next few weeks a new film about a high school would start. They also mentioned *Harry Potter* and they were informed that they were going to watch a part of the movie now. To my question whether they knew *Harry Potter* they all replied with 'Yes'. Two girls told the class some facts about Harry Potter so that those who could not remember the film/book so well would face no disadvantages when watching the film. They only needed to watch the sequence once to answer the questions, which was positive, as we were running out of time now. After their results were compared I handed out the jelly beans. Some girls knew them and they told me that they were their favourite sweets. Before that I went through all the flavours which were written at the back of the package. In my opinion this was good, because otherwise they would have asked me for the translation constantly.

After that we discussed which scenes and which characters they liked best and they gave reasons for their answers. I believe that this was necessary to round the last activity off. The final exercise dealt with a cultural topic. They were encouraged to consider the differences between Hermione's and Harry's school

uniform and tell me whether they liked the kind of clothing or not. Then I handed out a worksheet, which provided them with statements from British teenagers about school uniforms. They had to divide the opinions into For or Against and afterwards tick the statements they agreed and they did not agree with. Finally, they had to give reasons for their choices. Unfortunately, a comparison of their results was not possible any more due to a lack of time.

When the lessons were over they asked me if I would teach them again. When I answered in the negative some girls said that they would have liked some more lessons with me. One of them even wished me good luck for my future.

All in all, I enjoyed teaching the school story and I had the impression that the students got a good overview of several literary forms in which school stories appear. I also want to mention that all the aims that I tried to achieve with the exercises were reached[136].

In the lessons I tried to address several learner types with the exercises. The *Harry Potter* exercise aimed at the visual and the auditory learner type. As the students were watching the film, the 'visual learner type' was addressed. In addition, the students listened to the dialogues and sounds in the movie, which helped the 'auditory learner types' to understand the film. The activities that were designed according to the action- and production-oriented approach (f. ex. rearranging a poem that had been cut into pieces) rather aimed at doing something, which may have supported the kinaesthetic learners. I believe that the school story, as it appears in all kinds of text sorts and media, is perfect for designing exercises that appeal to different learner types.

In my opinion the pupils especially liked the exercises about poetry, which were designed according to the action- and production-oriented approach. The learners participated extremely well in these activities although they had viewed poetry with distrust before. It appeared to me that it was an easy task for the girls to take on another character's perspective and to write a diary entry. The reason for this may probably be that they could identify with the pupils and their

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[136] See chapters 5.1 and 5.2.

problems described in the poems easily. This might confirm my belief that teaching the school story in all kinds of text sorts is positive as the subjects and issues it deals with are usually not very remote from the learners' worlds. I assume that this was a factor which helped to increase the learners' motivation to participate in the exercises.[137]

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[137] See chapter 3.2.

6 <u>Conclusion</u>

In this thesis, the school story, a literary genre with a long tradition has been analysed with regard to its appropriateness to be taught in EFL classrooms. One of the main arguments in favour of teaching the genre may be that pupils can identify easily with the characters that are portrayed in school stories. Mostly, they are approximately the same age as their readers and the experiences the characters make in the stories are similar to those of the readership. Furthermore, the majority of contemporary school stories aims at both, male and female readers, which makes it easier for the teacher to chose a text that meets the interests of both sexes. In addition, school stories address readers of various age groups. This means that school stories can be integrated in the teaching of beginners, as well as the teaching of quite advanced students. Moreover, when teachers work with contemporary school stories it is positive that normally no specific background knowledge is prerequisite to understand the narratives. In other words, usually pupils are familiar with the setting, situations and problems that are tackled in school stories. Besides, teachers may teach cultural issues if the school story is set in a foreign country. This may enable pupils to become more aware of the differences between the foreign culture and their own culture they are familiar with.

As school stories are written in various literary forms I attempted to demonstrate how the different text types could be combined with various teaching methods in order to make the literature lesson most effective. I suggested, for example, including extensive reading in EFL teaching. A list of novels written for young adults was compiled, which all focus on a topic linked to school. Moreover, I designed an extensive reading programme on bullying at school. I want to mention that novels are very appropriate to be combined with extensive reading, as one of the main goals of the approach is that students read longer texts.

One of the chapters deals with the short story and shows three different approaches of how the short story could be taught. The text type is short and

self-contained, which facilitates working on the text more closely and intensively. In this part of the paper my endeavour was to show that due to its brevity teaching the short story can be realised in various ways.

In connection with poems about school, I wrote about a teaching approach that aims at a pupil-centred and creative use of literary texts. This is called action- and production-oriented language learning. As figurative language often deviates from the norms of language I believe that this approach, which intends to stimulate critical thinking and interpretation in pupils, is one of the most suitable for teaching poetry.

Since most chapters are concerned with language learners that have already reached a certain level of language proficiency I decided to write a section about teaching school stories to young learners. In this part of the paper picture books, graded readers and listening to school stories by using the TPR method are described. Since picture books are usually the first texts children encounter in their lives, it seems natural to include them in the teaching of young foreign language learners. Understanding the foreign language is facilitated as picture books provide the reader with visual input that supports the written texts. Graded readers can also be very helpful for teaching young learners who have only got a rudimentary knowledge of English. Because of the fact that the majority of the structures and the vocabulary used is familiar in graded readers pupils may read more fluently and thus build up confidence while reading. The third part of the chapter that deals with young language learners takes listening into consideration, which is often a problem for children because of several reasons. As listening is particularly demanding for young language learners the approach that might be the most suitable in this context is the TPR method, which initially recommends activities that require learners to respond nonverbally.

Due to the increasing importance of teaching intercultural competence one chapter is dedicated to this subject. School stories from all over the world are available to be integrated in teaching. These stories often provide readers with

various cultural issues, which can be discussed in the EFL lessons. The teaching approach mentioned in this section is called work-stations or open-learning environments. Each work-station could, for example, focus on a particular cultural issue that is part of a school story.

The lessons taught at the secondary modern school fostered my belief that the school story is worth to be integrated in EFL teaching. Especially the exercises about poetry, which were designed according to the action- and production-oriented approach, found the students' approval. The reason for this might be that the students could identify with the pupils and their problems described in the poems easily. This may confirm my hunch that teaching the school story is valuable as the subjects and issues it deals with are usually not very remote from the learner's worlds. I assume that because of this fact the learners' motivation to participate in the activities was increased. During my preparation phase for the practical teaching I encountered an additional factor that made me believe that the school story is beneficial to EFL learners. I realised that the school story, as it appears in all kinds of text sorts and media, is perfect for designing exercises that appeal to different learner types. All these factors contributed to my belief that the school story should definitely be integrated in EFL teaching.

Although I tried to provide an overview about various literary forms the school story can take on, there are still forms of the school story that could be explored further. These forms are, for example, electronic texts, plays or films. Furthermore, other teaching methods, such as the e-learning approach, could be analysed in order to find out whether they are useful for teaching the school story.

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8 Index

9 <u>Appendix</u>

<u>A full English breakfast</u>

Sarah: You're listening to British Council English Online. Hello I'm Sarah and this is Sabrina.

Sabrina: Hello

Sarah: Welcome to Ask UK, your opportunity to ask questions about all things British.

Sabrina: So what's today's question?

Sarah: Well, An Xiao Dan from Beijing wants to know about British breakfasts and in particular the great British fry up. Here she is,

An Xiao Dan: I heard that all British people eat bacon and eggs for breakfast. Is that true?

Sarah: Let's ask a few people and find out.

Interviewee 1 I usually have cereal and a cup of tea, so it'll be a bowl of cereal with milk and a cup of tea.

Interviewee 2 I always have for breakfast 2 pieces of toast with butter, a cup of coffee - black and 2 sugars and 2 cigarettes.

Interviewee 3 Usually for breakfast I grab something on the way to work, so usually it ends up being something like a carrot muffin.

Interviewee 4 I usually have a bowl of cereal and a glass of water for breakfast.

Sarah: Well it seems that British people these days don't often eat a full English breakfast.

Sabrina: Why's it called a full English breakfast?

Sarah: Because it's not usually just bacon and eggs, it can also include things like grilled tomatoes, mushrooms, baked beans, sausages, toast and jam…anything really!

Sabrina: …… and why do you think people don't often eat a full English breakfast?

Sarah: I think it's partly because people have less time these days – when you're rushing off to work in the morning there just isn't time to cook a big fry up and the other thing is that people are now trying to lead healthier lifestyles, so things like fresh fruit and muesli are becoming more popular.

Sabrina: So when would you eat a full breakfast?

Sarah: Well, let's ask some people and find out.

Interviewee 1 Well I travel a lot for work so when I'm in a hotel and I've got someone there who can cook a full breakfast for me then I'll take advantage of eating a full English breakfast.

Interviewee 2 I have a full English breakfast about twice a month at roughly about 11.30 when we take my daughter to a local greasy spoon.

Interviewee 3 These days rarely now that I live abroad, but if I get the chance and I've had a night out on the town, an English breakfast hits the spot.

Interviewee 4 I don't often have a full English breakfast but I would probably have a full English breakfast if I'm staying in a hotel or if some of my friends decide to go out for breakfast and then I would have a full English breakfast.

Sarah: So it seems that most people would only have a fry up at the weekend, to get rid of a hangover or if they are staying in a hotel. Have you ever had a fry up Sabrina?

Sabrina: Yeah I tried it once, I really love it!

Sarah: And that's it for this podcast, thank you for listening.[138]

Now watch the scene in the movie and compare Harry's breakfast with the traditional English breakfast. Are there any differences?

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[138] British Council China. 27 Feb 2009 <http://www2.chinadaily.com.cn/language_tips/2008-02/25/content_6482509.htm>

Fill in the correct words:

Christmas in England

In English speaking countries, children don't get their presents on Christmas Eve (___ December). _____ comes at night when everyone is asleep. Santa's _____ can fly and take him from house to house. They land on the _____ of the houses and then Santa climbs down the _____ to leave the presents under the_____.

In the morning of Christmas Day (____ December), children usually get up very early to unwrap their _____. Then they have plenty of time to play with their new toys.

Christmas dinner is served in the early afternoon. Most people eat _____ and sprouts and a Christmas pudding.

26 December is called_____ . It hasn't always been a_____ . People used to go back to work on that day where their bosses gave them little Christmas presents in small boxes. That's why the day is called Boxing Day.[139]

roofs	24	reindeer	25	roofs	presents	holiday
turkey		Boxing Day		Christmas tree	Santa	

Please read chapter 12 in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's stone* again and answer the questions:

Where do Harry and Ron spend Christmas Eve and Christmas Day?
What happens in the morning of Christmas Day?
Are there one or more Christmas trees mentioned in the book?
How and by whom is it decorated?
Do Harry and Ron get any presents for Christmas? Which ones?
Where do they find them?

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[139] English Grammar Online for you. 3 Apr. 2009 <http://www.ego4u.com/en/read-on/countries/holidays/christmas/england>

School uniforms

Together with a partner please try to identify any differences between Harry and Hermione's school uniforms. Then read the text and answer the questions.

Read and find out

- Which speaker is proud of their school uniform?
- Which item of clothing causes the most problems?
- Are the rules stricter than in your school?
- Are the rules the same for boys and for girls?

School Uniform Report …Forced to wear a skirt….

Each term the British press has reports of pupils being sent home from school. What is their crime? Not always bad behaviour. Sometimes it has something to do with fashion. Punk hair, rings in noses and dangerous heels can cause concern but some schools are prepared to send pupils home if their school uniform is too short. Pupils can't resist the temptation to customise their uniform, change the style of their trousers, write on their ties or adapt their uniform jacket to suit the latest trends.

UK students speak out:

- **I hate wearing our school skirt. It is no longer acceptable for girls to have to wear skirts. Making us wear them is totally sexist. In winter we are freezing and the boys are nice and warm in their trousers! It isn't fair. Emma, 15 Liverpool**
- **Three years ago the parents voted for a uniform. It has saved us all loads of money. Everyone looks smart in their school sweatshirt. I think it's cool. We still have pressure to wear the latest trainers but at least there is no competition about clothes for school. Martin, 16 Northern Ireland**
- **My mate was sent home in June because the Head of Year said her skirt was too short. I mean, it's ridiculous. I would like to wear long shorts when it is hot but that isn't possible either. The skirts have to be knee length. It's like being in prison. I don't think it makes any difference to our school work or exam results! Caitlin, 14 Edinburgh**[140]

The next task can be done in pairs or in a group. Please discuss:

Here are some more opinions from British teenagers.

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[140] British Council. 28 Mar. 2009 <http://www.britishcouncil.org/languageassistant-skirt.htm>

- Divide the opinions into For or Against.
- Tick the opinions you agree and you don't agree with and give reasons for your choice.
  - Uniforms keep pupils tidy and smart.
  - Uniforms are ugly and outmoded.
  - Uniforms stop unfair comparisons between rich or poorer students.
  - Uniforms make choosing your clothes in the morning easier.
  - Uniforms are not democratic.
  - Uniforms do not allow teenagers to express their individual personalities.
  - Uniforms are good for discipline and give a serious tone to the school.[141]

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[141] British Council. 28 Mar. 2009 <http://www.britishcouncil.org/languageassistant-skirt.htm>

Poems about school

Falling Asleep in Class

by Kenn Nesbitt

I fell asleep in class today,
as I was awfully bored.
I laid my head upon my desk
and closed my eyes and snored.

I woke to find a piece of paper
sticking to my face.
I'd slobbered on my textbooks,
and my hair was a disgrace.

My clothes were badly rumpled,
and my eyes were glazed and red.
My binder left a three-ring
indentation in my head.

I slept through class, and probably
I would have slept some more,
except my students woke me
as they headed out the door.[142]

Food Fight

by Kenn Nesbitt

We'd never seen the teachers
in a state of such distress.
The principal was yelling
that the lunchroom was a mess.

It started off so innocent
when someone threw a bun,

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[142] Gigglepoetry. 3 Apr. 2009
<http://www.gigglepoetry.com/poem.aspx?PoemID=108&CategoryID=44>

but all the other kids decided
they should join the fun.

It instantly turned into
an enormous lunchroom feud,
as students started hurling
all their halfway-eaten food.

A glob went whizzing through the air,
impacting on the wall.
Another chunk went sailing out
the doorway to the hall.

The food was splattered everywhere—
the ceilings, walls, and doors.
A sloppy, gloppy mess was on
the tables and the floors.

And so our good custodian
ran out to grab his mop.
It took him half the afternoon
to clean up all the slop.

The teachers even used some words
we're not supposed to mention.
And that's how all the kids and teachers
wound up in detention.[143]

Class Pest

by Kathy Kenney-Marshall

The boy who sits behind me
Is really, really mean.
He tells me I have cooties and
I smell like a sardine.
He tries to steal my pencils
And my favorite crayons, too.
I wish his folks would move away
And lock him in the zoo.
He cheats on every spelling test
And blames it all on me.
He always pulls my ponytail.
I wish he'd let me be.
He talks too loud, his laugh is weird.
I wish that he were mute.

---

[143] Gigglepoetry. 3 Apr. 2009
<http://www.gigglepoetry.com/poem.aspx?PoemID=192&CategoryID=43>

But the worstest thing about him is…
I think he's kinda cute.[144]

Parent-Teacher Conference

by Darren Sardelli

At the parent-teacher conference,
my father made a scene.
He scared my fifth-grade teacher,
with his mask from Halloween.

She showed him all my science grades
and said she was concerned,
but he just stuck his tongue out
when my teacher's back was turned.

He drew a monster on the board
and claimed it was her twin.
He even shook her soda,
which exploded on her chin.

My angry teacher crossed her arms
and said, "This meeting's done!
I now see where he gets it from—
you act just like your son!"[145]

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[144] Gigglepoetry. 3 Apr. 2009
<http://www.gigglepoetry.com/poem.aspx?PoemID=104&CategoryID=38>
[145] Gigglepoetry. 3 Apr. 2009
<http://www.gigglepoetry.com/poem.aspx?PoemID=352&CategoryID=44>

My Teacher Loves Her iPod

by Bruce Lansky

My teacher loves her iPod.
It's always in her ear.
She doesn't mind it if we joke
or chat 'cause she can't hear

If we don't pay attention,
she doesn't seem to care.
Whenever she has music on,
she wears a distant stare.

Our principal dropped by one day,
and she paid no attention.
He took away her iPod,
and he sent her to detention.[146]

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[146] Gigglepoetry. 3 Apr. 2009
<http://www.gigglepoetry.com/poem.aspx?PoemID=344&CategoryID=44>

THE CATECHISM EXAMINATION

Something about the way the garden hedge looks today gives me a feeling I would have difficulty in describing, although I recognize it very well. I had this feeling before, as a child. Perhaps since then too. But I only recall the first time.

The hedge, let me say, is very still. A quiet, neat line, separating the garden from the road. At the far side of the road is a stone wall, and beyond that the sea, which is an even grey colour, with dark flecks where the waves dip. The sky is the same colour as the sea, only a little lighter. No seagulls, no garden birds, no dogs, are visible. Just lines, grey and dark grey and black. It is a foggy day, dull, and lovely.

We were to have our catechism examination. For three months, ever since the Christmas holidays, Miss O'Byrne had been drilling us in the two hundred and thirty questions we, as prospective First-Communicants, were expected to know. We learned five questions every night for the first two months, and then we revised ten a night during the month before the exam. Even the most stupid girl in the class, Mary Doyle, knew nearly all the answers by now.

Miss O'Byrne is a strict teacher. That is her reputation, what the big girls and the mothers say about her. And she lives up to it. She even looks strict: tall, with angular features and menacing butterfly glasses. The frames of her glasses are transparent, but the wings are brilliant royal blue, with diamonds glittering in the corners. Behind, above, her eyes sparkle, sharp and penetrating.

She . . des in every morning, her thin legs pushing against her black pencil skirt. The first thing she does is call the roll. When a name is called and no one answers she glares at each face in turn, creating a palpable thrill of excitement in the big Georgian drawing room. Her eye rests, briefly, on me, and I feel afraid, and oddly pleased. Am I to be punished because, say, Mary Clarke is absent? She does not sit beside me, I have nothing much to do with her, I don't even like her. But Miss O'Byrne's ways are mysterious to me, and to all of us. Her system, if she has one, is not something we understand.

She looks down at the roll-book and we watch her fountain pen, a special Parker kept for performing this important task, scratch a big 'x' beside the name of the absentee. Miss O'Byrne smiles to herself, and shakes her head. Then she blots the roll-book with her pink blotter and the day begins.

Who made the world? Who is God? Who are the three persons of the Blessed Trinity? What is meant by Transubstantiation? What are the Ten Commandments? The Seven Deadly Sins? The Six Commandments of the Church?

Now, in the last week, she goes through all two hundred and thirty questions every day. It takes from nine o'clock until two, given the half-hour break for lunch. She begins calmly, and the class, too, is calm, at first. The girls sit upright in their narrow desks, faces pink and newly scrubbed, hair brushed back and tied in blue ribbons. Gradually the pressure increases. Girls make mistakes, and have to stand out in line to be slapped. Three slaps for each mistake. Miss O'Byrne takes this part of the proceedings seriously. She slaps using three or four rulers, bound together with an elastic band. Rumour has it that she once tried to introduce a bamboo cane, but the Parents' Committee and the Parish Priest banned it: bamboo can leave marks.

Miss O'Byrne's patience goes, soon, and order vanishes. Girls grow hot and sweaty, waiting to be asked, hoping they will survive the day without punishment, although this hardly ever happens. Their faces become red, their white blouses grow black and floppy. Only Miss O'Byrne's sweater, white angora, remains immaculate, smelling of Mum and Dior.

She takes a break to teach us a moral lesson, to tell us about the

44

45

Missions. Delighted to have a reprieve from the harrowing questioning, and eagerly anticipating the thrills to come, we sit up with suddenly renewed vigour in our desks. I run my fingers along the thick coarse grain of the wood: the wood is golden, and polished brilliantly by generations of woollen elbows, but the deep lines of its surface are filled with a black substance. It looks like fine clay, but it is dust. Ancient dust.

'Hands on your heads!' raps Miss O'Byrne, and we all obediently place our hands on the crowns of our heads. I feel my smooth hair, pulled tight downwards towards its pony tail. Underneath, my skin is hot and pulsating slightly.

The Missions. Nuns and priests and lay people who give up their lives to preach the word of God to pagans. Lay people, what are they? Some sort of hybrid, not fully human, I sense. People like Miss O'Byrne. Brave and unusual They are killed. Tortured. She tells of pins under fingernails, tongues ripped out. I am not sure who does it, rips out the tongues. Communists, perhaps. Or black people. In Africa or China. Miss O'Byrne mentions South America but I have not heard of it before. Africa, I know all about Africa.

My arms are getting tired. I wish she would let us put them down again. When she does, the questioning will begin.

Nuns and priests and lay people are tortured, because they want to teach catechism to the pagans. And we can't learn ours properly. We are too lazy. Lazy, spoiled little city girls.

Mary Doyle is wrinkling up her face and moving her arms about dangerously. Stupid Mary Doyle. She can't learn, it seems, and she looks terrible. Small, scrawny, with thin blonde hair. Her face is white and sprinkled with freckles. Her gymslip hangs on her bony body.

She cries. Whenever she is punished, which is often, she bursts into huge uncontrollable sobs. Her pale face grows red and spotty, and her body shakes.

There is something wrong with Mary Doyle. I do not know what, but I have thought of her for some time and come to this conclusion. It irritates me, that she is on my mind. She is very often on my mind, because she is so strange, because there is something wrong with her. Why doesn't her mother do something about her?

Her mother is all right. I have seen her, sitting in the dark

mildewed hall, under the statue of the Virgin: she wears a fawn teddy coat and inside her pink flowered headscarf her face is round and pleasant. Normal. Not skinny and odd. The trouble is, Mary's mother doesn't notice that her daughter is unusual. When Mary emerges from the cellar, where we hang our coats, Mrs Doyle gives her a kiss and says 'Hello lovey,' just like any other mother. Then Mary's face lights up as though there were a lamp underneath her transparent skin. And her mouth is really very big. She smiles and her whole face is taken over by the smile. She is like the Cheshire Cat my mummy reads about, at night in front of the fire in the kitchen. And even that, the way she lights up and turns into a smile, is odd. But Mrs Doyle just doesn't notice. She chats to the other mothers, about the price of First-Communion dresses and the French lessons we might get next year, as if Mary were the same as the other girls: solid, sturdy, in mind and body.

'Stop fidgeting, Mary Doyle,' says Miss O'Byrne. Mary's face wrinkles up and becomes pink. The bell rings, clanging violently through the cold gloomy rooms of the school. We are allowed to take down our hands. We are allowed to go down to the cellar, and out to our mothers, waiting in the hall.

Two days before the examination Miss O'Byrne is very nervous. Five pupils, five, are absent. During roll-call, her eyes dart about, stopping to rest for long periods now on one, now on another girl, daring those present to be absent tomorrow, or on the day of the examination itself. I feel genuinely frightened. I don't like Miss O'Byrne, but I have always trusted her not to go too far. She is an adult, she knows the limits. Today her eyes rest, for longer than is right, on me, and on others.

After roll-call, the test begins. It is a mock exam, a rehearsal for the real one, on Thursday. Tomorrow, Miss O'Byrne says, we will rest, and do no catechism. We do not believe her.

First she asks Monica Blennerhasset. Monica has thick glossy plaits, very white socks on slim legs, and a gym-slip which fits perfectly and is made of rich deep-blue serge, not the black shiny stuff which wrinkles easily, the kind I have. Monica is the best pupil. Her father is a doctor and her mother president of the Parents'

Committee, and she never misses. Usually I am disappointed when she is asked a question because the outcome is so certain, no risks involved. Now I am relieved.

Next she asks me. I am not like Monica Blennerhasset, or Orla O'Connor, who is the prettiest girl in the class and a champion Irish dancer. She has tiny feet, which arch like a ballerina's in her little satin pumps – we call them 'pons'. She points them exquisitely to the floor, before leaping into a star rendering of 'The Hard Reel' or 'The Double Jig'. I am not like them, a certain winner. But I am not a loser either, and as a rule I do well enough. I know the catechism, inside out. Mummy tests me every night, in front of the fire, before she reads *Alice in Wonderland*, before bed. I can recite the answers in my sleep. I know it so well that it bores me, and I am not afraid on my own account.

After me, it is Mary Doyle's turn. She trembles as she stands up. Oh, Mary Doyle, it's stupid to tremble! Her ribbon is loose, sliding down the back of her head.

'What is the meaning of the fourth commandment of the Church?'

Mary begins: 'The meaning of the fourth commandment of the Church is ...' Then she stops. Miss O'Byrne repeats the question.

Mary repeats: 'The meaning of the fourth commandment of the ... of the ...'

She is crying already.

'Stand out,' orders Miss O'Byrne, picking up her bunch of rulers.

My stomach tightens, and I feel a desire to laugh, which I suppress.

'Put out your hand.' The familiar formula has a novel quality.

Slap slap. The rulers bang together in the air, wood on wood. Then the loud smack of wood on flesh.

Six.

She would stop now.

Twelve.

Mary only missed one. Three for one. Mary is howling.

Fifteen.

Mary's sobbing has evened out, it is quieter.

Twenty.

I do not feel excited. I do not feel afraid. I want to get sick.

Twenty-three.

Mary is not howling at all. Her face is white. She is falling onto the floor.

Miss O'Byrne touches her with her foot. She wears black patent shoes with stiletto heels, very high.

'Get up, Mary Doyle,' she raps, in her cross tone. Mary does not get up.

Miss O'Byrne glares at me. I sit in the front row.

'You. Get a glass of water.'

'Yes, Miss.'

I rise immediately and leave the room. A glass of water. I have never seen a glass in the school. We bring our own plastic mugs for lunch, and pour milk into them from ketchup bottles or green triangular cartons. In winter, Maggie, the woman who cleans, gives us hot water for cocoa. The teachers drink tea from delph cups: we see them, sitting in the Teachers' Room, which overlooks the yard. They sip tea, eat sandwiches from tinfoil wrappers, and talk, as they supervise our playing.

I decide that Maggie might be in the kitchen, and go down the stone stairs to the cellar, where it is situated in a cubby-hole beside the toilets. Luckily, I find her, hunched over a little coal fire, her worn-out navy overall wrapped tightly around her body. She regards me sadly, and doesn't speak, as she hands me a cup of water. The cup is white with a green rim, the kind of cup you get on trains, and it is sinewed with thousands of barely visible veins, but it is neither cracked nor chipped.

'Did you go to the well?' Miss O'Byrne snaps. I make no response. I do not realize that her sarcasm, which is constant, is intended as humour.

Mary is sitting on a chair, her head between her knees. Thin fair hair droops onto the floorboards.

'Here, Mary, drink this.' Miss O'Byrne's voice is a catapult, the words tiny sharp stones.

Mary raises her head. Her face is whiter than ever, and her hand, when it reaches for the glass, is red, with blisters. But no blood.

'You did the ballet and passed out,' says Miss O'Byrne. Nobody knows what she is talking about.

I am standing beside Mary, waiting for the empty cup. I hope that I may be allowed to return it to the kitchen. Idly, I put my hand in

my pocket, and feel there a paper tube: it is a packet of fruit pastilles, which Mummy bought for me at Mrs Dunne's, the sweetshop in the lane behind the school. Without thinking, I take the packet and hand it to Mary. Miss O'Byrne does not see what I am doing.

Mary takes the sweets and puts them into her own pocket. She does not, of course, smile, but she looks at me with her bright green eyes, shiny from all the crying, rimmed with red skin. There is a light in them, though, that lamp she has inside. Ashamed and worried by my rashness, I sit down, forgetting about the cup. When Mary stops drinking, Miss O'Byrne puts it on her table, and it is still there at two o'clock as the bell clangs and we file out to the hall.

On Thursday we are allowed to wear our own clothes. I have a red dress, nylon, with white spots. Underneath is a red silk slip, and underneath that a crinoline of stiff net, which scratches my legs but makes the skirt stand out like a lampshade, which is exactly the effect I desire.

All the girls wear their best dresses. Pink and lemon and sky blue. They all have crinolines, but nobody else has a red dress. Mummy made it for me herself, because red suits me so well.

There is an air of great excitement in the classroom, engendered by the party dresses and the prospect of the examination. Girls giggle and scream. Miss O'Byrne, in a navy suit with an emerald-green blouse, bangs her rulers against the desk, but cannot maintain order, because she has to keep running in and out of the office, talking to the other teachers, and wondering when the priest will come.

Father Harpur arrives at half past ten. His hair is grey and curly, and his face soft. On his cheek is a brown spot, a kind of mole, and when he speaks his voice is very quiet and gentle.

'Hello, girls,' he says, gazing around with a smile. 'I'm sure you know your catechism very well indeed by now. Do you know, a little bird told me, that you are all very good girls, and know everything in the catechism. Is that true?'

Monica Blennerhasset smiles broadly and says, 'Yes, Father.' Some of the others nod.

'Now, I'm going to ask you something very hard, but very important. Can anyone recite the "Our Father"?'

We are taken aback, for a moment. The 'Our Father' isn't even in the catechism. But all hands shoot up, and some are waved about, eagerly. He asks Orla O'Connor, who had nodded to his first question. She says the prayer in a slow, considered voice, not the kind of tone we use for real catechism.

'Very good. The Lord's Prayer. It is a beautiful prayer, the Lord's Prayer. Jesus himself taught it to us. Jesus who loved little children. "Suffer the little children to come unto me," he said, didn't he?'

Nobody bothers to reply.

'Will you promise me something, girls?'

We nod.

'Will you promise me to say the Lord's Prayer every day for the rest of your lives?'

'Yes, Father,' we say, in our subdued voices, which probably sound pious to him.

'Very good. And now, since you are all such good girls, and know your catechism so well, I think you should have a half-day. What do you say, Miss O'Byrne?'

'Whatever you say, Father Harpur,' she says, her voice polite and respectful. She gives us a beaming smile, and we get up and file out. We knew we would get a half-day. The big girls told us about it. Miss O'Byrne warned the mothers, who are waiting, in the hall, under the statue of the Virgin.

'Well, how did you get on?' Mummy asks.

'Oh, all right,' I say. 'The priest was nice. But I do not like the priest. I do not like him at all.'

Instead of going home, we went to the Spring Show. It was my first time, and Ladies' Day. I recall it vividly. The hats. The free samples of flavoured milk and garlic sausage. The combine-harvesters. And the sound of the horses' feet, pounding, pounding, against the fragrant turf in the enclosure. It was a calm April day. Dull and poignant with the promise of summer. Like today.

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Handout 1

A typical school day.

Find out from your neighbour about his/her typical school day: Take notes.

Questions	Answers
When do you have to get up in the morning?	

What do you usually do first in the morning?	First I have a wash
	      brush my teeth.
	      switch on the radio.
	      stay in bed for 5 minutes.
	      get dressed.

When do you have your breakfast?	
How do you get to school?	

How long does it take you?	About … minutes.
	      half an hour.
	      three quarters of an hour.
	      an hour.

When do you get home?	
What's your favourite subject?	
What subject don't you like?	

Class Pest

by Kathy Kenney-Marshall

Match the English with the German expressions!

To be mean	Läuse
cooties	Jemandem die Schuld an etwas geben
To blame sth. on sb.	stumm
mute	Gemein, fies
To cheat	Buntstift
crayons	Süß, niedlich
cute	schummeln

Handout 2

Harry Potter

Answer the questions while watching the film:

What's the number of the platform Harry has to find?

What's the name of the train that brings the pupils to Hogwarts?

Can you name 2 or 3 flavours Bertie Bott's Beans are?

What does Hermione repair with her wand (Zauberstab)?

How do the pupils come to school after the journey on the train?

How many houses are there at the school?

Describe Harry Potter in detail!

Answer the questions after watching the film:

Which character (person) did you like best? Why?

Which scene did you like best? Why?

Would you also like to wear a school uniform?

Would you like to go to a boarding school?

School uniforms:

Here are some opinions from British teenagers.

- Divide the opinions into For or Against.
- Tick the opinions you agree and you don't agree with and give reasons for your choice.

  o Uniforms keep pupils tidy and smart.
  o Uniforms are ugly and outmoded.
  o Uniforms stop unfair comparisons between rich or poorer students.
  o Uniforms make choosing your clothes in the morning easier.
  o Uniforms are not democratic.
  o Uniforms do not allow teenagers to express their individual personalities.
  o Uniforms are good for discipline and give a serious tone to the school.[147]

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[147] http://www.britishcouncil.org/languageassistant-skirt.htm

10 __Abstract__

In this thesis the 'school story', a genre which is part of children's and young adult's literature, is analysed. The genre is rooted in Great Britain and it developed in the mid-18th to mid-19th centuries. At this time schools were usually segregated by gender. Because of this fact school stories were either written about boys or girls, and the readership was as rigidly divided by gender as the schools themselves. Both subgenres are described in the paper. By the 1970s several critics felt that the school story was in decline and its death was in sight, but the stories continued to be written and read. School stories that are quite modern and popular at the moment are the *Harry Potter* books, written by J. K. Rowling. These literary works contain many elements that were part of the traditional school stories.

As the school story centres on pupils, their experiences and problems, I am of the opinion that children and young adult readers can identify with the protagonists easily. School makes up a large part of children's and young adult's lives and this may be the reason why these texts are still enjoyed by millions of people. Thus, I claim that the school story could be integrated in second language teaching. In this paper several ways and approaches of how the genre may be taught are explored. Teaching methods that are taken into consideration are extensive reading, intensive reading, language-based approaches, literature as content, the personal approach, action and production orientation, Total Physical Response and open-learning environments. All these approaches to literature teaching are linked to a number of literary forms which the school story can take on. The genre, for example, appears in the form of novels, short stories, poems, films, picture books or a radio plays. In order to find out about the teachability of the school story a project in a secondary modern school in Upper Austria was carried out. This project justified some of my assumptions about the appropriateness of the school story to be integrated in teaching. First, I belief that the students were particularly motivated when reading poems about school as the issues the texts dealt with were not very

remote from the learners' worlds. Secondly, I experienced that the school story, as it appears in a variety of different text forms and media, seems to be appropriate for designing tasks that appeal to different learner types.

11 <u>Zusammenfassung</u>

Diese Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Genre 'school story', einem Teilbereich der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Das Genre hat seinen Ursprung in Großbritannien im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Zu dieser Zeit wurden Mädchen und Jungen in unterschiedlichen Schulen unterrichtet. Das ist der Grund dafür, dass sich die school story in zwei verschiedene Richtungen entwickelt hat. Beide Richtungen, boys' und girls' school stories werden in dieser Arbeit beschrieben. In den 1970er Jahren meinten Kritiker, dass das Genre der school story ausgestorben war, aber noch immer wurden neue school stories geschrieben und von vielen Menschen gelesen. Aktuelle und beliebte school stories sind derzeit die *Harry Potter* Bücher, die von J. K. Rowling verfasst wurden.

Da die school story Schüler, ihre Erfahrungen und Probleme zum Thema macht, glaube ich, dass sich Kinder und Jugendliche gut mit den Protagonisten der Geschichten identifizieren können. Weil Schule einen großen Teil im Leben der Kinder und Jugendlichen ausmacht, könnte dies der Grund für die immerwährende Beliebtheit der school stories sein. Deswegen bin ich der Ansicht, dass die school story auch im Unterricht Einzug halten sollte. In dieser Diplomarbeit werden verschiedenste Möglichkeiten das Genre zu unterrichten beleuchtet. Unterrichtsmethoden und –ansätze, auf die in der Arbeit eingegangen wird, sind extensive reading, intensive reading, language-based approaches, literature as content, the personal approach, action and production orientation, Total Physical Response and open-learning environments. Alle diese Unterrichtsmethoden werden im Zusammenhang mit einigen literarischen Formen, in welchen die school story auftritt, beschrieben. Das Genre kann zum Beispiel in der Form von Romanen, Kurzgeschichten, Gedichten, Filmen, Bilderbüchern oder Hörspielen vorkommen. Um herauszufinden, ob school stories tatsächlich gut in den Unterricht eingebaut werden können wurde ein Unterrichtsprojekt in einer Hauptschule in Oberösterreich durchgeführt. Dieses Projekt hat einige meiner Annahmen in Bezug auf das Unterrichten der school story bestätigt. Erstens glaube ich, dass die Schüler/innen besonders motiviert

waren mit Gedichten, die Schule behandelten, zu arbeiten, weil die Themen der Texte der Lebenswelt der Schüler/innen sehr ähnlich waren. Zweitens habe ich die Erfahrung gemacht, dass school stories einen guten Ausgangspunkt für Übungen und Aktivitäten darstellen, die verschiedene Lerntypen ansprechen. Da dieses Genre in so vielen verschiedenen Textformen und Medien auftritt, wird das Gestalten unterschiedlichster Übungen erleichtert.

12 <u>Curriculum Vitae</u>

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