

WHY READ CLASSICS?

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How important is reading classics for teaching and learning situations? It is my belief that literature and literary texts are fundamental to the English curriculum because such texts involve the use of language and the imagination to represent, recreate, shape and explore human experience. Through reading literature, students extend their understanding of the world and of themselves and come to see how cultural beliefs and values have been formed and continue to be shaped. Literary texts and accompanying discussions and writing practice develop skills that can be transferred to other reading materials.

Therefore, students want to understand why they are exposed to and recommended to read, communicate, and then compose their own texts on the basis of a literary piece and how useful it is for their current lives. Texts should be selected for teaching and reading classics not only on the basis of literature, but also for their language-use value to

give students an opportunity to acquire familiarity with the current use of the language.

Very often, strange texts are chosen which are not useful for drawing out learners' potential for communicating information and achieving educational goals such as being involved into argument and research.

Literary texts should include varied sentence structures and high-frequency words to enable students to process information and apply it to various situations. Texts should provide conditions for such mental processes as analyzing, generalizing, problem solving, investigating, comparing, experimenting and creating.

Upon becoming critical thinkers, students can 1) explain a point of view, 2) understand how characters in texts are developed, 3) give reasons for personal preferences, 4) create texts that show understanding and the connection between writing, speech and images, 5) express ideas, hypothesize, negotiate and evaluate the context, 6) interact in pairs and class discussions, which results in organizing their thinking for effective mass communication.

Thus, teaching and developing critical thinking and reading skills on the basis of literary texts is desirable because it promotes English literacy in general and enables learners to express themselves more or less effectively in written and spoken English. English literacy is important for all who intend to function in an English-speaking academic and career environment. An English curriculum should include literary pieces with the purpose of developing learners' analytical skills for speaking and writing.

In my opinion, the best definition of analysis is found in *The Concise American Heritage Dictionary*: "Analysis is the separation of a whole into constituents with a view to its examination and interpretation."