



THE USE OF LITERATURE TO MAKE WRITING AN EASY AND ENJOYABLE TASK

DR. MELISSA HELEN

Assistant Professor

Dept. of English

Nizam College, Hyderabad

(TG) INDIA

ABSTRACT

*The debate between the importance of literature and language is as old and as tricky as the classic debate between what came first the chicken and egg. None exists without the other. As much as their relationship is inseparable, their impact and relationship on one another is equally vital. Language does not exist in isolation; it is bound with psycho-socio-political-cultural features and contexts. Hence **literature emerges as a perfect vehicle to embody language**. Especially in the context of teaching a foreign language, in this context, English language teaching without the text or literature, is an arduous exercise. There are many advantages of using literature to teach language. Encouraging creative writing as part of ELT to enhance their writing and also speaking ability.*

INTRODUCTION

In general, reading literature is bound to be interesting because a literary work should primarily engage the students to think and answer questions that are both text-based and also contextualized according to the contemporary situations. Such activities both written and spoken, will act as a catalyst that facilitates the intellectual growth, the cultural knowledge and above all the ELT purpose.

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The students are given abundant scope to interact, sharing, and exchanging views or opinions among his or her classmates. Literary texts are engaging and evoke personal response. One of the most valuable advantages of using literature in language teaching and learning is the personal involvement and enrichment it cultivates in readers and learners.

Engaging in literary texts enables the learners to focus beyond the grammar and the syntax of the target language. The reader pursues the development of the story and willing to share his/her personal responses.

Lazar (1993) provides five reasons for using literature in ELT:

- Motivating materials
- Encouraging language acquisition
- Expanding students' language awareness
- Developing students' interpretive abilities
- Educating the whole person Literature is an important aid for cultural assimilation, emotional stability, liberal education and for developing a mature personality.

Literature and language are not only intertwined but also interrelated. Only with the instrument of language, literature is concretized. It sounds absurd to study literature without language. Literature is rooted in language and language gets life through literature. So, literature and language are closely interconnected. Teachers must use literature to motivate students for language acquisition. Each novel, short story or play can spark off a wealth of different activities. Tasks and exercises based on a literary text can provide valuable practice in listening, speaking or writing, as well as improving reading skills.

Among the four important literary expressions: Poetry, drama, fiction (short and long) and prose, This paper would like to focus on using poetry and fiction- short and flash fiction for writing skills. Among all the four skills, writing is considered to be the highest order and therefore challenging. It has also been proven that most students do not do well in writing, especially academic and formal writing is their least interest.

Additionally, in today's tech-savvy world motivating students to read and write is becoming a herculean task for the teacher. The usage of poetry and flash fiction is a good way of involving the students to learn and improve their communications skills in general- and particularly writing skills and grammar and vocabulary.

Generally most of the poems prescribed in our textbooks tend to be traditional and rather longish. Instead, I propose that we can use shorter poems and different kinds of poems.



*let it go
let it leave
let it happen
nothing
in this world
was promised or
belonged to you anyway
-all you own is yourself*

Rupi Kaur

I find it a profound poem to teach values like selflessness and inculcating a sense of philanthropic attitude amid the growing crass materialism of the contemporary world.

Comprehension questions like the following can be engaged to involve the students to think critically, speak and even write their answers:

1. What does the poem talk about?
2. What advice do you think the persona is offering in the poem?
3. Can we consider the last line of each poem as a title? Why and Why not?
4. Suggest titles for the poems.
5. What is that people hold dear in their life?
6. In your life what are the things that you cannot let go and why?

Another poem from her collection goes like this:
borders

*are man-made
they divide us physically
don't let them make us
turn on each other
- we are not enemies*

Rupi Kaur

The students can be challenged to design comprehension questions like the above. This is an important poem teaching values of inclusivity and maintaining unity. The teacher can challenge students to come up with poems like these or other subjects depending on their age and exposure.



Another interesting way of challenging the students to write after making them read the following A-Z POEM

What I Did The Last School Holidays

*Accessed information from the internet
Babbled with my friend
Conversed with my principal
Donated some clothes to the orphanage
Escorted my best friend to see her boyfriend
Fought often with my sister
Gave my football cards to my friends
Hacked into the computer system
Insisted on colouring my room pink
Joined the army for a week
Kicked my neighbour's dog
Learned how to cook
Murdered my brother's girlfriend
Nagged my neighbour's daughter
Opposed my parents' plans to go to Langkawi
Puzzled why my parents went to Langkawi without me
Qualified to join the Newboyz group
Rebuilt my tree house after my brother threw stones at it
Sold my hand phone because it was broken
Took my young brother to his friend's house
Unfertilized the soil behind my backyard
Vandalized a bus stop with my friend
Waited for my girlfriend at the bus stop which I had vandalized
X-rayed my body
Yelled at the field
Zapped my discipline teacher's car.*

(courtesy: Mohd Zarif, Mohd Khairy, Nur Dalila, Mohd Khairul, Nur Syahida)

Post Covid-19, times have been very disturbing, challenging, therefore the teacher can ask them to recollect what they did during the pandemic and lockdown to write a poem or even an essay. Other writing activities could include advertisements - a tour that they want to propose, again post Covid-19 people travel is opening up. We can challenge them to write a convincing, persuasive essay or imagine they have come back from a trip, ask them to write a narrative or descriptive essays.

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Students should be instructed to browse, search, compare travels, agents, prices, facilities and ask them to come up with a proposal. Serious kind of students can come up with writing proposals for higher studies in other countries or our country and subsequent careers in the chosen field. We can ask them to dream of an invention to solve one of the things they really hate to do and propose the benefits, possibilities, viability etc---- like we have today--flying car, online shopping, swiggy genie--- food supplements for lazy people!!!

Or teach them creative writing like the flash fiction- micro fiction. Or use technology to have a multi-media approach- using their phone ask them to prepare a short film or documentary- impromptu and ask them to write their experiences or elaborate on their film.

We can use famous short story of Ernest Hemingway the six word "For sale: Baby shoes. Never used." The teacher can discuss the elements of a short story like, plot, setting, characters, theme, conflict and challenge them to write micro fiction. One can find more examples of short stories like the 30 word flash fiction like the two following given as samples

1. Harriet Anena

“You’re so sweet.” “You’re sweeter.” “You want another round?” “Hun, I was earlier trying to tell you I have HIV.” “Dear God, what bullshit is this?”

2. Jackson Biko (bikozulu)

I’ll be back, she said. A lie. Daily, he waits by the window, holding a cup and the lie in the other hand. He waits until he becomes the lie.

We can also use samples of very short stories of Lydia Davis who is a modern master of packing emotion and meaning in a few words. Her 423-word work, “**Everyone Cried**,” is an example of an effective flash fiction story.

Thus a teacher can make use of many resources and examples available to suit the modern generation and find that making the students learn to write can be an enjoyable as well as meaningful task.



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