

USING LITERATURE IN EFL CLASSES: SHORT STORY

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to investigate underline the benefits of using literature in EFL classes. Short Stories can be used as a good source in ELT classes in almost all levels depending on the difficulty status of the story. Due to their length which is very appropriate for language classrooms, students can make good use of short stories in learning the target language. Using short stories in ELT classrooms is an effective technique for teaching linguistic system as well as the life in relation to the target language. Choosing the right short story is an important part of the process. At this point, students' proficiency level, age, and interests should be taken into consideration. Another important thing is the course objectives and appropriateness of the story as content.

In this study the importance of using Short Stories in ELT classrooms and points to be considered while choosing the right short story was discussed at the opening part of the study. On the next part, teaching discrete language skills by using short story in ELT classrooms is studied and a sample application is build up in order to share practical ideas.

Key Words: Literature in ELT classes, short story

Introduction

The first use of literature in EFL classes was started at the beginning of the century when Grammar Translation Method was the only method which was known to suit ELT classrooms. The use of literature in these classes was limited as the only aim was to translate the literary texts from the target language to their native language. Using literature in EFL classes gave a long break with the use of new teaching methods such as Direct Method or Audiolingual Method. The main reason for this was because these methods of teaching emphasized mostly on structures and vocabulary.

Starting from the last two decades, the goal of EFL teaching has changed and the aim of English teaching is now to help students to communicate fluently in the target language. As a result of this, teachers and trainers have started to seek for new ways of integrating literature in EFL classes once again because literature has an important role in teaching English. When used appropriately, with their authentic nature, literary genres are functional tools for language classes for all levels. Oster (1989) affirms that literature helps students to write more creatively (p. 85). Instructors can create a variety of writing activities to help students to develop their writing skills. They can ask students to write dialogues or more complex writing activities if students have reached a high level of language proficiency (Murdoch, 2002, p. 9).. With this new era, literature appeared in EFL classes as appropriate tasks and activities which were designed for language classes.

Short Story in EFL Classes

Researches show that among the other literary genres, short story is the most preferred one in language classrooms. According to Arıkan's research findings, students find the contents of the novel, poetry, and drama courses more difficult to follow because these types require ways of reading that are different from those required for the short story. The results of his study also show that the students identify short story reading as simpler and less complex than reading other literature courses. (Arıkan, 2005, p. 33). In this sense there are several advantages of using short stories in ELT classrooms. One of the most important of all is its controlled length. As they are shorter than a novel, short stories are effective sources of teaching

in classroom situations. Another point that makes short stories efficient tools for ELT classes is that they maintain high interest and attention. A short story with its setting, characters and compelling plot, captures and holds the attention of the learners which is an important part of the learning process. The use of short stories to teach English has several other benefits including motivational, literary, cultural and higher-order thinking benefits. Short stories allow the instructors to teach the four main language skills to all levels of language proficiency. Murdoch (2002) indicates that "short stories can, if selected and exploited appropriately, provide quality text content which will greatly enhance ELT courses for learners at intermediate levels of proficiency" (p. 9).

The inclusion of short fiction in the ESL / EFL curriculum offers the following educational benefits (Ariogul 2001, p.11-18): It

- makes the students' reading task easier due to being simple and short when compared with the other literary genres,
- enlarges the advanced level readers' worldviews about different cultures and different groups of people,
- provides more creative, encrypt, challenging texts that require personal exploration supported with prior knowledge for advanced level readers,
- motivates learners to read due to being an authentic material,
- offers a world of wonders and a world of mystery,
- gives students the chance to use their creativity,
- promotes critical thinking skills,
- facilitates teaching a foreign culture (i.e. serves as a valuable instrument in attaining cultural knowledge of the selected community,
- makes students feel themselves comfortable and free,
- helps students coming from various backgrounds to communicate with each other because of its universal language,
- helps students to go beyond the surface meaning and dive into underlying meanings, and
- acts as a perfect vehicle to help students understand the positions of themselves as well as the others by transferring these gained knowledge to their own world.

Another important benefit of using literature to teenage and adult learners at all levels is to develop their reading tasks. As to our case we aim to improve our students' not only reading comprehension skills, but their other skills as well.

Choosing the Right Material

What sort of literature is suitable for use with language learners?

Short stories can be a good source in ELT classes in almost all levels from young learners to adult learners so that they can make good use of short stories in learning the target language. While choosing the right short story, students' proficiency level, age, and interests should be taken into consideration. Another important thing is the course objectives and appropriateness of the story as content.

The needs of the students, interests, cultural backgrounds, and language levels should be taken into consideration when choosing the suitable material for the classroom.

One other significant criterion to consider is whether the particular work stimulates personal involvement by arousing the learners' interest. At this point it is important to choose books which are relevant to the life experiences, emotions, or dreams of the learner.

The difficulty level of the story is another important thing to be considered while choosing a suitable material. This is crucial as the learner is attached to the text if she can understand it. In addition, interest, appeal, and relevance should be taken into consideration.

Sample Application: "Araby"

Writers' note: "This sample application was prepared for upper intermediate level students because of the grammatical structures and the level of vocabulary used in the text."

Pre-Reading Activities

Before reading the short story (Araby) by James Joyce, students should be informed about the writer to provide background information. This will help the students to understand the target culture and the

atmosphere of the story which will be studied during the class. Another point to be underlined is the organization of a short story. This information is also necessary as it will help the students understand the theme of the story clearly.

Background Information about the Writer

A short biography of James Joyce

James Augustine Aloysius Joyce (2 February 1882 – 13 January 1941) was an Irish author of the 20th century. He is known for his landmark novel Ulysses (1922) as well as the short story collection Dubliners (1914) and the semi-autobiographical novel A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916).

Although he spent most of his adult life outside Ireland, Joyce's psychological and fictional universe is firmly rooted in his native Dublin, the city which provides the settings and much of the subject matter for all his fiction. Joyce became one of the most cosmopolitan yet one of the most regionally focused of all the English language writers of his time.⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Joyce

Background Information about the Organization of the Particular Story

Triangular Plot Structure (Freytag's Triangle)

Plot is the literary element that describes the structure of a story. The organization of events and characters in a literary work: the plan, design or pattern of events (Bozer, 1995). This organization consists of five plot parts: *exposition*, *rising action*, *turning point (climax)*, *falling action*, and *resolution*. In *exposition* the reader is informed about the background information, the time, the place of the action (setting), the characters, the context of situation and the problem before the action starts. The problem (conflict) is presented at the beginning of the story. This leads to a second act, the *rising action*.

Rising action presents the “dramatization of the events that complicates the situation and gradually intensifies or puzzles the conflict or contributes the new ones” (Ariogul, 2001:97). After exposition rising action continues successive stages of conflict up to the climax (turning point) according to (Bozer, 1995).

In *turning point (climax)* there is an important development in the action which will cause somehow new events in the action. The vital point in the action occurs when the problem is about to be solved.

In *falling action* the problematic cases that occur in the previous parts come close to *resolution (conclusion)* where the story may end with some solutions. During *falling action*, the conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist is solved either with the protagonist winning or losing against the antagonist (Bozer, 1995). The falling action might have a final suspense, during which the final outcome of the conflict is controversial.

In *resolution* the event(s) following the climax presents the solution of the problem and/or the explanation of the outcome (Bozer, 1995).



Another striking point in this organization type is *the Conflict*. It is the tension or opposition between forces in the plot. It is introduced to interest readers enough to continue reading the story. Without conflict, there is no plot.

Types of Conflict

Authors develop plot through the introduction, development, and resolution of conflict. Conflict usually takes one of four forms:

- *Human vs Nature
- *Human vs Society
- *Human vs Human “external conflict”
- *Human vs himself “internal conflict”

Conflicts in the story

Human versus society-The basic conflict in the adolescent boy in Joyce's story 'Araby' is that between his boyish imagination and the hard realities of the market-dominated work-a-day life.

Human versus society-Conflicts are between the materialistic modern life and the boy's reaction to it- he imagines carrying his chalice through the hostile market place.

Human versus society-There is also a conflict between the materialism of the indifferent world and the mask of spirituality that it wears- the rich priest, Mrs. Mercer 'selling' used stamps for some 'pious purpose.'

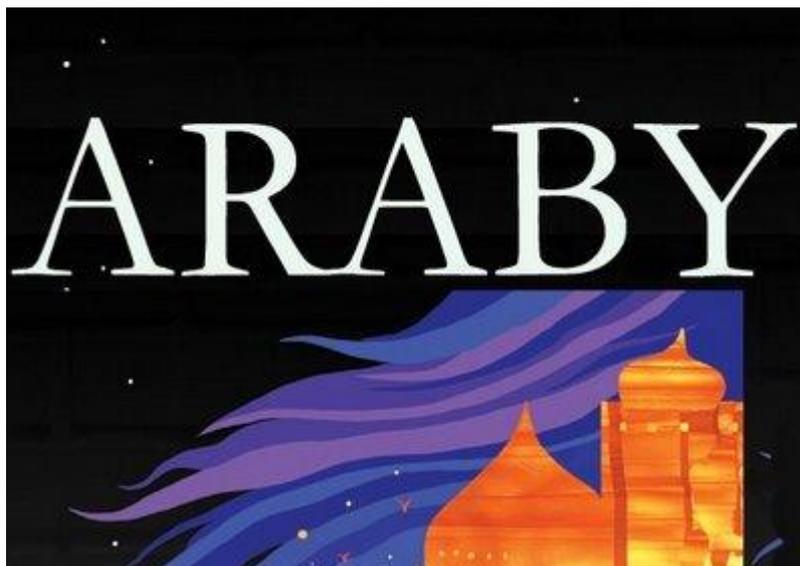
Human versus himself- Within the boy, there is another conflict unknown to him- his romantic yearning for transcendence and yet his entrapment in physical attraction and therefore the narrative voice talks about 'foolish blood' and 'the serious business of life.'

Discussion

In order to activate the background knowledge of the students, some pictures are shown. By this way, the “schema theory” which according to Arıkan (2006:7) is a rule system and a mental process which includes a body of experiential knowledge of related concepts, events, emotions, ideas, and roles. He believes that with schemata (prior knowledge) in our minds, we perceive and synthesize new knowledge. According to schema theory comprehending a text is an interactive process between the readers' background knowledge and the text itself. This process can be divided into two parts (Sarıçoban, 2001:69);

To do this the teacher asks some questions related with the pictures.

- When I tell you the word 'Araby' which is the title of our short story, what comes up to your mind?
- Do you think the story takes place in an Arabian Country? Why, Why not?



- What do you see on the below picture?
- Do you think the story takes place in this bazaar? Why, why not?



- What seems to be unusual about the picture?
- Who do you think is the boy sitting?
- Do you think this boy is lonely or disappointed? Try to remember your own disappointments or loneliness and comment on the picture accordingly.



While-Reading Activities

Araby, James Joyce

Activity 1. Students read the short story "Araby" (this can be done as home reading)

The summary of the text:

Araby by James Joyce

The story opens with a description of North Richmond Street, a "blind," "cold silent" street where the houses "gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces." It is a street of fixed, decaying conformity and false piety. The boy's house contains the same sense of a dead present and a lost past. The former tenant, a priest, died in the back room of the house, and his legacy—several old yellowed books, which the boy enjoys leafing through because they are old, and a bicycle pump rusting in the back yard—become symbols of the intellectual and religious vitality of the past. The boy, in the midst of such decay and spiritual paralysis, experiences the confused idealism and dreams of first love and his awakening becomes incompatible with and in ironic contrast to the staid world about him.

Every morning before school the boy lies on the floor in the front parlor peeking out through a crack in the blind of the door, watching and waiting for the girl next door to emerge from her house and walk to school. He is shy and still boyish. He follows her, walks silently past, not daring to speak, overcome with a confused sense of sensual desire and religious adoration. In his mind she is both a saint to be worshipped and a woman to be desired. His eyes are "often full of tears," and one evening he goes to the back room where the priest had died. Claspings the palms of his hands

together, he murmurs, "O love! O love!" in a prayer not to God, but to the concept of love and perhaps even to the girl, his love. Walking with his aunt to shop on Saturday evenings he imagines that the girl's image accompanies him, and that he protects her in "places the most hostile to romance." In the mixed symbolism of the Christian and the Romantic or Oriental myths Joyce reveals the epiphany in the story: "These noises con-verged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes." He is unable to talk to the girl. Drifting away from his schoolmates' boyish games, the boy has fantasies in his isolation, in the ecstasy and pain of first love.

Finally the girl speaks to the boy. She asks him if he is going to Araby. He replies that if he does he will bring her a gift, and from that moment, his thoughts upon the mixed imagery of the saintly light upon her hair and the potential sensuality of "the white border of a petticoat," the boy cannot sleep or study. The word Araby "cast an Eastern enchantment" over him, and then on the night he is to go to the bazaar his uncle neglects to return home. Neither the aunt nor the uncle understands the boy's need and anguish, and thus his isolation is deepened. We begin to see that the story is not so much a story of love as it is a rendition of the world in which the boy lives.

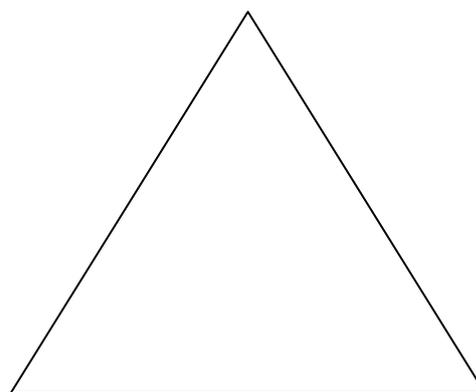
The second part of the story depicts the boy's inevitable disappointment and realization. In such an atmosphere of "blindness"-the aunt and uncle unaware of the boy's anguish, the girl not conscious of the boy's love, and the boy himself blind to the true nature of his love-the words "hostile to romance" take on ironic over tones. These overtones deepen when the boy arrives too late at the bazaar. It is closing and the hall is "in darkness." He recognizes "a silence like that which pervades a church after a service" but the bazaar is dirty and disappointing. Two men are "counting money on a salver" and he listens "to the fall of the coins." A young lady, bored with him and interested in two men who are flirting with her, cheapens and destroys the boy's sense of an "Eastern enchantment." His love, like his quest for a gift to draw the girl to him in an unfriendly world, ends with his realizing that his love existed only in his mind. Thus, the theme of the story-the discrepancy between the real and the ideal- is made final in the bazaar. The epiphany in which the boy lives a dream in spite of the ugly and the worldly is brought to its inevitable conclusion: the single sensation of life disintegrates. The boy senses the falsity of his dreams and his eyes burn "with anguish and anger." (http://theliterarylink.com/araby_essays.html)

Activity 2. After reading the story, the students and the teachers studies the organization on the board in order to make the meaning of the story clear.

EXPOSITION/ INTRODUCTION

Description of the place
the boy lives

Exposition



RISING ACTION

He and the girl have a conversation

Rising action

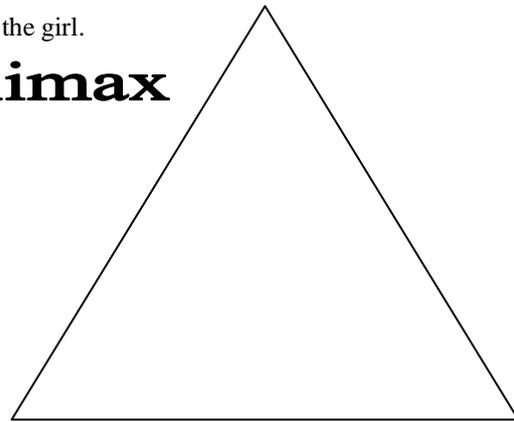
Information about his feelings for the girl

Information about the boy and his family

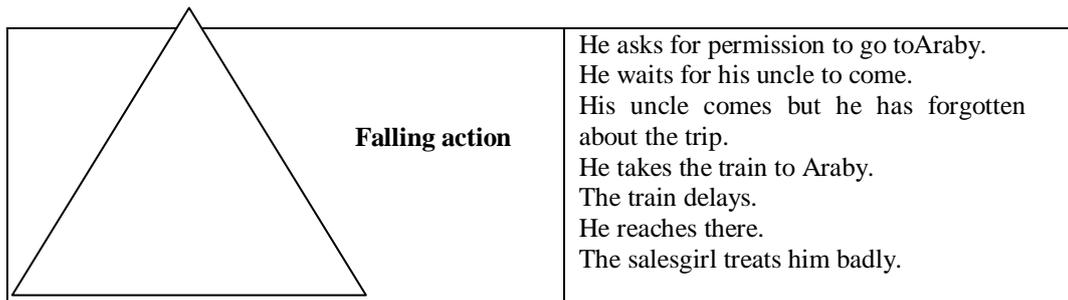
CLIMAX

He promises to bring a present for the girl.

Climax



FALLING ACTION



RESOLUTION



Activity 3. Questions for Interpretation

In this part, the questions given below will be discussed in the classroom and the students will be asked to make predictions about the text they have read.

1. Judging from the games the boys play, how old do you think the narrator is?
2. What is the mood of the story? How does Joyce establish it in the first few pages?
3. Would you describe the narrator's feelings toward Mangan's sister as realistic or romantic? Explain.

4. Why does the word “Araby” contain so much meaning for the narrator? Discuss the possibilities the word represents to him.
5. How are the results of the trip to Araby foreshadowed?

Activity 4. The students are asked to write an excuse note addressing the girl, telling her why he could not buy the bracelet. The teacher reminds the students that the excuse note doesn't have to be realistic; they can use imaginary reasons thinking themselves as the little boy.

Dear friend,

Activity 5. In the below exercise the students are asked to find the sentence that matches.

(Column A)	(Column B)
1) Mangan is the same age and in the same class at the Christian Brothers school as the narrator... 2) Although the boy had crush on Mangan’s sister,... 3) Mangan’s sister says she would like to go to the bazaar... 4) The boy describes Mangan’s sister in reverential terms ... 5) The way the uncle comes home that night suggests... 6) Mangan’s sister can’t go to the bazaar so she offers to bring her something from the Araby,,, 7) The boy thinks he is in love with a young girl... 8) After the boy speaks to Mangan’s sister... 9) On the Saturday evening of the bazaar, the boy’s uncle has forgotten about the trip... 10) The boy wants bazaar to be bright and open...	a) but it is dark and closed. b) but all of his thoughts, ideas, actions show that he is merely obsessed. c) he finds it hard to con concentrate on anything except for her. d) which causes the narrator to arrive at the bazaar very late. e) so he and the narrator often play together after school. f) which brings his life to a standstill until he can get this symbol of his love for her. g) he is drunk and that it’s a usual thing the boy sees. h) she has no idea how the narrator feels about her. i) but she cannot because she has to attend a school retreat that weekend. j) which call to mind the Virgin Mary.

Activity 6

Multiple Choice

The teacher goes on with some multiple choice questions.

- 1) In the story Araby doesn't symbolize...
 a) beauty b) content c) romance d) mystery e) commercialism
- 2) Which is not included in the falling action?
 a) The boy asks for permission to go to Araby.
 b) The train delays.
 c) Information about the boy’s feelings for the girl
 d) The salesgirl treats the boy badly.

- e) His uncle comes but he has forgotten about the trip.
- 3) In the story _____ represents the uncle's debt and irresponsibility?
- a) Mangan
 - b) The boy's uncle
 - c) Mangan's sister
 - d) The boy
 - e) Mrs. Mercer
- 4) Which is the climax of the story?
- a) Information about the boy's feelings for the girl
 - b) The train delays.
 - c) The boy and the girl have a conversation.
 - d) The boy promises to bring a present for the girl.
 - e) Discouraged the boy leaves the Bazaar.
- 5) Which one of the following themes are not included in the major themes of the story?
- a) Religion
 - b) Loneliness
 - c) Alienation
 - d) Transformation
 - e) Impatience
- 6) Which of the following items cannot be regarded as foreshadowing for the boy's disappointment?
- a) The boy's being younger than the girl
 - b) Uncle's answer to boy's question
 - c) Delay of train
 - d) The harsh weather
 - e) Uncle's indifference
- 7) Which of the following is the antagonist of the story?
- a) The train
 - b) The boy's uncle
 - c) Mangan's sister
 - d) Bazaar
 - e) Time
- 8) Joyce is famous for creating characters who undergo a/an _____ and the narrator of "Araby" is one of his best examples.
- a) change
 - b) epiphany
 - c) depression
 - d) transformation
 - e) stress
- 9) Mangan's older sister becomes the object of the narrator's schoolboy _____.
- a) crush
 - b) embarrassment
 - c) girl
 - d) enjoy
 - e) fail
- 10) Narrator's aunt warns the boy that he may have to _____ the bazaar "for this night of Our Lord.
- a) do without
 - b) go on
 - c) call off
 - d) put off
 - e) show up

Post-Reading Activities

Activity 1

Role-play

Teacher wants the students to do role-play for this activity. The teacher selects 6 volunteer students from the class to act some of the parts in the story. Firstly, she divides 6 students into 3 groups and wants them to choose a card the teacher hands them. In these cards the names of the characters are written. In the first card, students should act out the dialogue between the uncle and the boy. In the second one, they should act out the dialogue between the girl and the boy. And lastly, the dialogue between the boy and the salesgirl should be acted out. Secondly, she tells them to create a dialogue between those people.

CARDS

The boy and the girl

The boy and the uncle

The boy and the salesgirl

Activity 2

The teacher hands out the first part of a different version of the play and ask them to write a different ending (preferably a happy one☺).

Observing me, the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured:

'Yes, please.'

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