Teaching Literature in Elementary School

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Why teach literature?

- It exposes students to different cultures and broadens their horizons.
- It provides an opportunity to learn English in a way that is more meaningful.
- It promotes creative and critical thinking.
- It allows students to respond using multiple modes of expression.
The Key Components

There are three mandatory components for teaching literature:
- Pre-reading
- Basic Understanding
- Analysis and Interpretation

There are also three optional components:
- Bridging Text and Context
- Post-reading
- Summative Assessment
Pre-reading activities motivate the students and encourage them to be involved in the topic and theme of the text. They should trigger their curiosity and whet the students’ appetites. Pre-reading activities can be very short or even a whole lesson long, depending on the type of activity. Use props, clips, photos, etc.
Pre-reading

Which of these boys would you invite to a party? Why?

Sample activities based on the story
The Coat in Steps to Literature Book 1
Basic Understanding activities ensure that students have understood the literal meaning of a text.

Basic Understanding requires the use of Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) and normally answers the questions:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
Basic Understanding

- Where does the rich man meet Nasreddin?
- When is the party?
- What does Nasreddin wear to the party?
- Who are the other people at the party?
Vocabulary is also part of Basic Understanding. It should be divided into:

- **High-frequency vocabulary** – words and phrases that you want your students to learn and remember. This vocabulary should be taught and practiced.

- **Low-frequency vocabulary** – words and phrases that your students need to know in order to understand the story, but that you do not expect them to remember. These words should be glossed.
Analysis and Interpretation activities encourage students to go beyond the literal meaning of the text.

These questions require the use of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).

They can also require the understanding of literary terms.
Appropriate HOTS for the Foundation Level include:

- Classifying and categorizing
- Comparing and contrasting
- Generating possibilities
- Inferring
- Integrating
- Making connections
- Predicting
How is the coat that Nasreddin finds different from the coat that he wears to the party?

Do you think Nasreddin has ever seen so much food? Why or why not?

Why do you think the rich men at the party ignore Nasreddin?

Why is Nasreddin angry when the men start to talk to him?
Bridging Text and Context activities encourage students to understand connections between the text and universal themes and relevant information and ideas from other sources.
A moral is a lesson that you learn from a story. Stories about Nasreddin usually have a moral. How is this information connected to the story The Coat?
Post-reading activities allow for creative responses and self-expression after reading and analyzing a text.

Students must have learned the text in order to be able to do the Post-reading activity.

Teachers should allow for multiple forms of expression.
Post-reading

- Draw a picture of Nasreddin at the beginning of the party and a picture of him at the end.
- Tell the story in comic strip format.
- Imagine that Nasreddin is telling a friend about what happened at the party. Write what he says.
- Imagine that one of the rich men is telling the story about what happened at the party. Act out the conversation.

Sample activities based on the story
The Coat in Steps to Literature Book 1
Summative Assessment

- Summative Assessment is a test at the end of a literary unit.
- Summative Assessment should include both LOTS and HOTS questions.
- Summative Assessment may not always be appropriate at the Foundation Level. You may choose to assess your students through a Post-reading task, instead.