

Reflection on Literary Works at Elementary School

Abstract

In this study, the author focuses on the issue of teaching literature at the first level of primary schools. She points out its shortcomings. These are "little representation of experience methods, absence of relating literature education to media culture and insufficient attractiveness of readings. She offers full methodological unit for analysis of the readings with examples of the pupils' works.

Key words: *reflection; verbal, non-verbal; spontaneous - controlled; situation in the text, feedback, inner experience, verbalization of experiences.*

It is important that already at elementary school pupils know the reason why they are learning. "Why" does not mean mere pragmatism. The purpose of literary education includes having the chance to get to know others and thereby oneself, as well. At the same time it means becoming familiar with a way of putting into a picture form the world and life in all its categories from the past to the future, from the real to the fantastic, from the low to the high, from the ugly to the beautiful, from the bad to the good and from the empty to that which is of value.

The problem in literary education is the continuing traditional perception of interpretation of literary works, this being true from elementary school up. The specific procedure of dealing with a literary text at this first school level from a traditional perspective adheres to the following structure: reading a specific literary work, explaining the unfamiliar words or phrases, producing an outline and reproducing.. From the point of view of interpretation, the teacher, in the case of an epic, focuses in addition to this on depicting its main characters. If the teacher is dealing with a poetic text, he or she is satisfied simply with identifying the main idea and pointing out the type of poetry, its verse, rhyme and rhythm. Little atten-

tion is paid to the figurative language of the poem. The reflection of poetry at elementary school might be facilitated by the presence of some epic elements which both the teacher and the pupil can lean upon. In spite of this fact, it is at this stage of schooling that the pupil's ability to understand the poetic and noetic aspects of a literary work begins to develop, as well as their taste and aesthetic appreciation. However, many teachers see these negatives and try to challenge the accustomed stereotype by using non-traditional methods of working with literary texts. One way how to improve a pupil's perception, experience and evaluation of a literary work is a method known as reflection.

Reflection of a literary work becomes a productive part of interpretation procedures and work methods used in literary education classes. The goal in reflection is comprehension of the literary text combined with an ability to express one's own perceptive experience.

Unlike in traditional interpretation of literary works, whereby one is able to arrive at an objective view of the value of the work, reflection, within itself, includes the reader's personal attitude and opinion and an expression of his or her emotional relationship to the text read - this being true of course of the perception of other types of art also. Thereby the pupil stores the literary work in his or her emotional memory bank and on later occasions, in certain contexts or life situations, is able to recall it and compare it with other texts or other models of behaviour. And this is the aim, not to offer pupils literary education merely as a tool in their further education, but above all in the development of their personality, which is comprised not only of knowledge but also of feelings, and the development of their emotional perceptiveness. If we neglect this, most of our pupils will become players who, though they know the instruments, only use them as tools in order to achieve successful grades in their school reports.

Reflection may be spontaneous and controlled, verbal and non-verbal.

- **Spontaneous reflection** - this occurs after a powerful experience. The recipient feels the need to express the pressure of his or her feelings. The danger here is that pupils may manipulate the lesson and side-track the discussion onto topics which are interesting to them.
- **Controlled reflection** - utilises spontaneous reflection as the basis for work with the literary text. By giving pupils tasks where they have to express their perception and feelings, the teacher leads them in a particular direction to the significant values of the work in question.
- **Verbal reflection** - the pupil responds verbally - either orally or in writing according to the teacher's instructions and set tasks.
- **Non-verbal reflection** - this may be kinetic (mime, gestures, pantomime, physical touch), artistic and musical. Motor reflection can be so effective that

pupils are able to identify a particular literary work on the basis of gestures, mime, physical touch or studies in movement. The motor memory also comes into play. The issue of non-verbal reflection is connected with non-verbal communication which also has various forms. One of these forms is eurythmy, used mainly in Waldorfian schools but also in the training of managers or in other kinds of social communication. It may enter the teaching process as a means of eliminating learning disorders (dyslexia), spatial orientation, co-ordination, confidence training, gaining insight into the essence of life functions, the human body, the cosmos. Eurythmy has precise rules and the study of it lasts several years, and is not available in our country. The above-mentioned characteristics of eurythmy were observed during my short-term personal contact with this phenomenon abroad.

- **Musical reflection** - it is available and is also often used in literature education, especially in connection with the rhythm of a poem, its prosody – often even with melody.
- **Artistic reflection** - this is the most common. It has become a component of other methods such as creative drama. It may be used at different points in the lessons or in the blocks of lessons of literature education.

Artistic reflection is the creative expression of an experience by artistic means. Symbolic interpretation of a text plays an important role. Artistic reflection is realised through the drawing of figures, positioning them in space, with lines, proportions, perspective and colours, that is to say, through the means of artistic representation. The recipient is represented through the shape of figures, lines and colours, which also may have a diagnostic purpose. It should be noted at this point that artistic reflection of a literary work does not necessarily produce an answer which can be evaluated from an esthetic point of view. Another important aspect of artistic reflection is that the pupil may open up his or her feelings and experience of the literary text in this way, not, however, expressing his or her experience directly from the text, but by means of his or her artistic piece.

An elementary school teacher has the advantage of teaching all subjects, including art. So he or she can integrate and intertwine thematic blocks, create new ones and organise them according to a set goal.

Introducing directed reflection into work with a literary text may take place immediately after reading the text, after each activity or group of activities during a lesson of literature education, or after a block of lessons or at the end of a lesson or a block.

The goal of reflection is to gain information about the pupil's depth of perception and experience of the work. Evaluation of the literary text involving reflection takes place on the basis of expression of experience, associations with other texts and

real-life situations of the pupil. An objective evaluation of the text based on knowledge may be added to the controlled reflection at the end of the lesson. This evaluation is of course linked to the reader's skills and abilities as well as his or her competence as a reader. By competence we mean a certain degree of literary education which is a prerequisite for an argumentative evaluation of a literary work. Controlled reflection uses literary texts as a means of developing the sensitivity of an individual's sensory perception, language skills, dialogue, and active participation in community, also developing his or her acceptance of others and empathy, self-awareness and the freedom to express one's opinions. From the above, it is clear that the issue is not only literary education but also the personal development of individuals.

We decided to verify if controlled reflection can really play a positive role in literary education and in education through art. We verified it through assignments given to extension students - future elementary school teachers, ethics teachers and students of the specialised innovative study course.

We wanted to prove to the teachers participating, that, if in the controlled reflection we give pupils problems and questions which are connected with both their personal experience and a literary text, their responses will be non-stereotyped, unexpected and original. They will indicate to us the level of their perception and experience of the literary text.

The participants had been given instructions about methods of teaching literary education using controlled reflection during previous lectures and seminars. Those specific instructions on how to work with a literary text in the class were based on the following principles:

1. **Perception of a text.** Assignments, having the form of instructions or questions, should be connected with the perception of the text, with what pupils realised while reading. This does not mean that they should formulate the main idea of the literary work yet. This should be left until the final phase of work with the text.
2. **Curiosity concerning the text.** Pupils should be taught how to ask questions. By this we mean going further than just explaining unknown terms or words.
3. **Dialogue with the author.** Pupils have to agree or disagree with the way the author described a situation, a character or a conflict and how it was solved.
4. **Comments about the text.** Here pupils can compare, confront, associate, ...
5. **Connecting one's own situation with the situation in the text.**

Our recommendation to the teachers was that while using the controlled reflection they need to respect direct contact of each recipient with the text. This means

that they should allow pupils to read silently. The reason for this is that if the text is read aloud by a teacher or a pupil who is a good reader, the reading is already marked with their own interpretation or at least some evidence of it, such as in the tone of voice, melody, pauses, rhythm, pace, emphasis, etc.

The choice of text was left up to the teacher's or the pupil's themselves. The form of reflection could be verbal or non-verbal. In our case, they used artistic and written form.

From all the collected materials I selected the following examples.

DWARF ČIK

(from the fairy tale collection *Drevený trón* – *The Wooden Throne*) – 1st form

Assignments:

1. Draw Čik.
2. What was dwarf Čik like?
3. Do you agree or disagree with what he did?
4. If you had Čik's power, how would you use it?

In the first task, the pupils expressed their feeling and relationship to the character with predominantly yellow, green and blue colours. The figure of the dwarf bore the evidence of difference in the children's levels of skill. Most of the children drew a traditional figure with a head - a circle, arms and legs - as sticks. The colours were according to the description in the text and the children's imagination.

The answers to the second question were as follow: He was bad, he hurt people, he sent Janko to the palace where there were many traps....

All the pupils answered the third question in the same way: they did not agree with his behaviour because he hurt people.

The last question was focused on the development of imagination and creativity. However, here the children expressed their acceptance of ethical values: *I would help old people... I would help people...I would keep myself healthy...I would use it in the fight against evil.*

P. DOBŠINSKÝ

Starý Bodřík a vlk (*The Old Dog Bodřík and a Wolf*) – 1st form

Assignments:

1. Draw the farmer and his dog Bodřík with colour pencils.
2. What is Bodřík like? What are his character traits?
3. What are your character traits?
4. If you were old and did not know how to watch a flock of sheep, what would you do?

Note: The answers were given orally and taken down and added to the drawings by the teacher.

In drawings which were connected with the second question about what Bodřík was like, the children used the following adjectives: *old, good, nice, wise*. There were individual answers of *bad, ill, toothless, strong, proud, clean, ugly, dirty, weak*. Most of the children glorified the character of Bodřík.

The third question about their own characteristics led to self-reflection and the tendency was to name their own positive characteristics: *I think I am pretty, hard-working, I wash myself, I am tidy...good, cute, clever... sometimes diligent, good, pretty,good, clever, thin....young, disobedient, I have long hair, big,...good, small, cheerful, ...clever, cheerful, small,good, sometimes bad, fearful,...good, neat, brave, pretty.*

The fourth assignment gave the children a chance to express their opinions about a specific situation: *...I would shut the sheep in the sheep pen,....I would call for help...I would stick it out,...I would run away,....I would run away to the world and not return,..... I would watch the sheep but I would be afraid of the wolf,.... I would throw dynamite at the wolf,.... I would kill the wolf with a gun,.....I would call Bodřík to help me.*

In general, the answers show four types of solution: to call somebody to help, to run away, to stay and watch in fear, to react with aggression.

So the picture of the world in which the children live was also expressed through their aggressive statements.

J. C. HRONSKÝ

Smělý zajko (The Brave Bunny) – 2nd form

The controlled reflection consisted of the following tasks:

1. Draw the sad faces of the Bunny's parents (when he was leaving them).
2. Draw the Bunny's parents when he came back.
3. Draw a picture from the fairy tale and give it a title.
4. What was the Bunny like?
5. When am I sad?

For the first task most of the pupils drew a conventional picture of rabbits in tears. One exception was where a pupil added a picture of a bubble representing their voices and linked it to a picture of the little dancing Bunny. His interpretation went beyond the text and is an expression of sadness mingled with hope.

The second task did not provide the children with many creative opportunities. The tendency of the drawings was to be big smiles on the rabbit's parents' faces.

The third task was creative. The children were given a chance to choose. The pictures showed the children's interests, needs and also fears.

The responses to the fourth task were repetitive: *good, handsome, cheerful, wise, happy...*

The fifth question also provoked answers that were similar to one another: *When I am alone, a bad mark, when somebody I know dies, when nobody wants to play with me - some pupils did not talk about sadness but : ... I am happy when I help somebody, if somebody praises me, when I get top marks, I am happy when we can go and visit someone, when I am on my own, when I see my teacher.*

In summary we can say that even 1st form pupils are able to enter into the text and make associations between it and their own life situations. They can accept positive characteristics and express their empathy both through creative art and verbally.

P. DOBŠINSKÝ

O troch grošoch (A Tale of Three Groschen) – 3rd form

After drawing their own idea of a king and a poor man, the pupils had to write down answers to the following questions on paper.

1. What was the poor man like?
2. What was the king like?
3. How would the life of the poor man change if he had three pennies?
4. How would you punish the king?

Similarly as in the previous activities, the first two questions led the children to list the virtues and vices of the poor man and the king. The third and fourth question led them to express their empathy and the ethical values towards which they inclined.

CH. PERRAULT

Vily (The Fairies) – 3rd form

Assignments:

1. Write which part of the fairy tale was the most interesting to you.
2. Draw an illustration of it.

Almost all of the pupils were engaged with the section of the story where the younger daughter served a mug of water. From the standpoint of the fairy tale structure, it is a section where the giver is testing the ethic virtues of the hero.

The pictures (Assignment 2) show that the value of the statements varies and depends upon the depth of the recipient's empathy.

Other pupils liked different passages: *...when the prince fell in love with the younger daughter, ... when the younger daughter married the prince, ... etc.*

Only one answer of the 29 was of a totally different nature: *In the fairy tale about the fairy, I most liked the part where the mother whipped her daughter.*

During the analysis at the seminar, this child's teacher said that she had not expected such a response from that particular pupil, as he was the best pupil in the whole class. It was interesting that he did not draw the whipping in his picture, but only the prince and the younger daughter.

M. ĎURÍČKOVÁ

Jožko Mrkvička Spáč (Jožko Mrkvička the Lie-Abed) – 3rd form

Assignments:

1. Draw your idea of Jožko Mrkvička.
2. What would you do if you were like Jožko Mrkvička?
3. Why are you not like Jožko Mrkvička?
4. Write what you remember after reading the passage called “The Bathing” (Kúpačka)

In M. Ďuríčková's work, Jožko Mrkvička appears as an anti-hero - that is to say, that he is a negative role model who, from an educator's point of view, plays a very productive role. Though the pupils laugh at him, they realize that this is about them too. The most interesting responses in this reflection were the answers to questions 2 and 3. The pupils answered as follows: *I would jump on my head, throw children out of the window, break pencils and beat the teacher,... I would throw exercise books at the blackboard,... I would sleep during the lessons, ... I would throw all kind of useless things out of the window... I would oversleep and be late for school... I would pull Susan's hair... I would bring dinosaurs and lions to school... I would throw myself on the ground, make holes in the walls, steal tennis balls...*

The answers to the third question, “why are you not like Jožko Mrkvička” were as follows: *because I want to be wise,... I do not want to be bad,.. because I am afraid,.. because I am a good student and he was bad, ... because I love my whole family...because I have bushy hair, ... because I am afraid of teacher,... I do not want to be,... Because my Mum is a teacher,... because then I wouldn't be allowed to play computer games.*

The fourth assignment showed the different levels of ability among the pupils to express what they had heard verbally, that is to say in their composition abilities.

F. KRÁĚ

Jano (Johnny) – 4th form

The controlled reflection consisted of the following questions:

1. What was Johnny like?
2. What was Igor like?
3. What am I like?
4. What would I or my family do if we were poor like Johnny?

5. Johnny's future.

The sketch papers given to the children were divided in two. On one part of the paper, the children were supposed to write out their answers, and on the other, draw their idea of Johnny and Igor.

The answers to the first question about what Johnny was like, tended to be similar to one another: *good, diligent, self-sacrificing, clever, poor, dirty, tattered, wise, brave, fearless, bushy-haired, sad, handsome, a thief, kind, merciful, peaceful*. The expressions "kind" and "merciful" were really an exception in this general tendency. They indicated an awareness of inner ethic values in the child who used them.

A similar tendency can be seen in the group of answers to the second question about Igor. They revealed mostly opposite characteristics to Johnny's: *haughty, mean, a liar, proud, wicked, evil, clean*. The pupils who answered not with one but a combination of words showed more originality: *a great show-off, a tell-tale*.

The answers to the third question "What am I like" had a slight tendency to be similar. The majority of the children reflected good qualities, and a few of them, negative ones: *wise and good, diligent, good but sometimes I am bad too, tall, wise, diligent, I think I am good because I am tidy, I am like Johnny,..*

From the point of view of identification between the text and the recipient's personality, the answers to question 4 were the most interesting, "What would I do if I were poor?": *I would live poor and modestly as Johnny did... I would share everything I had with my friends also. I would not steal. I am sure that there are good people who would give me something to eat. I would try hard to get some money. I would steal. I would beg...*

The question about John's future produced the most in answers. The pupils were making up the story, creating possible new sequels using various literary genres. At the same time, we are able to spot, in their answers, traces of behavioural models for their lives - models influencing them either through their own experience or through the media.

A. DE SAINT EXUPÉRY

Malý princ (The Little Prince) – 4th form

Assignments:

1. Draw the little prince.
2. Describe the little prince.
3. I agree/disagree with what the little prince is doing.
4. What is the little prince's future?

Most of the pupils' paintings were influenced by the illustrations in the book. In some cases, the children gave the little prince a coat of armour – a sword, or even a crown. In answer to the second question about what the little prince was like, the

children attributed to him the following one-word adjectives: *sweet, kind, good, caring, quiet, sad*, but also more complex descriptions: *He was calm, he took care of his rose, he had yellow hair, a long overcoat and brown boots... The little prince was a boy with brown hair, he radiated kindness and peace... The little prince is distinctive, childlike, he has imagination, he does not understand some things, he adapts them to himself, he is a character. He had great imagination and he was worried that the adults were not interested in him. He was not interested in a child's dreams.* From the above remarks, it is clear that the pupils were able to think about this character more deeply and, at the same time, reflect upon their own problems in the light of it. This was even more evident in the third task, when, in some cases, they identified the little prince with the author: *In my opinion, the little prince did the right things. He tried to persuade his parents to enter into the children's dream-world... I, myself, as a small child, wanted a lot from this world and I am still interested in many things... He enters the world of adults...*

Some children disagreed with the little prince: *I disagree because he wouldn't answer the questions... I do not agree because he only wanted his own way and did not answer the questions you asked him, but you had to answer his.*

Some of the children's affirmative answers almost seemed to glorify the little prince!... *I agree because I think he is different from the adults... I agree because he is so much like children are!... I agree because he is fantastic!... I agree because he is so amusing and because he is from another planet... I agree with what the little prince is doing, because he is taking care of his small planet, and he is killing the baobab trees... I agree because he has imagination, he is himself, he has a sense of humour, he is amusing...*

Some of the children were taken aback by the fourth question and they did not answer it. But those who answered clearly revealed what kind of message they had carried away from this literary work. So, how do you see the future of the little prince?: *He will take his sheep with him, he will remove the seeds from the big trees so that they do not destroy the little planet, and then he will live just with his sheep.. He will make the children laugh... His future is bad because the baobab trees could destroy the little planet... Somebody will find him again and write another book about him, and then someone else will find him again etc.... he will return to his small planet and take care of his rose for the rest of his life...he will become a king in the future... I wish there were a little prince here, because he is good...he will always be my model...his future is to become the ruler of an asteroid and to help his friends... the soul of the little prince will return but his body will not...Because he is so imaginative, he will experience many more things... he will give evil no rest, he will be an individual, then he will change into an "adult" and he will be wise, he will understand everything in real terms, he will not have a childlike world.*

I have to state here that both the teachers and I were surprised by the children's ability to formulate the message of the book, on the basis of their reading and experience of it. The message had different meanings for different people and is evidence of the democratisation of daily life. In spite of this, the pupils could only comprehend this demanding adults' fairy tale to a certain childish extent. It is the teacher's role to lead the pupils and help them focus on objective aesthetic values and meanings in the book. However, in this case it was unnecessary, as all the answers indicate that the pupils perceived the book, of course to different extents, as an artefact which told them something about themselves.

The teachers, giving us feedback during the seminar discussion about the quality of their work, admitted two things. First, they were surprised by the pupils' ability to formulate their opinion. Secondly, they noticed that during the controlled reflection, the pupils' work was relaxed, spontaneous, but also associated with their literary memory, and experience, and this allowed them to express their personal attitude. Also they were surprised that those pupils who had been considered weak, were able to express their opinion, and, on the contrary, the best pupils in the class were surprisingly self-assured, and there was no evidence of an inner experience behind it.

Controlled reflection of the students participating in the specialised innovative study course and of the extension students – pre-service elementary teachers.

If we want teachers to introduce non-traditional forms of work into their teaching, it is not enough just to give them information about the forms which exist in Slovakia or abroad. Rather than just hearing a lecture on the topic, teachers should be confronted with the same experience themselves in their work, as pupils will face.

In the case of adult pre-service and in-service teachers, we worked with a text by Roald Dahl, "The Twits".

Though I prefer silent reading and the participant's direct contact with the text, I had to choose the method of reading aloud. I, myself, read the story aloud to the teachers for a practical reason – this recent book is not available in school libraries and at the same time, it is out of print.

Procedure and activity:

1. Reading the samples – the descriptions of the Twits.

Granddad Twit was one of those extremely ungroomed men. His whole face, other than his forehead, eyes and nose, was covered in thick whiskers. They even sprouted disobediently from his nostrils and ears.

Granddad Twit was of the opinion that being so hairy and unshaven looked incredibly clever and dignified. However, he was neither clever nor dignified. Granddad Twit was a twit. He was born a twit. And now that he was in his sixties, he was one more than ever before.

The whiskers on Granddad Twit's face didn't grow smoothly, obediently and regularly like on other men's face. They grew in prickly tufts and stood up on end like on a brush.

And how often did Granddad Twit wash his hairy prickly face?

The answer is – NEVER. Not even on Sunday.

He hadn't washed it for years.

... When he was eating, Granddad Twit didn't bother to open his mouth wide. Because of this (but also because he never washed), he always had stuck to his beard and moustache, hundreds of little bits of previous breakfasts, lunches and suppers...

Grandma Twit

Grandma Twit was in no better shape than her husband. Of course, she didn't have a beard or a moustache. And it is a shame that she didn't. At least they would have covered some of the awful hideousness of her appearance, with which she terrified the neighbourhood.

Just look at her.

Have you ever seen anyone uglier? I doubt it.

The strange thing is that Grandma Twit was not always ugly. When she was young, she had quite a pretty face. But as the years went by and she grew older, the ugliness increased.

Why did it happen? I will tell you why.

If someone has ugly thoughts, it begins to be noticeable on their face. And if that person has ugly thoughts every day, every week, every month, every year, that face becomes uglier and uglier, until it becomes dreadful to look at.

A person who only has nice thoughts, can never be ugly. You can have a hooked nose a crooked mouth, a double chin and protruding teeth - but if you have nice thoughts, they will shine from your face like rays of sunshine and you will always look nice."

(Roald Dahl: *The Twits*, p. 11, 12, 14, 16, 17.)

2. Drawing of one's idea of the Twits.
3. What is Granddad Twit like? What is Grandma Twit like?
4. What am I like?
5. What bad things are the Twits capable of doing?
6. A commented reading of the book.
7. Discussion.

Evaluation:

The drawings were an indication of the skills and abilities of the participants. The expressions of the figures expressed the adjectives which follow. The descriptive illustration was dominant. Only two of the participants showed a more creative approach. The questions about what the Twits were like were answered by the following repeated adjectives: he was - *dirty, disgusting, awful, unshaven, negligent, untidy, stinky*, she - *ugly, bad, treacherous, limping, shuffling, unkind, intolerant, untidy, yelling...*

Then the participants answered the question "What am I like?" by listing their negative characteristics: *careless, pessimistic, lazy, indolent, stubborn, impatient, talkative, in the habit of yelling, not having enough time for my own children, inflexible, unpunctual, judgmental, wicked, malicious but only sometimes, authoritarian, uptight, thoughtless, self-satisfied, strict, short-tempered, closed, unapproachable, sleepy, indecisive, envious, irritable with children and husband, conceited, moody, too demanding.*

These statements are valuable because they reveal one fact. All of them were lists of negative characteristics, positive self-acceptance being missing. During our discussion with the participants, we came to the conclusion that the reason why they are unable to see themselves positively can be found in the collective approach to education under the communist regime.

I was particularly interested in the fourth part of this reflection. It indicated both the level of creativity and the ethic values recognised by the participants. They were condemning of man's negative activity.

The answers to the question "What bad things were the Twits capable of doing?" were as follows: *kicking a dog, producing fear and resentment in people, intruding upon people, destroying everything, causing harm to the neighbours, gossiping, stealing, beating each other, destroying their common property, tormenting, turning the world upside down, destroying birds' nests, being cruel to animals, beating children and animals, robbing a bank, getting drunk and crashing into someone...*

The answers about tormenting, destroying birds' nests and turning the world upside down, were most similar to the truth in the text.

The evil actions of the Twits also impacted their mutual relationships. The apes were closed in a cage by the Twits and there they had to stand on their heads almost all day long. On Thursdays the Twits used to eat paté made from small birds, which they caught with the help of a "supermaxispecial" bird lime on Wednesdays.

During our commented reading (when part of the book was read, and part talked through), I introduced the whole book to the participants. They could compare their own conclusions with the text itself.

I worked with the book “The Twits” in ethic education too. The difference was that during the first assignment, some participants identified the Twits as homeless people and they pitied them. They only saw as bad deeds when they combed through dirty ashtrays and stole out of hunger, which they also excused immediately.

The discussion was spontaneous. We discussed in particular whether this type of literature is suitable for children, and also other works by the same author. Some teachers considered similar texts to be a behavioural guide for pupils with discipline problems and so they refused to use them.

The evaluation of the work of the participants must be divided into two parts: evaluation of the work of the teachers and of the work of the pupils. The first prerequisite for the teacher’s work to be successful is the choice of the text - either the whole text or just samples of it. Texts should be of an objective high standard. Most of the texts chosen were of this standard. Only in a few cases were commercial “Disney - type” texts chosen, or functional texts which were focused directly on the educational aspect.

It is also important that a text be chosen according to the needs and interests of the children. Of course, we do not exclude texts which go beyond these requirements, for example, *The Little Prince*. The kind of text depends on the teachers and on the maturity of the class, and on their ability to work with it and process it methodologically.

The teachers formulated their assignments and questions according to my instructions but at the same time, there was space for their creativity.

Questions of the type “What is he or she like?” seem quite simple and their answers of small value. However, they reflect the ability to compare - they can stimulate associations, opposites and at the same time, they reflect a confrontation with one’s own character traits. While the adults’ reflection on the question “What am I like” tended to be negative, the pupils tended to see themselves in a better light.

Entering into dialogue with the author was presented by the teachers as agreement or disagreement with the characters of a specific literary work - this kind of reflection was done with epic texts.

The pupils’ answers provided insight into the depth of meaning of the text, identification with a character or its rejection. Most of the pupils were able to provide arguments for their opinions. They stated why they agreed or disagreed with the action of the characters. The choice of texts meant that they reflected the main characters or heroes only, and none of the other characters in the literary works. This is understandable because the depiction of heroic models in the literature for younger children is often at a very black and white level.

The answers to the question “What would I do..?” were of the greatest value in terms of information provided. Here we saw reflected the inter-working of grasping the meaning of the text, and one’s cognitive memory, experiences and even emotional memory. The children had to think the text over, to make a decision and to express their attitude.

We cannot overlook the value (in terms of providing information) of the artistic expression of their understanding of the text and their feelings about it. There was a whole range of the pupils’ artistic creations - from the simple recording of the first grasp of the text to expressing the inner meaning of the text. Naturally, we did not assess them in terms of artistic skills. On the other hand, we should note that elementary school teachers usually teach all subjects and so they can evaluate the child’s output not only from the position of a literature teacher, but shift over into the area of art and assess it as an artistic work. At the same time they need to evaluate everything from the educational and psychological point of view too. Concerning artistic reflection, it is an important first step before the children verbalise their experience. That means that the pupil can speak about his or her artistic work on the basis of his or her perception of the literary work. This experience is then strengthened by the experience of one’s own interpretation and composition.

We consider controlled reflection to be one method in literary education. It allows pupils to penetrate the meaning of a text and to grasp the author’s message.

Besides this, controlled reflection is a useful method in the development of the child’s personality - it improves communication skills and abilities and helps in self - reflection and in the social integration of children into the community.

For teachers it can be a method in educational diagnostics as well as in sociological research. (e.g.: A controlled reflection of a story about animals - Children from Kysuce, in the north-west of Slovakia, all 23 of them answered the question “What would you do if you were hungry?” that they would go and ask for food from some good people.)

As we have already stated, controlled reflection is one method in literary education. If used in combination with other methods (interpretative ones, creative drama etc.), we consider it to be both a stimulating and a productive method.

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