

## **STRATEGIES IN TEACHING LITERATURE IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This essay discusses about some strategies in teaching literature in English classroom, focusing on teaching poems, prose, and plays. There are some strategies can be applied by the lecturer in teaching literature in English classroom. First of all, the lecturer should prepare the material presented to the students in the class. Secondly, lecturer can set some questions. Thirdly, always ask "why". Fourth, add fuel to the fire. Fifth, add history to the material. Sixth, involve every single student. Seventh, grade the thought, not the content. Eighth, give appropriate homework. Ninth, emphasize references. Tenth, read out the work of other scholars and finally, enjoy the experience. Then some possible way and solution are suggested in teaching literature as the example as follows; first, strategies and procedures in teaching poem entitled "Richard Cory" by Edwin Arlington Robinson, second, strategies and procedures in teaching prose entitled "Sorry, wrong number", third, strategies and procedures in teaching play entitled "Sense and Sensibility."

**Key Words:** Teaching Strategies, Teaching literature, English classroom

## **I. Introduction**

This paper discusses about strategies in teaching literature in English classroom, focusing on teaching poems, prose, and plays as well. We, as the literature lecturers, should know the best strategies and procedures in teaching this subject to the students since it needs students' deep understanding in mastering it.

According to Lombardi, Esther (2007), literature is a term used to describe written or spoken material. Broadly speaking, literature is used to describe anything from creative writing to more technical works, but the term is most commonly used to refer works of the creative imagination, including works of poetry, drama, fiction and nonfiction.

Literature represents a language or a people: culture and tradition. Nevertheless, literature is more important than just a historical or cultural artifact. Literature introduces us to new world of experiences. We learn about books and literature; we enjoy the comedies and the tragedies of poems, stories, and plays; and we may even grow and evolve through our literary journey with books.

Ultimately, we may discover meaning in literature by looking at what the author says and how he/she says it. We may interpret the author's message. Whatever critical paradigm we use to discuss and analyze literature, there is still an artistic quality to

the works. Literature is important to us because it speaks to us, it is universal, and it affects us. Even when it is ugly, literature is beautiful.

## **II. Strategies in Teaching Literature in English Classroom**

According to Sondra C, Krystle, literature is a very versatile subject and is generally considered one of the most difficult subjects to teach. There is no right or wrong way to teach a literature class; however, there is a smart way to teach it. The idea in literature is not just to get an answer, it is to get an in-depth, provocative and creative answer. The job of the professor is not to teach the student, it is to lead the student.

The literature lecturers must be creative and innovative in teaching this subject so that the students will not be bored in studying it. The students will be hard to master it if the lecturer cannot find the best strategies in teaching it to the students. Moreover, Sondra C, Krystle states that there are some strategies can be applied by the lecturer in teaching literature in English classroom. First of all, before teaching, the lecturer should prepare the material presented to the students in the class. Secondly, he/she can set some questions. Make sure the questions we set have not been discussed in detail in class. Of course the questions have to be similar but ensure that they are not the same. We are grading

the students on their literary analysis not on their note-taking skills.

Thirdly, always ask "why" for any pieces of works, the most important question in literature is 'Why?' Make sure every student knows the importance of this question from the first class. The lecturer has to train the class to be opinionated and try to interpret every line according to the reason and the intention behind it. The heart of all Literature is its intention.

Fourth, add fuel to the fire. It means that there is no room for a unanimous agreement in Literature. Every line is subject to interpretation, levels of importance and hidden meaning. Make sure that the students are not exposed to one view. The best way to do this is to play devil's advocate. When they express a view, disagree. If they agree with you, change your view. This will make for interesting debate and force the students to defend their view point and explain why they are right. Try to be as unreasonable with your stand as you can, this will get the students more 'heated' and force them to think in the abstract manner necessary to write a Literature paper. This is also good for waking up those students at the back who snooze every class. An argument is much more interesting than the face of the desk.

Fifth, add history to the material. As your students become familiar with the material, allow them to become familiar

with the face behind the material: the writer. Tell them a little bit about their past and the way they lived their lives and some of the documented inspiration behind their works. A lot of very famous writers lived rather interesting (and somewhat tragic and scandalous) lives, it's always interesting to hear about, and it might provide more meaning to their words.

Sixth, involve every single student. Each class has students that are not really interested in the material but come to class each day for unidentified reasons. Each class also has students who tend to monopolize the conversation and centre discussions towards their opinions. Avoid that at all costs. Even the lazy students can usually provide some sort of input. Ask a lot of questions and give everyone an equal shot at answering. Don't stand there and wait for an answer. Maintain an interest in each and every student. Students can usually tell if you like them or not or if you prefer one over the other. Avoid this at all costs. Your job is to promote the imagination of all the students and to treat them all equally. Talk to all of them personally at least once.

Moreover, recognize the students' weaknesses and strengths: By giving your students a lot of opportunities to do various kinds of work (speaking, arguing, writing, interpreting, etc.) you can assess the weaknesses and strengths of each one. Praise each student on their strengths and

talk to them about their weaknesses. Allow your students the freedom to choose the form they are more comfortable with. For example, if a student is good at verbal discussion and not good at written communication, you can allow for one of their assignments to be verbal. To be fair, however, you must give all students a chance to choose the form they are good at. Talk to the students personally about their weaknesses and how to improve them.

Seventh, grade the thought, not the content. When marking papers, you need to be aware that literature is not like most other subjects where the content is what is essential. It is the creativity and thought behind the content that makes a literature essay stand out. You are also grading the content, obviously. But in literature, you have to give more marks to the student with a controversial and creative interpretation and a few less to the student with the 'textbook' interpretation. For example, the student who can convince the reader that Frankenstein's monster was actually his alter ego, with support from lines in the book, is a better student than one who treats the monster as just a creature who had the misfortune to be created by man.

Eighth, give appropriate homework. The students must be treated like adults, the homework should be appropriate and challenging. Be clear about how you like your papers to be written and make sure they

follow a certain format. The best kind of homework is a variable kind. Make sure they do a lot of research-based papers but also give them a good amount of unconventional homework like: an essay on the difficulties of a literature student, or writing a poem, or interpreting a fairy tale (there actually is a lot of symbolism in stories like 'Beauty and the Beast' and 'The Pied Piper').

Ninth, emphasize references. No matter how creative the thought, it has to be backed up by quotes from the material. A student might have a particularly brilliant idea but if it is disproved by the material, the idea is worthless. Stress on the fact that every claim has to be supported by lines, verses and dialogue in the text.

Tenth, read out the work of other scholars. Expose the students to interpretations by other Literature analysts. You ought to keep the papers submitted by your old classes as well, to read out to the new ones. Challenge the students to respond to those interpretations. Ask them questions like: "In what ways could he/she be correct or incorrect?"

Finally, enjoy the experience. If you are heading to class and you are dreading it or feeling like you ought to just turn back and go home, it is time to reschedule the class or postpone it. If you are not giving a class 'your all', the students will notice and it affects the environment of the classroom.

Also, the students will probably like you more for the extra couple of hours of time you've given to them.

### **1. Strategies and Procedures in Teaching Poems.**

A poem is a composition written in verse, although verse has been equally used for epic and dramatic fiction. In teaching poems to the students, the lecturer should know the best strategies in teaching it. According to Hamilton Silvestri, there are some strategies and procedures in teaching poems as follows:

- Read to the students. First and foremost, you want the students to do nothing but listen to the poem. Tell them to close their eyes and just listen to the rise and fall of your voice. Practice before you read aloud.
- Ask the students to immediately write what they are feeling when you are finished speaking. Tell the students that it is not just the words the poet writes that have meaning, but also the rhythm and cadence of the arrangement of words that also carries tremendous power. Ask them to identify what dominant feeling they had when listening to the poem; happiness, sadness, anger, loneliness, etc.
- Study the poem line by line. Help them understand words they are unfamiliar with. Ask them to brainstorm what the poet might mean in each line.
- Form a mental picture. After studying the poem line by line, ask the students to form a mental picture while you read the poem to them again. After reading, ask them if they have changed their original choice of feelings.
- Open the classroom to debate why or why not they changed their minds. Let the students take over at this point and let them discuss their opinions on the poem's meaning.
- Create. Now that they are--you hope--in love with poetry, have them create their own poem. Give them a "feeling" word and tell them to create a "picture" with words of that feeling.
- Post students' poems into a chapbook and run copies for them to keep. Being "published" will encourage them to keep writing.

### **Richard Cory**

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,

We people on the pavement looked at  
him:

He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,  
And he was always human when he  
talked;

But still he fluttered pulses when he said,  
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he  
walked.

And he was rich, richer than a king,  
And admirably schooled in every grace:  
In fine, we thought that he was everything  
To make us wish that we were in his  
place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,  
And went without the meat, and cursed the  
bread;

And Richard Cory, one calm summer  
night,

Went home and put a bullet through his  
head.

"Richard Cory" is a narrative poem written by Edwin Arlington Robinson, first published in 1897.

The poem describes a person who is wealthy, well educated, mannerly, and admired by the people in his town. Despite all this, he takes his own life. Through this

story, Robinson introduces the classic theme of not judging people by their appearance; rather, there is more to a man than what appears on the surface. The idea that money cannot buy happiness is also suggested. The speakers are townspeople who admire Richard Cory.

### **2. Strategies and Procedures in Teaching Prose.**

Teaching prose focuses on increasing student's comprehension of the material and establishing a personal connection to it. The key is to use a variety of strategies to keep students interested and involved. Grimaud, Kristie (2009) states that there are some strategies in teaching prose to the students; read, write, discuss, and integrate technology.

- **Read.**

Encourage students to read the material several times if needed. Repeated observation reveals what they may have missed the first time. Introduce active reading strategies at the beginning of the course. First, teach them to observe what is on the page, the facts and answers to "who, what, when, where, and how." Then encourage them to notice patterns, connections, repetition or contradictions. Tell them to question everything and explain that a situation or item wouldn't be in the text if there wasn't a reason for it.

Lastly, teach students to discover the theme of the text what the author intended for the reader to understand. At the beginning of the course, make sure students understand literature terminology. They will need to know what the fiction elements are (point of view, character, setting, plot, structure and theme) and why writers use them. Most textbooks explain these terms, so have students read about the concepts and then discuss them during class by using examples from the assigned readings.

- Write.

One of the best ways for students to increase comprehension is to write about the story they've read. Require students to keep a journal during the course and have them brainstorm, list or free-write a paragraph immediately after completing the reading. Depending on the level of the class, create a form with questions to answer as homework.

Other writing assignments also enhance creative and critical thinking. Ask students to write a continuation of a short story and imagine what would happen next. Alternately, have them rewrite the ending of a short story, choosing a

point in the action and changing the direction of the plot. You can also require that they change the gender, age, race or sexual orientation of a character from a story and rewrite the story or a selected scene. Assign the students a character and have them write a letter to him or her--or have the students write a letter to the author and tell him or her what they think of the story.

- Discuss.

Lecturing helps students understand the material, but creating a discussion involves students more effectively. Hearing another point of view challenges them to comprehend the material deeper. During class, ask questions and discuss them.

- Integrate Technology.

Integrate technology into your teaching strategies. After reading and discussing a work, watch the movie version in class. If a movie hasn't been made of that book, watch a similar one to compare or contrast. View author broadcasts reading their own work or commenting on it. Assign students to make a movie about the story or novel.

In this study, the writer would like to analyze the prose entitled: "Sorry, wrong number."

The story is about the sick woman, 12 years in bed, cannot do anything due to her sickness. Her sickness has made her husband, Mr. Stevenson, bored and planned to kill her. At one night while she was alone at home, she called her husband to accompany her. He was overnight at the office. She asked the operator to put her through her husband, but for several times she thought that those were the wrong number. She heard the conversation about the planning of murderer to kill a woman.

The conflict happened when she called the police department to tell about what she had heard. And that police argued that the woman in target was her since the circumstances were alike as hers. She became afraid after hearing that. The climax is when the telegram came and told that her husband went to Boston and will come back tomorrow. At that time, she realized that she was alone and she became more afraid.

The denouement is when telephoning the police department to tell that there was someone who wanted to kill her. The shadow of the second man, George, in black gloves, reach down and pick up phone while Mrs. Stevenson was lying with her lifeless hand, hanging down on her bed. He says: "sorry, wrong number." Before hang the telephone up.

### **3. Strategies and Procedures in Teaching Plays.**

Drama class allows students to release inhibitions and become someone else for a brief period, which can help them gain insight into human behavior. Drama teachers can show students a new way to enliven their craft and help them to think creatively in every aspect of their lives. An eHow Contributor mention that there are some strategies in teaching plays to the students; learn first, use games,

- Learn first.

If you have not already received a degree or certification in theater arts, learn as much as you can. Study with different coaches and teachers and in different genres of drama. Become accustomed to the act of performing so that you can give your future students well grounded advice and guidance.

- Use games.

Teach drama with impromptu games and interactive group activities. Playing can be good for a child and an adult, and it helps to free the mind and the body to react naturally. Impromptu games are can help actors to create realistic characters. Having the entire class "be a tree" is not as helpful as



having them play out unscripted scenes drawn from a hat.

- Continue to learn.

Teachers are qualified to teach their subject, but continue to learn after you begin teaching. Stay abreast of the latest trends in theater and movies, and this will give you new and different ways to prepare your students for theater and for life. Teach drama as you would teach any other subject by reading and studying drama constantly.

- Discuss interesting topics.

You don't necessarily have to delve into the human psyche in every class, but discussing different motivations for a person's action as a class can help shed light on scene work and monologues. Find out what your individual students enjoy outside of class and pick scenes and study works that will cater to those interests. Especially in a school setting where drama may be a requirement for a certain degree, try to draw your students in that are taking the class because they have to and not out of an interest in the class.

- Teach from experience and from texts.

Using well established actors and teachers to help you convey a

message is not frowned upon. A well rounded drama student will be more successful in dealing with different scripts and future coaches and teachers.

In this paper, the writer is interesting to discuss about the play entitled: "Sense and Sensibility."

First of all, the writer would like to present the characters of this play.

- Henry Dashwood — a wealthy gentleman who dies at the beginning of the story. The terms of his estate prevent him from leaving anything to his second wife and their children. He asks John, his son by his first wife, to look after (meaning ensure the financial security of) his second wife and their three daughters.
- Mrs. Dashwood — the second wife of Henry Dashwood, who is left in difficult financial straits by the death of her husband. She is 40 years old at the beginning of the book. Much like her daughter Marianne, she is very emotive and often makes poor decisions based on emotion rather than reason.
- Elinor Dashwood — the sensible and reserved eldest

daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dashwood. She is 19 years old at the beginning of the book. She becomes attached to Edward Ferrars, the brother-in-law of her elder half-brother, John. Always feeling a keen sense of responsibility to her family and friends, she places their welfare and interests above her own, and suppresses her own strong emotions in a way that leads others to think she is indifferent or cold-hearted.

- Marianne Dashwood — the romantically inclined and eagerly expressive second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dashwood. She is 16 years old at the beginning of the book. She is the object of the attentions of Colonel Brandon and Mr. Willoughby. She is attracted to young, handsome, romantically spirited Willoughby and does not think much of the older, more reserved Colonel Brandon. Marianne does the most development within the book, learning her sensibilities have been selfish. She decides her conduct should be more like that of her elder sister, Elinor.
- Margaret Dashwood — the youngest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dashwood. She is thirteen at the beginning of the book. She is also romantic and good-tempered but not expected to be as clever as her sisters when she grows older.
- John Dashwood — the son of Henry Dashwood by his first wife. He intends to do well by his half-sisters, but he has a keen sense of avarice, and is easily swayed by his wife.
- Fanny Dashwood — the wife of John Dashwood, and sister to Edward and Robert Ferrars. She is vain, selfish, and snobbish. She spoils her son Harry. Very harsh to her husband's half-sisters and stepmother, especially since she fears her brother Edward is attached to Elinor.
- Sir John Middleton — a distant relative of Mrs. Dashwood who, after the death of Henry Dashwood, invites her and her three daughters to live in a cottage on his property. Described as a wealthy, sporting man who served in the army with Colonel Brandon, he is very affable and keen to throw

frequent parties, picnics, and other social gatherings to bring together the young people of their village. He and his mother-in-law, Mrs. Jennings, make a jolly, teasing, and gossipy pair.

- Lady Middleton — the genteel, but reserved wife of Sir John Middleton, she is quieter than her husband, and is primarily concerned with mothering her four spoiled children.
- Mrs. Jennings — mother to Lady Middleton and Charlotte Palmer. A widow who has married off all her children, she spends most of her time visiting her daughters and their families, especially the Middletons. She and her son-in-law, Sir John Middleton, take an active interest in the romantic affairs of the young people around them and seek to encourage suitable matches, often to the particular chagrin of Elinor and Marianne.
- Edward Ferrars — the elder of Fanny Dashwood's two brothers. He forms an attachment to Elinor Dashwood. Years before meeting the Dashwoods, Ferrars proposed to Lucy Steele, the niece of his

tutor. The engagement has been kept secret owing to the expectation that Ferrars' family would object to his marrying Miss Steele. He is disowned by his mother on discovery of the engagement after refusing to give up the engagement.

- Robert Ferrars — the younger brother of Edward Ferrars and Fanny Dashwood, he is most concerned about status, fashion, and his new barouche. He subsequently marries Miss Lucy Steele after Edward is disowned.
- Mrs. Ferrars — Fanny Dashwood and Edward and Robert Ferrars' mother. A bad-tempered, unsympathetic woman who embodies all the foibles demonstrated in Fanny and Robert's characteristics. She is determined that her sons should marry well.
- Colonel Brandon — a close friend of Sir John Middleton. In his youth, Brandon had fallen in love with his father's ward, but was prevented by his family from marrying her because his father was determined to marry her to his older brother. He was sent into the military abroad to

be away from her, and while gone, the girl suffered numerous misfortunes partly as a consequence of her unhappy marriage, finally dying penniless and disgraced, and with a natural (i.e., illegitimate) daughter, who becomes the ward of the Colonel. He is 35 years old at the beginning of the book. He falls in love with Marianne at first sight as she reminds him of his father's ward. He is very honorable friend to the

The story revolves around Elinor and Marianne, two daughters of Mr. Dashwood by his second wife. They have a younger sister, Margaret, and an older half-brother named John. When their father dies, the family estate passes to John, and the Dashwood women are left in reduced circumstances. The novel follows the Dashwood sisters to their new home, a cottage on a distant relative's property, where they experience both romance and heartbreak. The contrast between the sisters' characters is eventually resolved as they each find love and lasting happiness. Through the events in the novel, Elinor and Marianne find a balance between sense (or pure logic) and sensibility (or pure emotion) in life and love.

### III. Conclusions

Literature is used to describe anything from creative writing to more technical works, but the term is most commonly used to refer works of the creative imagination, including works of poetry, drama, fiction and nonfiction. Literature is important to us because it speaks to us, it is universal, and it affects us. Even when it is ugly, literature is beautiful.

The literature lecturers must be creative and innovative in teaching this subject so that the students will not be bored in studying it. The students will be hard to master it if the lecturer cannot find the best strategies in teaching it to the students.

There are some strategies can be applied by the lecturer in teaching literature to the students; before teaching, the lecturer should prepare the material presented to the students in the class, set some questions, always ask "why" for any pieces of works, the most important question in literature is 'Why?', add fuel to the fire (make sure that the students are not exposed to one view), add history to the material, involve every single student, grade the thought, not the content, give appropriate homework, emphasize references, read out the work of other scholars, and finally enjoy the experience.

In teaching poems, the lecturer should have the strategies on it. These are some can

be implemented in English classroom. First of all, the lecturer can read it to the students while the students listen it. Ask the students to immediately write what they are feeling when you are finished speaking. Study the poem line by line. Help them understand words they are unfamiliar with. Ask them to brainstorm what the poet might mean in each line. Form a mental picture. After studying the poem line by line, ask the students to form a mental picture while you read the poem to them again. Open the classroom to debate why or why not they changed their minds. Let the students take over at this point and let them discuss their opinions on the poem's meaning. Finally, ask them to create their own poem and publish it.

In teaching prose, the lecturer should have the strategies on it as well. These are some strategies that can be applied. Encourage students to read the material several times if needed. Write. After that, ask them to write. One of the best ways for students to increase comprehension is to write about the story they've read. And next discuss it together. Lecturing helps students understand the material, but creating a discussion involves students more effectively. And finally integrate technology into your teaching strategies. After reading and discussing a work, watch the movie version in class.

The same as teaching poems and prose, teaching plays also needs the best strategies

to teach it to the students. Learn first. If you have not already received a degree or certification in theater arts, learn as much as you can. Study with different coaches and teachers and in different genres of drama. Become accustomed to the act of performing so that you can give your future students well grounded advice and guidance. The lecturer can also use games. Continue to learn and discuss interesting topics are also the two most important things should be aware by the lecturer.

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