

MYSTERY NOVELS AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

Teaching of literature has long been excluded from or given a minor importance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum. Teaching literature in EFL classes has many uses and purposes, which can be put into three different categories namely linguistic, cultural and individual ones. Therefore, it can be said that an efficient EFL curriculum should properly bring language and literature teaching together. There are many types of novels which can be encountered during study of English literature. Some novels exhibit several qualities.

The novel is a humanist development that looks at the complexities of life as lived in the everyday and does it through telling a story. There is some sort of predicament, perhaps against other people or social conventions or simply within the mind. Something has to be worked out and resolved, hopefully. The novel does contain hope or investigates despair. There are various categories of novel through which these happen. Everyone loves a mystery. Mystery stories provide interesting and enjoyable material in the language classroom”

1.Introduction:

“Mystery stories provide rich environments for the productive and receptive skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing” (**Johnson and Louis 1987**).

“Mystery stories also provide useful sources of practice and reinforcement in the areas of critical thinking and deductive reasoning” (**Raths et al. 1967**).

This study explores the ways that mystery stories can be successfully utilized to **improve language proficiency and linguistic ability**.

Howard Haycraft states in his introduction to *A Treasury of Great Mysteries*,

“. . . people read mystery stories for a diversity of reasons. Some, for the intellectual challenge of the puzzles they present, others for the vicarious pleasure of the chase. Others believe . . .”

that the vast popularity of the genre lies in the fact that, in a disorderly world, it represents one of the few fixed points of order and morality, where justice may be counted on to emerge triumphant.

It is these reasons that make the mystery story a very powerful tool in the teacher's arsenal of activities.

“Whether you are using a 1 minute mystery story to give the class something to talk about or do while you take attendance, a filler at the end of class if you have time left over from your daily plan, or a full fledged dissection of a mystery story over a 2 hour class, mystery stories are very versatile”.(Dills 1989).

Mystery stories range from the 1 minute mystery story that occupies 3 paragraphs to full length novels of **Sherlock Holmes** or **Agatha Christie**.

“Mystery stories can also be found to suit any number or type of class objectives whether it be a focus on pronunciation, grammar, listening, reading, or speaking” (Green 1987).

There are many kinds of mysteries. Some can be solved and some cannot. The mystery of the Great Pyramids, or the mystery of UFOs have yet to be explained and solved. Everyone is faced with a mystery of some kind or another in their lives. Missing objects such as keys or important papers, or even missing people and crimes constitute many of the mysteries we face on a daily basis. A certain type of mystery that can be solved and that has a definite conclusion is the mystery story. A mystery story is a genre of literature that has a plot which involves the solving of a puzzle, esp. a crime.

Mysteries such as **Sherlock Holmes** and **Agatha Christie**, provide insight and context into the time that they were written.

“If the writer is successful, they can appeal to the reader on an emotional level and reveal significant insights about the way people lived and will live. The writer develops the characters, setting, and plot so they elucidate the times in which they live. Attention to detail even in romantic mystery novels provides the reader with excellent sources to improve vocabulary” (Sage 1987).

The writer of good mysteries uses research and realizes the importance of accuracy and detail in leaving clues for the reader to follow. The mystery writer is as interested in conveying a story as they are in *providing clues to the puzzle and solving the crime*.

Good mysteries must also be good stories. The mystery story presents the reader with characters and suspects caught up in a web of intrigue and untruthfulness, and builds the mystery with clues and details. As the reader becomes involved with the characters and story line, they *begin to absorb the information and begin to recognize* the many clues that the writer leaves them . Gradually the *characters become real to the reader and the reader can begin to "cheer" for one character, the sleuth, over another, the culprit*.

“And, at this moment, the reader is unconsciously using their *cognitive ability* to sort and group these details and clues; they *compare* them to other characters and positions in the story and begin to discern the differences in the truth of what they are reading about and to compare it to realistic and probable circumstances” (McLaughlin 1987).

If the writer accomplishes this kind of reader involvement, they can make some impact on the *reader's conscience*.

Mysteries make the reader think, consider, discover, and, most important, begin to realize the importance and usefulness of studying English.

The writer has, of course, as their central purpose, also described and explained some aspects of **critical thinking** along with **reasoning** and **deductive skills**. The mystery writer who is writing mysteries for the general public is writing literature too. The writer finds many half-truths, many unspoken words and many different views of the same facts as plot or character development. One is looking for the clues, but it is sometimes difficult to say what is a clue and what is not, and it is even harder to say which clues are meaningful and which are subsidiary. The reader determines what clues to consider, and in performing this, they are **synthesizing** and **analyzing** clues and facts in interpreting the story. The reader chooses the clues and they say what these chosen clues mean.

The mystery writer sets their ideas down in writing. They are writing for people about mysterious events and in doing so they are writing literature. The mystery is fiction, unless it is in the true detective genre, and the writer uses the skills of the literary writer. The writer of good mysteries is aware of the various aspects of the time period in which the story takes place, and if they are sophisticated about the historical view, they will integrate this in their story. In including the historical dimension, the writer incorporates facts about history that are important to the readers' understanding of the mystery story. These facts are important because the characters and the story cannot be understood without knowing them.

In addition to attention to the historical dimension, the good mystery writer incorporates **accuracy** in specific detail of characters and suspects, clues, and other information to lead the reader **directly or indirectly** to the **solving** of the mystery. Only an honest portrayal of the past events illuminates the times accurately. Mystery writing is a demanding art form because the writer has to spend a considerable amount of time ensuring that details are precise and accurate.

Teachers should appreciate the importance of mystery stories. **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** and **Agatha Christie** are masters in the art of mystery writing. American and British writers such as **Dashiell Hammett** and **Ellery Queen** have a tremendous public following because of their strict attention to accurate detail. American writers such as **Hy Conrad, Stan Smith, and Carol Farley** write

mystery stories for young adults. They, too, combine accuracy with fictional form in exciting and interesting literature. *These writers of mystery stories provide an invaluable experience for readers.*

When the language teacher brings this kind of fiction into the classroom, they are providing the student with the ***ability to understand language.***

“The mystery story uses **imaginative** and **figurative** language to entice students into a realistic exploration of events. The characters and drama interact with each other in such a way as to involve the student in a study of the story on an emotional level as well as a cognitive level. This student involvement is a logical reason why language teachers should be persuaded to use mystery stories” (Brumfit and Carter 1986).

2 MYSTERY NOVELS AND THE STUDENTS INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Once students become immersed in the story's setting, character, plot and theme, they become interested and stimulated by the story. While reading the mystery, they begin to draw inferences about history, social attitudes and manners, customs and beliefs. They begin to absorb the mystery story details without even realizing they are being instructed. In contrast, if these same language techniques were presented in a textbook and the teacher asked the students to memorize or know them, it is likely that little information would be retained by many students.

The events become more significant because the students must understand them in order to understand the story.

“Students retain information more easily because it has been understood within the context of the plot, character, setting and theme of the story” (Mason and Au 1986).

Students begin to consider the relevancy of learning language in relation to the amount of enjoyment and interest they receive. The students begin to see how a study of the mystery helps them to understand the English language.

The impact of a mystery story on students cannot be minimized. The range of their imagination and understanding can be broadened. If they respond to a good mystery, they might be motivated to read more, and use English on a more frequent basis. They begin to develop their own sense of enjoyment from discovering information on their own. Students would then be expected to read more complex mysteries after they have finished reading simpler ones.

Piaget, Vygotsky, and others established the relationship between thinking and language. Many aspects of language are important to critical thinking skills.

“There is a close relationship between what students say in class discussions and their ability to think” (Stanford and Roark 1974, Staton 1984).

“Many people view reading as an active mental process involving the ability to construct meaning” (Pearson and Tierney 1984).

3.CONCLUSION

By using mystery stories in all of the language classes whether in India, Korea, Japan or the United States. Mystery stories have no cultural bias and work well in any setting. The Teacher carry approximately 5 different types of mystery stories wherever they go. One of the favorite uses is to allow students to solve a short mystery story, generally a 3 to 5 minute mystery of Hy Conrad or Ken Weber, while the Teacher is involved with class administrative duties such as record keeping or taking attendance. Conrad mysteries are loved by all because they range from a page or so to 5 page mysteries that utilize affidavits, lab reports, crime scene analysis reports, autopsy reports, and miscellaneous reports that students have to sift through in order to find the culprit. These work well if we want to divide the class into groups.

4. REFERENCES

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