

# **Creative Techniques of Teaching Literature**

**Dr. Mrs. Anisa G. Mujawar, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.**

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## **Significance of the Study of English Literature**

The study of English language is gaining more and more significance and its inevitability is felt meticulously in the global contexts. The learning of English is inexorable in the present milieu as it has become the link language. However, the teachers and learners of English in India where students are the non-native learners of English face many problems related to teaching-learning of English. The teachers have to develop essential skills of students to teach them to express themselves in English in academic as well as real life contexts.

Along with the study of English language, study of English literature is also important. The English literature has a wide readership. Hence, study of this literature widens the literary spectrum of readers. Indian students are to be inspired to consider the study of English literature as significant as the study of English language. It is valuable even in language learning.

## **Culture and Literature**

Most of the Indian universities prescribe the British, the American, and the Commonwealth literature. Except the Indian literature, the Indian students cannot easily understand the whole body of the British or the American or any other literature. These literatures contain various allusions, customs, manners, mythologies, and other details. They refer to various social, political, religious references. If the Indian students have to understand the foreign literature, they must know its context and background. They have to comprehend the lexical items in the text that carry the thematic or content meaning in the piece of literature. If they do not know the context, there is a possibility of ennui while studying literature. It is therefore the duty of the teachers of literature to make the study of English literature interesting and also sustain students' motive to seek an appropriate pleasure and knowledge which is

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usually found in studying literature. Consequently, it is indispensable to find out some creative techniques to teach English literature to the Indian students.

### **Focus of This Paper**

This paper focuses on some creative techniques to promote the teaching-learning of English literature. Literature can be taught by using pre-teaching projects of geographical, political, and historical aspects of country, collection of pictures, stamps, use of films, dramas, computer-aided language laboratories, internet, blogs, World Wide Web, and some other innovative techniques of teaching literature. Such creative techniques can enhance students' involvement and love for English literature.

### **Difficulties Faced by Students**

The Indian students face number of difficulties while studying English literature. Before stating the creative techniques to teach English literature, it is quite relevant to refer to some of the problems faced by the Indian teachers as well as students:

1. Most of the classes have large number of students. It becomes difficult to follow diverse experimental methods to teach because they are unworkable to control the large number of students and maintain the balance of interactions with all of them within the stipulated time.
2. The teaching of literature is to be made examination-oriented. If the teachers give more time for the all-round understanding of the text, it is unfeasible to cover the syllabus. Hence, the teachers have to prefer the examination-oriented teaching.
3. All the classrooms do not provide the facilities of LCD, computer, and internet. Hence, the teachers have to be satisfied with the traditional teaching.
4. Now-a-days the need to communicate in English is emphasized everywhere. It stresses the functional use of the English language. Hence, most of the students get interested in the study English language and not the English literature.
5. Indian students have no easy access to the inward meanings of the British, the American, the Commonwealth, and other English literatures because these literatures have totally different cultures in every aspect.

6. The students of literature are not strongly aware of the possible jobs after studying literature courses. They think that to enter the fields related to or based on literature needs a glamorous background for the persons.

### **Creative Techniques to Overcome the Difficulties**

Keeping in view some of the difficulties mentioned above it is possible to find out some creative techniques to teach English literature:

1. **Pre-teaching project / presentation of geographical aspects:** Before beginning to teach the general topics related to the history of English literature or the texts focusing on some regions, it is interesting to give students a small project regarding the introduction and background of the country to which the text is related. It is also possible to ask students to bring the maps of that country in the class or inspire them to draw the maps in the notebooks. It increases their interest in the subject. The knowledge of geographical details, weather conditions, natural resources, etc., of the country adds a different flavour to learning of literature. It will provide students essential background which is particularly reflected in lexical items used in the literary text. This kind of teaching technique can make students feel the text rather familiar.
2. **Pre-teaching project / presentation of the historical aspects:** It is always valuable to train students to prepare small project/presentation of the historical background of country related to the study. It helps them to know and understand the historical details that influence the country and its literature.
3. **Small project/presentation of the political aspects:** It is promising to advise students to make a small project on the political background of the country. This helps them to understand the political movements as well as their effects on society reflected in literature.
4. **Collection of pictures, stamps:** It is possible to recommend students to collect some pictures, images related to the customs, traditions, food, clothes etc. of the country. Even the stamps of that country can also be collected to increase the participation of the students to learn about the literature of that country.
5. **Collection of mythology:** It is very important to refer to the mythological references that occur in the works. We can collect the pictures, references of the

mythology. These pictures can be very fascinating to become familiar with the country and its literature. They enhance students' perception of the world.

- 6. Films / Dramas:** Many films and dramas are produced on many novels and stories. These films or dramas can be showed to students after or before teaching the novel or drama. It is very appealing to invite students to compare the film with the text. This helps them to use their comparative skills of language. It is an effective way to inculcate among the learners very useful skills and strategies to acquire the language in context.
- 7. Computer-aided language laboratories:** It is an enjoyable activity to take students to the language laboratory and ask them to listen to the American or the British English. This gives them an idea of the language and the style of its expression by the American and the British.
- 8. Use of Internet, Blogs, World Wide Web and E-books:** Now-a-days students can use internet, blogs and e-books. If the language laboratory makes these facilities available, students will enjoy the learning. This gives them an opportunity to remain up-dated in the field of literary study.
- 9. Author's introduction:** Students can be motivated to present a brief biographical sketch of the author in the class. It is remarkable to collect all the detailed information of the author and his literary works. This makes students aware of the literary world of authors. Some students can be asked to write one paragraph on each work of the author. Such information can be compiled. It helps them to know the background of the author and his writing.
- 10. Scope of creativity:** It is a great activity to rouse students to write a poem on the novel, story on a poem or picture, draw a picture on a poem, and write a poem on a picture. We can organize competitions for such activities. It will be a nice opportunity for students to enhance their abilities to learn language by using their creative faculty.
- 11. Organizing interviews of the great/popular writers/critics/actors/ actresses:** Students believe that entry into the fields of cinema, script writing, song-writing etc., is not possible. They think that it is difficult to build a career in these fields. It will be an evocative occasion for them if teachers organize the interviews or talks of popular writers, actors and actresses. With such activities students get inspired and motivated to study literature and enjoy the assignments given to them.

- 12. Role plays:** It is easy to arrange the enactment of the drama. It is also possible to organize the small role play sessions. It helps to increase students' abilities to learn literature as well as it helps them to improve their speech.
- 13. A mental activity:** It is easy to give some mental activities to students for their wider participation. The literary texts can be introduced by telling them an anecdote, joke, proverb or showing /drawing picture etc.
- 14. Reading aloud:** It is very useful to enable students to read the text in meaningful units/chunks. Furthermore, through this activity teachers can diagnose the correct or incorrect strategies students deploy while doing silent reading. It is therefore a remedial task that can train the learners to overcome problems related to fluency and accuracy in reading English as second/foreign language.
- 15. Exercises for reading between the lines:** It is essential to teach students of literature to read between the lines. They can be asked to speculate on the meaning of the pieces of literature. What do the particular lines or dialogues mean can be explained by students. It will increase their imaginative powers and mental horizons. It is very important activity. In the words of M S. Knowles, “. . . it is tragic that we have not learned how to learn without being taught, and it is probably more important than all of the immediate reasons put together. The simple truth is that we are entering into a strange new world in which rapid change will be the only stable characteristic” (15). Hence, it is essential to find out new techniques to teach literature.
- 16. Post-teaching activity:** Teachers can ask the students to imagine different ends to the drama, story or novel. It is interesting to listen to various possibilities to end the work. Students can brainstorm a lot and bring out their creative talents. It ignites their heart, mind, and love for literature. They become competent to express themselves. It is true as Chris Morgan, et al., mention, “competence in a skill is acquired by practice. The principal challenge for the teachers is to provide maximum opportunities for practice with individual feedback upon developing expertise” (141). Teachers have to make students competent.
- 17. Exercises for reading beyond the lines and finding out human values:** It is easy to ask students to find out human values in the novels, stories, dramas and poetry. It affirms the value and significance of literature. Students note the

universal values in literature. It inculcates in them the need to believe in equality of human beings.

It is necessary to teach students of literature to learn some human values and principles of life from the pieces of literature. Teachers have to encourage them to learn the values and follow them in practical life. They can be inspired for patriotism, humanism, kindness, loyalty, truth, peace, love, social reforms etc. They must read literature beyond the lines. It helps to increase the maturity level of students. It also refines their sensitivity and enables them to be sympathetic as well as empathetic. They will be trained to become concerned and considerate.

**18. Exercises for creating the awareness about environment:** We all are aware of the dangers threatening the globe. It is a good exercise to ask students to find out examples of the ways of protecting the environment stated in the pieces of literature. It is also possible to find the descriptions of environment or natural beauty, animals, birds presented in literature. It enhances students' knowledge of flora and fauna.

**19. Orientation for explaining career opportunities other than films:** The students get interested in the study of literature if they come to know about the opportunities of jobs and careers. There are some jobs where the competency in literature is certainly an addition in the personal profile of the candidates. The students of literature can do everything in a very unique way in the fields like journalism, tourism, publications, freelancing, translations, audio books, places of public interests, websites of literature, embassies, cultural centres, etc.

## **Conclusion**

If the teachers of English literature do not find out creative methods of teaching literature and employ them in their teaching, the classroom teaching can become the elongated monologues. Hence, it is essential to teach literature with the help of new methods. With these methods it is possible to involve all the students in the learning activities. It gives them an opportunity for interdisciplinary study also. It will help them to undertake research in other disciplines or it will encourage them for comparative study. These techniques are motivating and challenging. They help

students to enrich and sustain their efforts of learning literature. They encourage students to interact and communicate with each other

Creative methods will increase students' interest in literature not only of India but of the foreign countries also. They will be able to be more and more global because they will understand that literature plays a vital role in bringing all the lands together under one roof of universal human traits reflected in it. Students of literature can become the agents of change when equipped with good and thoughtful understanding of literature.

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Dr. Mrs. Anisa G. Mujawar, M. A., M. Phil., Ph.D.  
Associate Professor and Head, Department of English  
Chhatrapati Shivaji College, Satara  
Satara 415001  
Maharashtra  
India  
[anisamujawar@yahoo.co.in](mailto:anisamujawar@yahoo.co.in)