

## Problem-Oriented Creative Literature Instruction

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This article discusses literature instruction that seems to significantly bolster a critical attitude, problem-oriented thinking, and creativity—that is, reading literacy and its derivative, literary competence, which is developed intensely and systematically in literature instruction. Reading literacy is an extremely complex listening, cognitive, and meaning-creating process, and an ability to read, write, speak, and listen to (or view) various texts (including fiction). Reading literacy is defined in the scholarship as “an individual’s constantly evolving ability to negotiate socially defined symbolic systems in order to receive, comprehend, create, and use texts in family, educational, employment, and social settings. It fosters successful and creative personal growth, as well as responsible participation in professional and social life” (Bucik et al. 2005: 6) Students with well-developed reading literacy are able to use what they learn in everyday life: they can analyze the information, adopt a critical view of it, and convey it (i.e., use it logically); this means that they can assign meaning to what they read: they can read for and with understanding.

In literature instruction, reading literacy is manifested as the ability to use various strategies of reading various text genres,<sup>1</sup> and the ability to experience, empathize, analyze, understand, evaluate, and critically receive fiction. Thus in literature instruction students primarily develop their literary competence—that is, the ability to read literature, explore literature (understand what has been read, analyze, evaluate, and critically receive literary texts, and the ability to use knowledge of literary studies), and create literature, depending on the medium involved.

Literary competence is understood as the component of reading literacy that is developed more intensely and systematically in literature instruction—that is, as verbal understanding (meanings of words, data, and so on), and understanding by inferring and creating links (i.e., the ability to understand the gist, message, or idea of a text read, read between the lines, explain links, summarize, evaluate, use knowledge of literary studies, and creatively transform literary texts). Well-developed literary competence (gradually also with students who do not enjoy reading) should increase reading pleasure. (Prim. Grosman 2004, Žbogar 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to literary texts (genre, canon, and trivial texts, and texts from modern and older literatures), non-literary texts are also read during literature instruction (e.g., literary critiques, reviews, definitions, explanations, and so on).

Literary competence is defined as the complex of capabilities involving literary research, reading literature, and creating literary texts. Literary research includes a grasp of the literary system and familiarity with literary history and theory, and the cultural and societal contexts in which a text appears. Literary research also involves situating, describing, telling about, and explaining the meaning of a literary text's functions in a national and world literature. Literary competence requires inserting oneself into a fictional world, responding to the reading experience, aesthetic enjoyment of literary texts, discerning what is essential in the text (e.g., literary language, ambiguity, and fictional qualities); and recognizing its aesthetic, ethical, and cognitive value. Further, the valuing and application of these qualities in everyday life is important. Literary creativity is evidenced in creative reading and writing (e.g., the ability to dramatize a prose text, set it to music, or reinterpret it by such means as irony and parody).

Literary competence is enhanced by a problem-based and creative approach to teaching literature, one that encourages interpretation of texts with the aid of, for example, discussion of impressions, experience of the text and its context, and of how the reader understands the text. The teacher can direct students on connecting a text with literary studies (e.g., theoretical and historical aspects), and making interdisciplinary links (e.g., with sociology, history, and art history). A student with advanced abilities can take a critical stance to a text, can create with it, and independently obtain information on it in the course of research.

Problem-oriented creative literature instruction is a relatively new concept in Slovenia. Zoran Božič's articles "Problemski pouk književnosti" (Problem-oriented literature instruction, 1993), "Od reproduktivnega pouka književnosti k problemskemu" (From reproductive to problem-oriented literature instruction, 1993), and "Problemske obdelave klasikov" (Problem-based analyses of the classics, 1993) are among the pioneering Slovenian works on problem-oriented instruction. Božič uses the term "problem-oriented instruction,"<sup>2</sup> which has become established in general teaching practice. Arguments supporting the use of this term can also be found in works by the expert on Croatian literature and language instruction Dragutin Rosandić (1975: 168–69), who also includes creative reading, exploring,<sup>3</sup> and reproductive-creative methods among the positive effects of

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<sup>2</sup> According to Božič, problem-oriented discussion of texts in Slovenian language instruction was introduced by the Cankar Prize school competition and external exams after 1989, especially the high school exit exam in Slovenian. However, some Slovenian experts disagree with this claim and draw attention to the fact that the two essays written as part of the high school exit exam primarily require reproductive knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> This article also supports the idea that exploring literature helps promote students' creative abilities.

this type of instruction, in addition to acquisition of knowledge, problem-solving, self-directed learning, and collaboration. Certain Slovenian experts classify it under learning strategies (e.g., Strmčnik 1992, 2003), and others under learning methods (e.g., Cenčič 1991).

Problem-oriented creative literature instruction is based on introducing problems: this evokes students' interest and curiosity, creates a cognitive conflict (a cognitive mystery) and dilemmas, and requires students to form an opinion and posit hypotheses.<sup>4</sup> A literary problem requires complex, gradual, and procedural solving using several thought procedures (via collaboration). Solving a literary problem<sup>5</sup> focuses on the objective and subjective layers of literary texts, which means that it demands either in-depth reading of literature or exploring or (re)creating literature, depending on the level of the explorer's characteristics (e.g., his or her background knowledge, creativity, and breadth of knowledge) as well as his or her level of psychological development (e.g., his or her emotional maturity, sensitivity, previous experience, information, erudition, and level of motivation). Literary problems open up the unknown and unexplained, which truly evokes curiosity and motivation for dealing with literature and the literary system in the majority of students, but it nonetheless makes sense to adapt them to students' cognitive-receptive level. Due to their receptive distance, some ethical, psychological, and social problems that a literary work can raise cannot be discussed at all levels of education. Therefore, problem-oriented creative instruction is carried out by taking into account the teaching principles described in greater detail below.

### **Teaching principles of problem-oriented creative literature instruction**

The phases of a problem-based, creative approach to teaching literature are:<sup>6</sup> 1) establishing a motivational atmosphere for engaged learning: creating cognitive tension that helps check students' grasp of literary concepts needed for interpretation and reflection on their vital connection with fiction (e.g., reasons for reading, uses for literary

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<sup>4</sup> Thus for example, one should not ignore the fact that students included in problem-oriented creative instruction report that they felt happy during this type of instruction and find it interesting and useful, unlike traditional instruction, which they find uninteresting and boring (Schmidt, Dauphinee, & Patel 1987).

<sup>5</sup> The nature of the literary problem dictates the selection of research methods and the manner of seeking answers to open questions (it can require contextualization in terms of literary history, literary theory, biography, and bibliography, and can reveal the author's worldview and style).

<sup>6</sup> The core of such studies is research work and acquisition of knowledge, problem solving abilities, self-directed learning, and collaborative learning (Barrows 1996).

knowledge), as well as their ability to refer to previous literary knowledge and other disciplines; 2) establishing a literary problem: the student weighs it, discovers its different facets and levels, identifies the problem's constituent parts and qualities, and takes ownership of it, thereby evoking an emotional and intellectual commitment: he or she takes a stance on the problem and poses questions, thus showing a command of it on an experiential, emotional, and intellectual level; 3) defining research methods: the student selects a research tool to address the problem and expand the pool of related, necessary information; 4) independent research work proceeds in 4.1) data collection—that is, bringing existing knowledge into play, selecting available data, comparing and describing it, and listing missing information; 4.2) processing information—that is, analysis, classification, reflecting on, comparing, arranging, and integrating it; 4.3) using information—the student constitutes, applies, and evaluates information obtained; 5) analysis and correction of research results: the student confirms or refutes a hypothesis with literary or extra-literary arguments, and reaches a conclusion on the literary problem; 6) additional individual or group assignments.

In a problem-based, creative approach to teaching literature, students read a literary text and write down or discuss their first impressions (how they experienced what they read, which character they could or could not identify with, which character they could sympathize with, and which literary characters' actions they cannot accept; this is referred to as experiential reading). Then they analyze the text (or only a passage in the case of a longer text) independently (individually or in groups, in writing or orally) in terms of motif and theme, language and style, and ideas and message: they read it using both logical-analytical and narrative thinking processes (i.e., in an interpretative-analytical or cognitive manner). They analyze the text by reading the text again individually and marking the key motifs (using their own judgment), defining the theme, marking any special linguistic and stylistic features (phonetic, verbal, or syntactic), and trying to determine the main idea and message of the text (or passage). They discuss the findings in pairs or groups: they talk about the special features of the text they read, take positions on the message (idea) of the text, and comment on and compare the literary characters' acts. Students can also analyze the dramatic structure: they define the plot, the climax, and the resolution, and observe formal special features (division into chapters, paragraphs, lines, and stanzas, a possible frame story or embedded story). At the synthesis and evaluation stage, students select one problem that they explore in greater detail (e.g., the characteristics of a ballad); they can analyze or re-create the text, compare it with an unknown text (Svetlana Makarovič's ballad "Kost" (The bone) with a ballad by François Villon), compare two unknown texts based on discussing a key concept (gallows humor in Makarovič's and Villon's ballads), analyze re-creations of other

authors (e.g., re-creations of the folk ballad “Rošlin in Verjanko” [Rošlin and Verjanko] in the collection *Rošlin in Verjanko ali Dolgo odlagani opravek slovenstva* [Rošlin and Verjanko, or a Long-Deferred Task of Slovenian Identity]). Modeling represents a special type of solving literary problems. It entails exercises in which students become aware of the usefulness of literary studies knowledge in their everyday lives (e.g., in making interdisciplinary connections of knowledge on ballads and observing the *Dance Macabre* frescoes in Hrastovlje, or studying Slovenian folk tradition, as illustrated by the motif of Rošlin and Verjanko in folk literature and belles-lettres). Developing and presenting problems independently also constitutes a literary problem in itself—one that might be formulated: Read Prešeren’s “Gazele” (Ghazals). What questions come to mind while reading them? Try to answer one of them. Substantiation can also serve as an introduction to analyzing and interpreting a text. For instance, a possible question might be: Cankar’s “Epilog” (Epilogue) is considered a manifesto of Slovenian modernism. Why?

Problem-oriented creative instruction is carried out primarily by using methods such as explanation, conversation, discussion, creative reading and writing, and solving literary problems. The type of instruction and methods selected depend on the students’ development stage, their independence, and envisaged learning objectives.<sup>7</sup>

Problem-oriented creative literature instruction is structured according to students’ cognitive-receptive level, and the level and program of education, while taking into account the following teaching principles:

- (1) Reception acceptability of literary texts (the relations between Slovenian and world literature, between narrative literature, poetry, and drama, between older and contemporary literature, and between canon, genre, and trivial literature).
- (2) Systematicity (from known to unknown, from simple to complex).
- (3) Systemics (placing new literary studies information within the literary system).
- (4) Discussion-based approach (openness to diverse concretizations and interpretations).
- (5) Creativity (via creative reading and writing to re-creative activities).

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<sup>7</sup> With regard to selecting the suitable work methods, constructivists believe that all work methods are appropriate “if they open new views, and broaden the student’s interests and new horizons” (Marentič Požarnik 2004: 66); however, they emphasize the advantages of project learning.

Teachers of literature report that problem-oriented creative instruction that respects these teaching principles stimulates students' curiosity and motivation to read literature in their free time and at school, enhances their literary experience (and their identification with fictional worlds), and furthers their understanding, evaluation, critical views, and imaginative (re)creation.

The problem-oriented approach is activated through reading for and with understanding: analyzing the text's motifs and themes, ideas and style, and language and message. Open and undefined places and gaps, the literary aesthetic experience, and various interpretations (concretizations) that the text produces are discussed.

The systemic nature of knowledge demands systemic learning of literary material. New literary studies concepts are introduced by reviewing known concepts that complement the new ones (e.g., the ballad, the novella, the fairytale, Slovenian Reformation-era literature, and modernism). Sufficient information and a sufficient number of concepts are the preconditions for systematic development of the systemic knowledge of literary studies. The systemic principle demands contextualization as regards the author's biographical and bibliographical oeuvre, as well as literary history and literary theory. By organizing and comparing concepts and information, students recognize their basic features, and the relations and hierarchy within the literary studies system. By structuring them, they perceive their hierarchic organization and interconnections. By combining new information into conceptual folders, this forms a tree structure of knowledge in literary studies and subsequently enhances literary competence.

Systematicity is realized by moving from what is known to what is unknown (e.g., from reviewing the concepts of the novel, novella, and sketch to discussing the short story, from reviewing the concept of modernism to discussing the concepts of postmodernism and minimalism), and from simpler to complex (from analyzing the motif and theme, language and style, and idea and message to discussing postmodern and minimalist characteristics). Students who are well acquainted with literary texts and literary context can build coherent and system-integrated knowledge of literary studies, and demonstrate their reading ability and literacy. Enhanced ability to read for and with understanding should also gradually increase reading pleasure among students that are not fond of reading literature.

### **Pragmatic and literary aesthetic reading**

The central activities of a problem-based, creative approach to teaching are thus reading literature (literary aesthetic reading) and reading about literature (reading about fiction with a pragmatic aim).

Reception aesthetics (Jauss 1998: 147–209, 491–509) speaks of aesthetic literary experience that has several dimensions: it is productive (creating a fictitious world that does not exist in reality), receptive (the reader’s pleasure and fascination),<sup>8</sup> and communicative (effects on changing the individual reader’s awareness, and collective cultural and moral norms).<sup>9</sup> Problem-based approach is to use creative aesthetic principles in order to make the close analytical reading come alive for students.

Aesthetic reading in school is understood as a complex and closely interconnected combination of experiential, sensual, emotional, and interpretative-analytical processes (Krakar Vogel 2004, Kordigel Aberšek 2008, Rosandić 1975, Saksida 2008, Žbogar 2013). Since 1996, the teaching of literature in Slovenia has emphasized reading based on the experience of and first impressions from a literary text, with a communicative approach foregrounded in grade school (Saksida 2008). In college preparatory high schools, high schools, and occupational schools, the focus is on a partial and/or comprehensive academic interpretation (Krakar Vogel 2004). It appears that greater attention to literary research and creativity is warranted. They are key components of a problem-oriented, creative approach to literature (Žbogar 2013). Therefore, the typology of various types of school reading is presented: experiential reading (focusing on the reader’s receptive processes, and readers’ experience of fiction and their identification with it), cognitive reading (interpretative and analytical; i.e., systematicity and a guided analysis of a literary text, observing its special features and effects), and creative reading (promoting creative and free reading of fiction).

Creative reading entails free actualization of a literary text and is thus less structured than guided (compulsory or assigned) reading of literature. In literature instruction, creative reading is stimulated through exercises and assignments such as jigsaw reading—in which students receive a poem (e.g., Prešeren’s “Sonetni venec,” [Wreath of sonnets]) divided into individual lines, which they order into a coherent sequence<sup>10</sup>—or a reading cloze exercise, in which students receive an excerpt of a text with several words or phrases missing in each sentence and then creatively

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<sup>8</sup> With readers in college-preparatory high schools, one cannot count pleasure and fascination as the sole results of the reading process; therefore, activities that stimulate interest and curiosity, especially introducing literary problems that evoke a cognitive conflict, are valuable motivational tools.

<sup>9</sup> This is provided by the teaching principles of systematicity and systemics.

<sup>10</sup> They can also order a jigsaw made from a narrative text, a poem, or a play in a similar way. In the case of poetry, punctuation marks and capital letters can be removed in individual lines and, after putting the lines into a coherent order, students can also be asked to appropriately edit the text (insert missing punctuation and correct capitalization). The purpose of these types of exercises is not to find the “correct” order, but to find more or less creative solutions.

fill in the gaps (Krakar Vogel 2004). Experiential and creative reading primarily stimulates narrative thinking, which reflects the reader's subjectivity (his or her sensual and emotional perception, will, and motives). According to Ingarden (1931, 1937), a literary text is a schematized formation with open and undefined spaces and gaps as aspects of the reality presented, which readers fill in during a reading process called concretization by using their own conceptual and imaginary skills. They assign more detailed meaning to the undefined spaces in the multi-layered structure of a literary work, develop their text potentials, and hence actualize the fictitious world depicted. Therefore, concretization is also the result of reading: a subjective or individual reader's copy of the literary text. Reading literature is directed and guided via textual signals that allow different but nonetheless not completely random interpretations defined through literary text conventions. Creative reading of literature can be completely random, free, and left to one's imagination. This is, for example, how a director or screenwriter reads, deviating considerably from the original text.<sup>11</sup>

At school, experiential responses (i.e., to such questions as, What did you like about the text you read? What were you able to identify with? Did anything surprise you? How did you experience the tragic resolution? What affected you the most? Would you recommend this work to others? Who?) are enhanced via guided or directed cognitive and also creative reading, which is developed especially in elective activities (e.g., a drama club, a creative writing circle, or school radio).

Cognitive reading of literature is an interpretative-analytical reading of a literary text; it activates both inductive and deductive thought processes<sup>12</sup> (i.e., reading for and with understanding, which combines skills of decoding and understanding). Students learn how to read with understanding in greater detail after they master alphabet reading (with the majority of Slovenian students, this happens at approximately age eight: at the end of second grade or the beginning of third grade). Reading for and with understanding entails a constantly growing repertoire of knowledge, skills, and strategies: the ability to use a text that has been read in various contextual situations. It is demonstrated as the ability to deal with a text (i.e., to analyze stylistic, morphological, and content-related features of a text), to compare (look for similarities and differences), to discover cause-and-effect relationships, to take critical views on what has been read, to

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<sup>11</sup> For example, the play *Ljubezen (Nedolžnost v sedemdesetih minutah)* (Love [Innocence in seventy minutes]), directed by Andreas Urban and adapted for stage by Tomaž Toporišič at the Slovenian Youth Theatre (2013), is a complete reinterpretation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

<sup>12</sup> Cognitive reading is closely connected with experiential and creative reading. Their common denominator is the ability to interpret.



evaluate, and to present arguments. This allows students to get to know and understand the text in greater depth, and stimulates their reflection on the text read.

The analysis of a literary text is carried out by dismantling the text read into its component parts, so that “relations between the components as well as their organization into a whole become clear” (Marentič Požarnik 1995: 27; Krakar Vogel 2004, Kordigel Aberšek 2008, Saksida 2008, Žbogar 2013); for example, by seeking the main and auxiliary ideas, exploring what means a literary work uses to achieve its effect, weighing which data are essential for understanding the story’s message, and so on. In terms of taxonomy levels, the literary text is analyzed by individual elements; for example, the rising action, climax, and resolution of a play are determined, and the motives that drive the literary characters to act in a certain way are defined.

More complex thought processes take place at the level of analyzing the relationships (e.g., which characters in Ivan Cankar’s plays bear the author’s ideas, which statements best illustrate the personality traits of literary characters, which literary characters impede the hero, and what the relationships are between the literary characters).

The analysis of the structure and organization principles is the most demanding in terms of taxonomy (usually representing the first stage of evaluation); for example, when the literary work read is used to infer the author’s purpose, tendency, or main conceptual orientation.

Evaluation refers to forming a critical opinion on what has been read; that is, forming quantitative and qualitative intra- and extra-literary judgments.<sup>13</sup> Intra-literary judgments refer to the evaluation of a literary work in terms of the suitability of its form; for example, when discussing Vinko Möderndorfer’s carmen figuratum “Cesta” (The road) in class, students answer the following question: Does the artistic image of the poem show what the road is and what it is not? (Blažič et al. 2012: 39). An extra-literary evaluation is when a depiction in the media is compared to the literary work; for example, in the second year of vocational high school, students receive the following instructions while discussing Miha Mazzini’s novel *Kralj ropotajočih duhov* (The king of the rattling spirits): Watch the feature film *Sladke sanje* (Sweet dreams) and compare it to the novel. Give your opinion in a short written statement. What is typical of the film’s ending? (Golc et al. 2011: 53).

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<sup>13</sup> Regarding the facts and views presented in the literary text, any prejudices, a comparison of the reader’s and narrator’s views on the topic discussed, the atmosphere in the text, style, and so forth.

Synthesizing entails connecting and combining various elements that students did not previously know into a new whole that did not exist before. This demands not only combining individual elements, but also creatively linking them. Synthesizing in its simplest form entails creating an original message; this can be oral or written, and transmitted via an artistic or musical medium. A cognitive reading synthesis may include a recapitulation of the text read, a commentary, an assessment, criticism of the text read, or an interpretative or discussion essay on what has been read.

Cognitive reading of literature is thus analytical (depending on the literary text and also on the knowledge of the temporal and cultural contexts) and interpretative, because it requires assigning meaning to the fictitious world depicted (and hence is closely connected with experiential and creative reading). Backed by knowledge of literary studies, identifying with literary worlds and experiencing what has been read enables more intense understanding of a literary work: its expressive potential in terms of language, style, motif, theme, ideas, and message (aesthetics, ethics, and cognitive aspects), and its fictitiousness and literariness.

### **Exploring literature**

Cognitive reading of literature is largely tied to analyzing the text, whereas exploring literature focuses on the context using logical and analytical thinking. It refers to verifying the empirical reality or to the third sublevel of synthesis (deduction of abstract systems). Stimulating the exploration of literature strengthens the in-depth understanding of literature as a literary system, which includes literary production, mediation institutions and the media, the book market, and receiving and processing literature. This understanding is thus shown in connecting knowledge with problem-related challenges or situations in the form of giving examples and deducing from them, comparing, distinguishing, distributing, connecting, and explaining; in the form of inductive or deductive thinking, analyzing, substantiating (with extra- and intra-literary arguments), solving literary problems, predicting, forming hypotheses, planning, testing, synthesizing findings, generalizing, and evaluating.

Students derive generalizations or hypotheses regarding the literary studies data and phenomena observed, and must somehow classify and explain them. They inductively or deductively incorporate new findings into the literary theory and literary history context, and integrate them with what they have learned in other subject areas (e.g., history, sociology, and art history). For example: Historical figures and events in literature are frequently something that writers reshape with their imagination. What is the difference between King Matthias in the Slovenian folk story King Matthias and the real Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus? (Blažič et al. 2010: 185). Students most commonly synthesize the findings of their

literature exploration in the form of structural diagrams, chronological charts, term papers, reports, and project (research) assignments. They often present this to their fellow students in class.

Exploring literature by focusing on the literary studies system (knowledge of literary theory and literary history, and familiarization with the special features of the cultural context) makes it possible to put the teaching principle of systemics into practice. If knowledge is useful (students that know what a metaphor is can more easily identify and understand its effect and function in various texts), it enhances literary competence. In addition to reading literature, exploring literature often employs the pragmatic reading of meta-literature. Exploring the literary system must be adapted to students' cognitive and reception abilities; it is primarily developed in a variegated manner in college-prep high schools and in university-level literature courses. By exploring context in literature, students can systematically learn the concepts and definitions used in literary studies, place the special features of a literary text in temporal and cultural contexts, become familiar with the special features of the literary-history period in which the text was created, expand the breadth of their cultural knowledge, and enhance their ability to make interdisciplinary connections.

### **Creating literature**

Literary creativity manifests itself in literature instruction in the form of creative reading, creative writing, and re-creative activity. At the same time, creativity is also a coherent part of reading and exploring literature. Thus, for example, creating literature requires the second sublevel of synthesis, which proves more successful if students have also read the text well in an experiential and cognitive manner.

At the second sublevel of synthesis, students create an action plan or proposal; for example, a theater adaptation, staging, a music adaptation, an oral presentation (recitation, declamation), an experiential essay, and so on. A sample task is: Imagine you're a film director making a film titled *Krst pri Savici* (The baptism at the Savica). Draw and describe the setting. (*Novi svet iz besed* 8 2012: 161). Or, for example, while discussing Robert Swindells' novel *Stone Cold* in class, students might be told: Write down a few ideas about how you could help the Slovenian homeless (*Novi svet iz besed* 8 2012: 25). Other examples are: Create a statuette of King Matthias (from modeling clay, plaster, dough, or any other material) (*Novi svet iz besed* 7 2010: 185). Create a comic strip using the theme of "Uvod h Krstu pri Savici" (Introduction to the baptism at the Savica). Imagine you're in an online chatroom chatting with the literary figures from *Krst pri Savici*. What would you chat about? What would Črtomir text to Bogomila (160 characters)? (Blažič et al. 2012: 161).

In addition to creative reading defined in the previous section, creating literature also includes a special form of reading literature also known as *interpretative reading* in Slovenia and Croatia, *expressive reading* in Russia, and *aesthetic reading* in France (Rosandić 1986: 9–12). Here we employ Krakar Vogel's (2004) terminology and the concept of interpretive reading. This is a special type of reading aloud, in which “a written text is transformed into a spoken text, taking into account the differences between the written and spoken language” (Podbevšek 1998/99: 19), or a “communication process, in which the reader changes (recodifies) the sign system of the written language into the sign system of the spoken language” (Rosandić 1986: 9). Podbevšek understands interpretative reading as reading a literary text and also refers to it as “engaged reading suitable especially for reading literary texts” (1998/99: 20); similarly, Rosandić also refers to “expressive (emotional and logically colored) reading” in addition to “neutral” (emotional and logically uncolored) reading” (1986: 9). Expressive reading contains elements of spoken art or, more specifically, elements of stage speech. Interpretative reading aloud offers an opportunity to “make students get used to active listening” (Podbevšek 1998/99: 20), and “is based on the values of spoken language (intonation, volume, pace, pauses, and timbre)” (Rosandić 1987: 13). This activates creativity: “an intimate contact is established with the text, and through identification, imagination, and understanding the reader penetrates the most hidden layers of the text and conveys it to listeners. The scope of this penetration is determined by the text and the reader's skills to make the text come to life” (ibid.). This involves a combination of aesthetic oral performance skills and decoding skills.

In Slovenian language instruction, oral interpretation is practiced also in the form of orally interpreting a literary text out loud, either through reciting or declaiming. In reciting, the speaker does not know the text completely by heart and must therefore occasionally look at the text. Recitation is less challenging than declamation in terms of memory. Declamation is a pronounced form of continuous speech and entails the oral presentation of a text learned by heart. In this case, the speaker remembers not only a specific reality, but also its unique verbalization (i.e., sentences and words) in which this reality has been captured (Toporišič 1996: 178).

As students are prepared for an oral presentation, attention must be paid to diction and the content-related level of an oral presentation.

The diction level of the presentation refers to orthoepic rules, appropriate speed, clarity, fluidity of speech, and avoiding fillers.

The content-related level of the presentation refers to rhetorical devices, such as breaking up the speech with pauses, using appropriate technical terminology, taking into account the chronological order (causes and effects), originality (liveliness), conciseness, accuracy, and

appropriateness of speech, and aspects of non-verbal communication (e.g., gestures, mimicry, posture, and eye contact).

The teachers' and students' oral interpretations in class are dominated by the syntactic logic of breaking up the speech with pauses and intonations, whereas in artistic oral presentations performers often break syntactic rules and shape the speech rhythm based on sense and emotional engagement, which is why they make more pauses. Compared to artistic interpretations, oral interpretations in class include more eye contact with the audience and fewer nonverbal signs. Oral interpretations are not very diverse: prosodic means are less common, intonations have less strictly defined melodic lines, intervals are shorter, and the pace is usually somewhat faster. There are more mistakes than in artistic interpretation—for example, incorrect accentuation; mixing up words, word order, and case; unclear pronunciation; disregard for fleeting vowels; and frequent pauses.

In literature instruction, students write creative literary and semi-literary texts, such as experiential and imaginative essays, poems, recapitulations, travelogues, diaries, and so on. "Creative writing supports the standard objectives of literature education while also meeting other functional and educational objectives... imagination..., as well as developing a positive relationship to linguistic creativity" (Krakar Vogel 2004: 46–47). These types of exercises and assignments include word association games (students look for words that begin with a specific letter and, for example, do not continue with *a*, that rhyme, have a similar meaning, and so on) and re-creative activities (e.g., students create an imaginative essay using keywords, transform a specific text, adapt it, turn it into a play, act it out, change a fairytale's ending, change the features of a literary character, shift a literary character to the present, and so on; Žbogar, 2013). Creative writing can be stimulated through the activities described as well as by writing prequels, sequels, screenplays for short films, and so on. The entire class can take part in the film, with individual students taking on the roles of a director, a dramaturge, technicians (sound, light, props), costume designers, makeup artists, prompters, leading and supporting actors, and extras.

### **Examination and grading**

Examination and grading in literature instruction can be descriptive, numerical, partial or comprehensive, or oral or written (Krakar Vogel 2004: 111–40). Acquiring literary knowledge as a system of literary information is one of the goals of literature instruction. In terms of content, literary knowledge can include knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and other auxiliary disciplines; in terms of educational value, it can be functional (i.e., applicable to a specific case) or informative-formative (learned as a system of information). At the level of knowledge, students

“are required to learn and remember specific findings (facts, data, definitions, categories, methods, and theories) and recapitulate them in approximately the same form as they have understood them” (Marentič Požarnik, 1995: 17).

Traditional forms of checking and evaluating knowledge are inadvisable in a problem-based, creative approach to teaching literature. Complex simulations, research or term papers, reports, and research projects represent an alternative to the traditional examination and grading of knowledge of literary studies, which is the result of exploring literature.<sup>14</sup> These forms enable students to correct their knowledge and learn during the examination and grading itself; for example, through self-evaluation or the evaluation of their classmates. Examination and grading should be adapted to the special features of an individual class.

The review stage in problem-oriented instruction should not be given much attention because, compared to traditional instruction, problem-oriented instruction is expected to enable more permanent acquisition of knowledge, which professionals refer to as “building up one’s knowledge” (Rutar Ilc 2004: 31). This knowledge is also more useful than that acquired in transmission instruction.

Grades in literature instruction should thus reflect the development level of the student’s literary competence, which is manifested as creative reading skills (e.g., taking part in a performance, theater adaptation, or production of creative written works), cognitive reading skills (comparative analysis of interpersonal relationships in the form of an essay; commentary, review or literary critique, recapitulation, and assessment of literary characters’ behavior in written form), and the ability to explore literature (interview with the writer, reconstruction of a specific literary-history period in the form of a structural diagram, a timeline, or a term paper on literary history or literary theory).

Literary competence can be examined externally (e.g., by interpretative and explanatory essays as part of the high school exit exam entailing a complex resolution of a specific literary problem). An analysis of term papers (or research or project papers) can also serve the purpose. The examiner should take into account not only the solution, but also the research procedures used, the ability to critically analyze literary problems, and verbalization. Target-oriented teamwork can also serve as an evaluative basis. Students simply look for research methods and determine the manner of resolving the literary problem; that is, they document the problem situation, define and formulate the literary problem, and prepare a plan for solving the problem. Background knowledge and a focus on hypotheses, the

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<sup>14</sup> The question is to what extent these forms of examination are effective, especially in assessing knowledge and competences.

rules of solving literary problems, and research methods that can be used to effectively test the posited hypotheses and lead to a solution to the literary problem also play an important role.

Alternative forms of examining and grading students' knowledge also include advisor's assessments (the teacher observes the behavior and active participation of an individual in the group, and examines and assesses the literary skills and knowledge of an individual student, which enables individualization and differentiation because the teacher assesses the development level of critical thinking in individual student and the development [progress] of the student's research skills), research diaries (research often takes place outside the school learning environment), and self-evaluation.

### **Conclusion**

The article has attempted a detailed analysis of how literature should be taught: through close analytical reading, through systematic sequences of questions from the instructor designed to lead students toward deeper analysis, through classroom practices designed to get students to engage in active, creative reading of the text, and structured academic discussion designed to teach students to construct and defend logical arguments, by making claims, providing evidence to support the claim, and by providing reasoning that articulates how evidence supports a claim.

Problem-oriented creative literature instruction based on the pedagogical principles of adequate reception, systematicity, systemics, a discussion-based approach, and creativity, develops reading literacy and thus literary competence: as a complex ability to read literature (experiential, creative, and cognitive reading), create literature, and explore literature (directed primarily towards the literary studies system).

Reading literature in school moves systematically from experiential to cognitive or interpretative and analytical reading of literature (with and for understanding). A more complex treatment of a literary text in terms of taxonomy demands taking critical views on the text and evaluating it; this is a precondition for synthesizing the findings on the text, which can be notably inductive or deductive. A cognitive reading synthesis can be interpretative (describing the literary character and commenting on what has been read) or analytical (an essay on a selected problem-related premise), a synthesis of creating literature can include a theater adaptation or staging of a work of fiction, and a synthesis of exploring literature can include a term paper (with suitable graphic illustrations, such as a poster). It is more appropriate to develop in-depth exploration of literature and cognitive reading of literature in college-preparatory high school programs and in university-level literature courses.

However, in general, reading, exploring, and creating literature can be developed (adapted to the education level and program) from primary school onwards (through differentiation and individualization, and by taking into account the students' cognitive-receptive abilities). Reading literature in school is thus based on experiencing the literary works read and identifying with them; this is further developed through cognitive reading of and exploring literature, which also includes reading meta-literature. As a component of reading literacy is reflected in literary empathy (i.e., the ability to identify with fictitious worlds, literary characters, and their actions, behavior, and emotions, and the ability to analyze, interpret, compare, assess, comment on, and evaluate what has been read).

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## POVZETEK

### PROBLEMSKO-USTVARJALNI POUK KNJIŽEVNOSTI

Članek opisuje značilnosti problemsko-ustvarjalnega pouka, za katerega se zdi, da intenzivneje razvija bralno (in literarno) zmožnost/pismenost. Bralno pismen učenec v vsakdanjem življenju uporablja pridobljeno znanje: informacije zna analizirati, se do njih kritično opredeljevati in jih

*posredovati (smiselno uporabljati), kar pomeni, da zna prebrano opomenjati: brati z razumevanjem in za razumevanje. Literarna kompetenca je sestavina bralne pismenosti in se kaže kot zmožnost besednega razumevanja (pomeni besed, podatkov ipd.), razumevanja s sklepanjem in, povezovanjem. To je torej zmožnost dojetja bistva, sporočila, ideje prebranega besedila, branja med vrsticami, razlaganja povezav, povzemanja, vrednotenja, zmožnost uporabe literarnovednega znanja ter zmožnost ustvarjalnega preoblikovanja literarnih besedil. Razvita literarna kompetenca naj bi (postopoma tudi pri učencih, ki sicer ne berejo radi), povečevala bralno ugodje in tako posredno spodbujala bralno pismenost slovenskih učencev.*

*Osrednja metoda problemsko-ustvarjalnega pouka je reševanje književnega problema. Usmerjeno je v objektivne in subjektivne plasti literarnega besedila, kar pomeni, da terja bodisi poglobljeno literarno branje bodisi literarno raziskovanje ali (po)ustvarjanje. Poglobljanje v literarno besedilo je odvisno tudi od raziskovalčevih značilnosti: od njegovega predznanja, ustvarjalnosti, kritičnosti, razgledanosti, pa tudi od stopnje njegovega psihičnega razvoja, npr. čustvene zrelosti, senzibilnosti, predhodnih izkušenj, informacij, erudicije in stopnje motiviranosti.*

*Literarna zmožnost se v šoli najpogosteje razvija preko šolskega literarnega branja, ki ga razumemo kot kompleksen in tesno prepleten pletež doživljajskih, čutnih, čustvenih, interpretativno-analitičnih procesov. Literarno branje v šoli naj bi vendarle bilo usmerjeno v bralca: v učenčeve receptivne procese. Za spodbujanje učenčevega doživljanja leposlovja se poslužujemo doživljajskega branja, pa tudi sistematičnega in vodenega analiziranja literarnega besedila, opazovanja njegovih posebnosti in učinkov. Slednje spodbujamo preko kognitivnega branja. Ustvarjalnost učencev, njihovo kreativno uporabo znanja o literaturi pa sooblikuje ustvarjalno branje. Šolsko literarno branje torej izhaja iz doživljanja prebranega literarnega dela in vživljanja vanj, prvotne doživljajske odzive poglobljamo s kognitivnim literarnim branjem in literarnim raziskovanjem, pri čemer se poslužujemo tudi branja metaliterature, nadgrajujemo pa z ustvarjalnimi dejavnostmi.*

*Problemsko-ustvarjalni pouk književnosti strukturiramo glede na spoznavno-sprejemno stopnjo učencev, stopnjo in program šolanja, upoštevajoč didaktična načela recepcijske sprejemljivosti književnih besedil, sistematičnosti, sistemskosti, problemskosti in ustvarjalnosti. Priporočajo se alternativne oblike preverjanja in ocenjevanja znanja.*