



## ROLE OF ENGLISH TEXTS IN THE CLASSROOM

**Dr. Geeta Sahni**

Associate Professor (Retd.), Department of Education, University of Delhi, Delhi-110007  
Email:drsahnicie@gmail.com

\*Children's literature

\*Young Adult literature

\* Text structure, genres, and text selection

### **\*Children's literature**

Giving children access to all varieties of literature is extremely important as it plays an important role in their social and academic development. It provides students with opportunities to respond to literature; gives them appreciation about their own cultural heritage as well as those of others; helps students develop emotional intelligence and creativity; nurtures growth and development of the student's personality and social skills; and it hands down important literature from one generation to the next. Children's literature provides them with the opportunity to develop their own opinions about the topic. This strengthens deeper thought about literature and helps students develop their own feelings and encourages creativity and imagination.

Benefits children derive from reading and listening to books are:

- Strengthening a bond between the child and adult reader
- Experiencing the pleasure of escaping into a fantasy world
- Developing a favourable attitude toward books enriching their lives
- Stimulating cognitive development
- Gaining new vocabulary and syntax
- Becoming familiar with story and text structures
- Expanding their imagination and attention
- Becoming sensitive to other people's feelings and problems
- Learning to cope with their own feelings and problems
- Widening horizons as they learn about the world
- Developing an interest in new subjects and hobbies
- Understanding the heritage of their own and other cultures

Giving children access to all varieties of literature is extremely important as it plays an important role in their social and academic development. It provides students with opportunities to respond to literature; gives them appreciation about their own cultural heritage as well as those of others; helps students develop emotional intelligence and creativity; nurtures growth and development of the student's personality and social skills; and it hands down important literature from one generation to the next. Children's literature provides them with the opportunity to develop their

own opinions about the topic. This strengthens deeper thought about literature and helps students develop their own feelings and encourages creativity and imagination.

Benefits children derive from reading and listening to books are:

- Strengthening a bond between the child and adult reader
- Experiencing the pleasure of escaping into a fantasy world
- Developing a favourable attitude toward books enriching their lives
- Stimulating cognitive development
- Gaining new vocabulary and syntax
- Becoming familiar with story and text structures
- Expanding their imagination and attention
- Becoming sensitive to other people's feelings and problems
- Learning to cope with their own feelings and problems
- Widening horizons as they learn about the world
- Developing an interest in new subjects and hobbies
- Understanding the heritage of their own and other cultures
- Learning new knowledge
- Bringing history to life
- Exploring artistic media used in illustrations

#### **\*Types of children's literature**

Typically, Children's books are classified as follows:

\*Picture Books: provide a visual experience - telling a story with pictures. There may or may not be text with the book. A picture book might illustrate letters of the alphabet or numbers or tell a story entirely with illustrations. Many times, these books are published in a small size, so that children can hold them easily and these are called hand-books. (Hand-books are not a genre, but are a format for a book.) They are fun books for young, non-reading children to play with. Often, they can tell the story based on pictures. Students reading these books analyze the illustrations and develop their own dialogues for the story. This helps them form their own opinions and express themselves through language.

\*Picture Story Books: contain pictures that complement the story and the text and the illustrations are both important to the development of the story. The pictures get the children's attention, but the text completes the story. The pictures set the mood and help children to judge what will happen next.

\*Traditional Literature: are stories passed down from generation to generation, changing slowly over time, providing a link between the past and the future. It is a great starting point to introduce children to the concept of a story and introduce them to different types of stories. Traditional literature includes:

-Folktales: which feature common people, such as peasants, and ordinary events. There could have some "make-believe" characters, such as talking animals, but the stories, overall, appear realistic. Folk tales seek to explain things about life, nature, or the human behaviour.

-Fairy Tales: also called "magic stories," feature magical and enchanted forces. They always have a happily ever after ending, where good is rewarded and evil is punished.

-Fables: are short stories, in verse or prose, with a moral ending. These stories were made famous with Aesop (6th century BC), who told tales of animals and other inanimate objects that teach lessons about life.

-Legends: are historical stories based on the life of a real person, famous for his achievements.

-Myths: contain common themes and characters, often gods. They attempt to explain the beginning of the world, natural phenomena, the relationships between the gods and humans, and the origins of civilization. Myths, like legends, are stories told as though they were true.

-Historical Fiction: are stories that are written to portray a time period or convey information about a specific time period or an historical event. Authors use historical fiction to create drama and interest based on real events in people's lives. The characters may be real, based on real people, or made up. In many ways, these types of books can be more powerful teaching tools than nonfiction, especially for children. Often, historical fiction presents history from the point of view of young participants. There are few contemporary accounts of how children have experienced and participated in history - children's historical fiction attempts to help readers see how history affects people of the same age. When these books are written for young readers, they are called chapter books, because they expand the concept of a story by presenting a tale in portions, each building on the last and leading to a final result. Children's historical fiction features youth as playing an important, participatory role in history.

-Modern Fantasy: are imaginative tales that require young readers to accept elements and story lines that clearly cannot be true. The stories may be based on animals that talk, elements of science fiction, supernatural or horror, or a combination of these. When written for young readers, these books are called chapter books. "Winnie the Pooh," "Alice in Wonderland" is an example of modern fantasy written for young readers up to 12 years old.

-Realistic Fiction: is written for today's youth, representing contemporary times, based on real-world situations. It is similar to historical fiction, except that these stories are based on current events. They feature children as the main characters and allow young readers to experience different settings, cultures, and situations than found in their lifestyle. The books present a real-world problem or challenge and show how a young person solves that problem. By nature, children's realistic fiction is positive and shows young readers how they too can conquer their problems.

-Non-fiction or Informational Books: are designed to help young readers learn more about real things, providing information without the literary devices common to fiction. They can be a challenging genre for children because they have to match high interest topics with appropriate reading levels and background knowledge.

\*Biography is a form of non-fiction that is based on a person's life and form an effective bridge between storytelling and nonfiction. Children enjoy reading stories about other famous people and can be extremely motivating. The lives of famous, important people let children see how the process of growing up shapes the opportunities, choices, and challenges people face in life.

\*Poetry and Drama are important genres that introduce children to verse, prose, rhythm, rhyme, writing styles, literary devices, symbolism, analogies, and metaphors. They are written at different reading levels, so that a young reader's interests can be matched with their abilities.

This is especially important for reluctant readers that may read below their age group. The simple language used in some poems and drama can be appreciated by readers of varying abilities, providing a context to teach a variety of language arts skills.

**\*Young Adult Literature (YAL)** is anything that readers, from the age of 12 -18, choose to read. It is often referred to as "YA" literature. Some think of it as literature written for and published specifically for young adults. YAL is a growing, hugely popular genre that plays an immensely important part in teenage lives. The imaginative storylines, combined with the exploration of emotions that feature in our everyday lives, has meant that YAL is a fantastic tool to discover the complex world that we live in. YAL is well known for confronting hard-hitting and banned subjects such as drug use, sex and pregnancy, bullying, death, illness and so on. Experiencing these complexities of life, through literature, is a safe way for the reader to gain knowledge of new experiences that could play an important role, later on, in their lives. Readers can identify similarities between themselves and the characters which comfort them to know that they are not alone in their situation. Young adults, generally, feel the need to belong and through YAL they can be reassured that being different is not abnormal. YAL is important and relevant as it reflects the attitudes, issues and fears of today's teenagers and guides them through those tough experiences. It has been suggested that young adult literature has the potential to help students understand their own lives. Themes among young adult literature include multiculturalism, identity, society and health issues.

### **The Seven Characteristics of Young Adult Literature**

-YA authors write from the viewpoint of young people

In many YA novels, the parents or other authority figures are absent. The characters are forced to confront their problems on their own.

-The literature is fast-paced, with emphasis on powerful images.

-YA literature involves a variety of genres and subjects.

-It includes stories about characters from many different ethnic and cultural groups.

-The characters are faced with challenges, which earn the reader's respect, even if they don't succeed.

-They deal with emotions that are important to young people.

#### *Genres of YA Literature*

Genres for young adults include poetry, drama and plays, short stories, folk tales, contemporary realistic fiction, fantasy and science fiction.

-Realistic Fiction is a genre consisting of stories that could have actually occurred to people or animals in a believable setting. These stories resemble real life, and the fictional characters within these stories react similarly to real people. In good realistic fiction, the characters are engaging, the dialogue is believable. the plot is fresh and original and the setting is true to life.

-Humor: is a central genre of young adult literature because laughter becomes a connection point between the young reader and the text. These humor novels deal with serious issues in a laughable way, to inform and entertain young adults.

-Adventure: the main characters in this type of novel are continuously finding themselves in dangerous situations, where they have to do their best using skills and reasoning to get out of those difficult situations. Example: J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series.

-Paranormal romance is the dominant genre in Young Adult right now. It's a subgenre of romance novels, where the main theme is romance with a paranormal twist, but it can also be mostly science fiction/fantasy with a romantic subplot. Recurring themes are romantic relationships between humans and one of the following: vampires, ghosts, witches, fallen angels, and so on. Examples: The Twilight Saga by Stephenie Meyer.

-Fantasy and Science Fiction: is a genre usually set in the future, dealing with the impact of imagined innovations in science or technology. This genre offers readers escapism, fanciful ideas and settings, which can provide a unique perspective on contemporary times. It differs from fantasy as its imaginary elements are largely possible within the scientific laws of nature. 90% of YAL fits into this category.

-Historical Fiction: presents history in a manner that connects with readers on a personal and emotional level; the focus is usually on an important historical theme that helps readers deal with the present. It provides a story set in the past where the main character is usually an adolescent who has the typical concerns and problems of a modern adolescent. Example: Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson.

-Mysteries: in true young adult mysteries, the main character is usually an adolescent who assumes the role of the amateur detective. Through a series of clues, he solves the mystery, sometimes placing himself in real danger.

-Gothic- this genre has elements of horror, the supernatural, fear, darkness, with villains such as vampires and demons and a few heroes and heroines. It includes romance and mystery, especially between human and beast.

-Folk tales: show typical characters, themes, literary devices and vocabulary.

-Poetry: has an element such as rhythm, rhyme, figurative language and imagery that young adults enjoy.

-Drama: is performed on stage, where young adults read aloud or perform from the scripts.

-Problem stories: are short stories that have an adolescent as the main character, focusing on the challenges the youth face, as well as the wonderful times filled with joy, excitement, love and a sense of belonging to a peer group.

-Non-fiction: also called Informational literature, includes biographies and autobiographies, which can help broaden a young adult with other cultures, races and ethnicities. Factors to consider with informational literature are the merits of the author, content accuracy; current sources, balancing of ideas and theories.

## **CONCLUSION**

During the end of the 20th century, there has been a wide variety of literature published for young adults. YA fiction prepares young adults for entry into the adult world as well as encourages a love of reading. For these reasons, YAL is an important part of a high school library.