



# Basics of Literary Studies

Anton Pokrivčák  
Silvia Pokrivčáková



---

---

# Basics of Literary Studies

**Anton Pokrivčák**  
**Silvia Pokrivčáková**

**2023**



---

**Authors ©:**

prof. PhDr. Anton Pokrivčák, PhD.

prof. PaedDr. Silvia Pokrivčáková, PhD., :

**Reviewers:**

Doc. PhDr. Mária Hricková, PhD., Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra

Prof. PhDr. Jaroslav Kušnír, PhD., University of Prešov

**Copyright information**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the above-mentioned acts, without the prior permission of the author.

The right of the author to be identified as the Author has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright Act No. 618/2003 on Copyright and Rights Related to Copyright (Slovakia, EU). The text is assumed to contain no proprietary material unprotected by patent or patent application; responsibility for technical content and for protection of proprietary material rests solely with the author and is not the responsibility of the publisher. It is the responsibility of the author to obtain all necessary copyright release permissions for the use of any copyrighted materials in the manuscript prior to the submission.

The electronic textbook **Basics of Literary Studies** (ISBN 978-80-568-0577-0) is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs Licence. Based on a work at <http://www.truni.sk>.

The textbook is accompanied by the audiobook **Basics of Literary Studies** (ISBN 978-80-568-0576-3) which is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs Licence. Based on a work at <http://www.truni.sk>.

**Aknowledgement**

Both the textbook and audiobook **Basic of Literary Studies** are results of the project VGS *Extension of study support for 1st year students as dropout prevention (2022-23)* intended to improve the quality of educational processes at the Faculty of Education at the University of Trnava.

ISBN 978-80-568-0577-0

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31262/978-80-568-0577-0/2023>

---

## *Table of contents*

	Introduction	7
1	Literature and its study	9
2	Literary history	22
3	Literary criticism	31
4	Intertextuality, or text in context	51
5	Language of literature	56
6	Literary kinds and genres	83
7	Poetry	89
8	Prose	102
9	Drama	109
10	Digital literature	120
11	Literary education	129
	References	144

---

---

# Introduction

For centuries, the study of literature has been a traditional and inseparable part of all philological and language-teacher training study programmes. However, its focus and content have substantially changed over time, mostly in response to philosophical, social, and cultural developments. So why should university study of languages still involve the study of literature? What benefits does it bring? Why and how should students read literature?

Some answers are provided in the present textbook which is intended to serve as guide for students beginning their study of literature today. As other similar study companions (e.g. Cascardis *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and Philosophy*, 2014; Culler's *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (2011) or Klarer's *An Introduction to Literary Studies*, 2023), it offers a concise and accessible discussion of central issues in the contemporary study of literary texts, including definitions of key terms such as literature and literary scholarship, periods of literary history, theoretical approaches to the study of literary texts, an overview of critical approaches, characteristics of language typical for literature, classification of literary kinds and genres, etc.

Despite its similarities with other study guides, the present textbook is unique at least in one aspect: it integrates the knowledge coming from the international context of the study of Anglophone literatures with a specific cultural and geographical context of Slovakia (and Czech Republic), which establishes a space for constructive comparison and mutual beneficiation.

The current text is an edited and extended version of the previous textbooks *Focus on Literature* (2003) and *Understanding Literature* (2006) by the same authors. The new and expanded edition is fully updated to include:

- 
- a wider range of textual examples from Anglophone literatures,
  - new developments in literary theory and criticism related to digital literature and digital humanities,
  - updated resources, added online links, and DOIs to make the textbook usage more comfortable,
  - and adapted references written in [MLA style](#) which is most commonly used to cite sources within the language arts, cultural studies, and other humanities disciplines.

Compared to the previous editions, sections for independent study (lists of recommended sources and lists of literary terms) and self-regulated study (questions and check-yourself sections) were added. We hope these will provoke students to discover and explore various ways of “understanding literature,” through their independent work in the libraries, on the internet, or by consulting other resources, all of which can significantly improve their appreciation and grasp of literature and its contexts. We do hope the textbook (and the course) will help its readers – our students be ready and sufficiently informed for the study of other literature-oriented courses and to develop their skills of independent critical reading, interpreting and writing about literature.

We would like to express our gratitude to all those students and colleagues who inspired us to write and continually update the book. We also thank to the reviewers - doc. PhDr. Mária Hricková, PhD. from Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, and prof. PhDr. Jaroslav Kušnír, PhD. from University of Prešov - for their valuable and constructive notes. Our gratitude goes to the proofreader Caroline Ann Daněk Kyzek, M.A., PhD., as well, for her careful reading and suggestions which improved the terminological unambiguity and stylistic quality of the text.

Authors



---

# *1 Literature and its study*

## **Warming up activities**

*Work in pairs or groups and:*

- 1) Make a list of books/texts you consider to be literature.*
  - 2) Make another list of books/texts which you do not consider to be literature.*
  - 3) What do the works on your first list have in common?*
  - 4) What do the works on your second list have in common?*
  - 5) Can you think of any literature that is not written?*
  - 6) Search various sources and find at least 5 definitions of literature. Choose the best one or create your own definition, meaningful and easy to remember.*
- Compare and discuss your answers in your study group*

## **Defining literature**

Literature (from the Latin *littera* = a letter of the alphabet) is one of the words familiar to almost everyone and used by many people daily. It appears in various discourses, on various levels, in various social groups as well as historical periods. its frequency of use has enriched it with multiplicity of meanings and definitions.

In the English-speaking world, the most “classic,” as well as the most extensively referred to, definition of literature is the one provided by René Wellek and Austin Warren in their influential *Theory of Literature* (first published in 1945, [online](#)). They put forth essential distinctions and conceptualisations which, in our opinion, have not been significantly challenged until the present, and,

---

although their work is not a recent one, it still seems to be the most practical point of departure for an introductory course (Bennet and Royle, 2023).

In René Wellek's and Austin Warren's understanding (1949), the concept of literature comprises the following basic meanings:

- a) *all written texts* (anything in print – great novels, poems, textbooks, instructions for use, a music poster, a train ticket, etc.). This is the widest, but, as they claim, for the purposes of serious study, insufficient concept of literature. A definition of literature focused on “writings” can be found today in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary & Thesaurus* ([online](#)),
- b) *a sum of great books* (although narrower, the concept is not sufficient either, since, as they maintain, it is based on a value judgement, rather than on serious formal and thematic distinctions),
- c) *imaginative literature* (the art of letters or verbal art which uses words to evoke aesthetic feelings as opposed to utilitarian literature, which rather aims at passing on practical information, as well as to other arts using other communication codes (shapes, colours, tones, etc.). A similar focus on its artistic nature can be seen in the definition of the term “literature” in contemporary *Oxford Advanced Learner's English Dictionary* ([online](#)): “pieces of writing that are valued as works of **art**, especially novels, plays and poems (in contrast to technical books and newspapers, magazines, etc.)”.

**Literature is an imaginative art made up of verbal signs (words) which communicate aesthetic messages. It exists either in oral or written form.**

The given definition is an example of the **criteria approach** to defining literature since it provides a list of criteria which must be met (therefore, it has also been called the checklist approach). On the contrary, **the prototypical approach** focuses “on an established prototype, a particularly good example of the word, to which other examples of the word bear some resemblance” ([Meyer, 1997, p. 2](#)). According to this approach, literary works are:

- 
- written texts
  - marked by careful use of language, including features such as creative metaphors, well-turned phrases, elegant syntax, rhyme, alliteration, and meter;
  - belong to a literary genre (poetry, prose, or drama);
  - intended by the author to be read aesthetically;
  - seen by the reader as art and thus are indeed read aesthetically;
  - deliberately ambiguous and thus open to multiple interpretations.

The “narrowed” concept of literature will become the object of our theoretical reflections in further chapters as well. However, by acknowledging the “independence of literature”, people also acknowledge the fact that it is part of human sciences and that the meaning the literary works “produce” cannot exist in isolation but has to be related to other – non-literary phenomena as well. After all, a literary work is made up of verbal signs, which means that, if it is to have significance for human beings, it has to communicate a message and that this message is usually very complex, involving various aspects of human reality.

Before embarking on an analysis of the ways in which literature addresses human reality, it is necessary to stress that even if the word literature (littera - “letter”) suggests close association with written literary texts – manuscripts, books, and, most recently, electronic documents – it cannot be limited only to them, because in earlier historical periods a literary word was primarily a “spoken” one. Many great works were originally told, sung, or chanted, and only later on written down, including even such world cultural heritage texts as Homer’s epic poems *Iliad and Odyssey*, or the Old English *Beowulf*, as well as famous “postcolonial texts” told by aboriginal peoples in the U.S.A., Australia, and Latin America. This fact makes it clear that it is not a letter, but a word in its various manifestations (spoken, written, coded in electronic texts), which should be taken as a main medium (in Aristotelian terms) of literature.

---

## Why do people write and read literature?

Several millenia of study and intentional thinking about literature as art brought numerous answers to this simple query. The comparative and critical analysis of many sources can lead to identification of seven main functions of literature:

- literature as imitation
- literature as fiction
- literature as affective art
- literature as expression
- literature as universal human knowledge
- literature as entertainment (escape)
- literature as part of culture.

Perhaps the oldest answer to the above query was provided by an ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle in his *Poetics* ([online](#)): “Epic poetry and tragedy, comedy also and dithyrambic poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation. They differ, however, from one another in three respects – the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct.” According to Aristotle, literature thus fulfils men’s need for pleasure and learning through imitation (*mimesis*).

After Aristotle, the idea of art as imitation has gone through different manifestations within particular historical periods (neoclassicism, realism), resulting in the modern concept of *fiction*. As Danziger and Johnson (1966, p. 13) have it, “for though the work is usually, in one way or another, a reflection or recreation of the world and of life – what earlier critics called an imitation – we are certainly aware of the fact that it is not, after all, the world and not real life”. What is fictional does not, naturally, exist in reality. It cannot be said, however, that it does not exist at all, for fictional existence is a unique form of existence. In this

---

sense it could be said that fiction is something that is and, at the same time, is not. Although fictional worlds created by writers are not real worlds, they cannot be considered to be false either. Their power lies in suggestion, in the ability to “materialize,” through authors’ imaginative and creative capabilities, human longings, desires, fortunes and misfortunes, happiness and tragedies. This power of literature leads to its many conflicting theories.

Another approach is to regard literature in terms of its **affective power** on readers. Since here the main focus lies in literature’s affecting readers’ everyday lives, the approach is called affective (“affect” in psychology means emotion, feeling, or mood), or sometimes pragmatic. Its essence may be best described by quoting Tolstoy’s ([online](#)) definition of art: “Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings, and also experience them.”

As he further claims: “The stronger the infection, the better is the art” ([ibid.](#)). Like imitation and fiction, the concept of literature as affective art has taken on many different forms throughout the history, beginning with Plato’s crediting art with a subversive power, through to contemporary reader response theory.

In addition to literature’s undeniable power to affect the feelings of the readers, i.e. its “receivers”, it also “meets the need” of its “producers”, the authors of literary works, for expression (i.e. **expressive function** of literature). What is it that the writers want to express? According to Plato ([online](#)), poets are possessed speakers of divine truth “inspired to utter that to which the Muse impels them”. In addition to divine knowledge, truth and sensations, there are also other phenomena poets can strive to express. One of the strongest concerns with expression can be found in romanticism and its outbursts of strong human heart. For the English romantic poet William Wordsworth, for example, poetry is a “spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity. The emotion is contemplated till, by a species of

---

reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind” (Wordsworth, first published in 1800, [online](#)). A vitality and strength of this sense of literature can be demonstrated by Expressionism (emerging in the early twentieth century) whose aim was to “achieve a psychological or spiritual reality rather than record external events in logical sequence” (*The Free Dictionary*, [online](#)). Given their variations, this group of approaches (for the expression-based understanding of literature is by no means limited to the mentioned two movements) can be generally characterised as seeing the fictional world through the eyes of the author, taking it to be a unique product of a unique poet, dramatist, novelist, and a unique form of a unique talent or craft.

Values expressed by literary works are, naturally, quite varied. While some historical periods emphasised, for example, the values of objectivity and universality, others reflected subjectivity and particularity. On the whole, however, it could be said that literary works written during a particular period usually tend to express similar values. Thus, for antiquity were characteristic the works which addressed mostly **universal themes** – good and evil, man and nature, man and god, reality and transcendence – and, on the contrary, in Romanticism works which stressed particularity, subjectivity, individualism, nature, etc. There are many common readers and literary scholars who consider objectivity of values and meanings attributed to the so-called canonical literary works (that is, works which are considered to be traditional and most representative for a particular national literature or culture) a fundamental and constitutive sense of literature, as well as many critics who think the opposite holds true, seeing literature’s sense in its ability to subvert all past, present and future claims for universality. While the first approach could be found in various formalist and structuralist movements (see New Criticism’s qualification of a literary work as an objective artefact), the second is clearly demonstrable in

---

current postmodern approaches, especially in cultural studies (for more see Buda and Pokrivčák, 2021).

Moreover, in their works, writers try to express not only their aesthetic feelings but also other aspects of the world they live in. In recent times, for example, rather frequent are the works treating topics which had previously been “taboo”, “forbidden”, or simply considered unworthy of literary expression (addressing women’s issues, problems of national and ethnic minorities, postcolonial issues, etc.). As a result of the need to address alternate, other than officially accepted and fostered, meanings, there emerged cultural studies (see subchapter on other critical approaches) analysing **cultural differences** in production, distribution and consumption of artistic works among different kinds of audiences (differentiated along possible “interpretive groups” based on gender, ethnicity, and other principles). Cultural studies scholars very often search for non-traditional meanings of literary works in non-traditional areas (outside the scope of what they consider “narrow” textual analyses), using practices and procedures of other, non-literary disciplines and often highlighting other than largely aesthetic problems and issues (social and historical inequalities, feminism, ideology, etc.).

Finally, in many contemporary opinion polls people say that they read books for other than aesthetic reasons as well: to escape from everyday boring life with its stress and problems, to relax after a hard work, to experience foreign settings and lifestyles, etc. The books which treat such topics or problems usually address masses of readers and sell well on the markets (**escapist literature**). They can be found not only in bookstores, but in bus or railway station lounges, airports, etc. Since they meet current mass interest in uncomplicated entertainment, they are most frequently referred to as mass or popular literature. In “high-brow” literary critical circles, popular literature has been traditionally “looked down at” as superficial and not as valuable as the so-called serious literature. Most recently, however, its status has been reconsidered, especially by postmodern critics who attempt to elevate it to the level of serious literature,

---

or, in other words, to “close the gap” between the traditional understanding of what is “high” and “low” (Fiedler, [online](#)).

### **The study of literature**

So far, literature has been discussed here as a complex artistic phenomenon, meeting different needs and serving different purposes. Analogically complex and complicated is its study. The study of literature (or literary studies) is a branch of scholarship exploring literary texts and culture. It can be seen as part of a general study of arts and aesthetics, consisting of four basic components (or theoretical disciplines): literary theory, literary criticism, literary history, and, most recently, critical theory or simply theory. Although each of them explores literature from a slightly different aspect, their common goal is to allow the reader to experience a literary work more deeply and precisely, either through providing more knowledge about its background, author, or by offering an informed view of the complexities of a work’s meaning.

**Literary theory** is the study of basic principles of literature, its categories, and criteria. It is concerned with the analysis of general literary or aesthetic categories, common for more works of literature, such as the relationship of literature to other arts or other areas of human knowledge, the ontology of a literary work, composition (theme, plot, character, setting, point of view, etc.), and literary style (diction, rhythm, rhyme, tropes, etc.). Literary theory is sometimes taken to be superior to the other two disciplines, especially because it serves as a common denominator for theoretical as well as critical activities.

**Literary criticism** is the analysis, evaluation or interpretation of the works of literature, mostly performed by literary scholars or critics. It is focused on the clarification of meaning of a particular work, unlike literary theory, and uses synchronic methods of interpretation (see chapter Literary criticism). In some American traditions, literary criticism stands for literary theory as well, although this conflation has been challenged.



---

**Literary history** approaches literature (a particular work of art, a period, movement, school, or a theoretical category) from a historical, diachronic point of view, tracing its development over a longer period of time (see chapter Literary history). This approach has been enriched by versions of critical theory. Critical theory, or simply Theory, is a result of significant challenges to the status of the literary work occurring in the late twentieth century, when the literary, traditionally a constitutive feature of the ontological uniqueness of the literary work, has been spread out to other, non-literary fields, such as history, philosophy, law, or anthropology. While in the past these fields were seen as contributing to the accumulation of human knowledge of the real world, in the late twentieth century they are frequently taken as being only different manifestations of a semiotic, textual, construction of reality.

Literary theory, criticism or literary history with their methods cannot be seen in isolation. They usually interrelate, sometimes even conflict, but through this enrich literature. It is impossible to analyse a historical movement or work without familiarity with general literary principles, as it is equally impossible to analyse a literary or historical or theoretical category without drawing on particular literary works as carriers of such categories. Last but not least, it is impossible to ignore the literary work's relation to other "non-literary" areas of human and social life as well.

In addition to the above division of scholarly approaches, one may also look at literature through a perspective of other categorisations. Thus, the concept of **general (universal) literature** should be mentioned, which involves the study of literary movements, schools, and fashions identified in larger geographical areas, transcending regional or national lines (e.g. the study of the development and poetics of magical realism across several national literatures after World War I). The general literature is often referred to as world or comparative literature as well. Within world or comparative literature interrelationships between two or more national literatures (e.g. comparing poetic techniques of magical realism used in English and American literatures) can be examined.

---

**National literature** is one of the most frequently used terms in the field of literary scholarship, though, paradoxically, very difficult to define properly. The core of the problem lies in the fact that national literatures are usually distinguished by means of linguistic criteria (one national language – one national literature). Such an approach is, however, not sufficient in the case of English, American, Irish, Australian literatures, or literatures of some parts of Africa or India, since they are all Anglophone. Defining national literature using geographical criteria (one country/land – one national literature) is questionable as well, for example in the case of American literature with its Jewish, Latino-American, African-American, and other “ethnic” or “minority” literatures. To apply an author’s national consciousness poses a problem when dealing with the so-called “international” writers, such as Milan Kundera (a Czech who was living and writing in exile in France and his works becoming an integral part of French literature), or T. S. Eliot – born in the U.S.A. and becoming a British citizen.

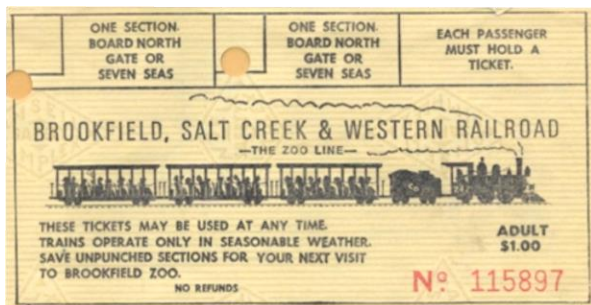
Traditional divisions into the world, national and comparative literatures have recently been enriched by concepts introduced within poststructural perspectives and efforts. Thus, we can often come across divisions along ethnic lines (literature of ethnic minorities in the U.S.A., but also in Slovakia), gender lines (feminist or gay and lesbian literature) as well as political and geographical lines (postcolonial literature).

As in the case of literary theory, criticism, history, and critical theory, the concepts of general (world, national, comparative, as well as perhaps the newly emphasised ethnic or postcolonial literature) implicate each other, i.e. it is impossible to study national literatures without background knowledge of certain universal tendencies and developments, or, in reverse, to explore world literature without partial reference to national literatures, or to examine literature of ethnic minorities without reference to the so-called “majority” literature.

## Assignment 1: The nature of literature

Decide which of the following texts (A - G) belong to literature (= as a verbal art) and which do not. Which criteria did you apply while deciding?

**A**



**B**

This delicious pasta really is the total package: Hearty, easy, full of cheese, and bursting with carbs! All the qualities I look for in a friend.

That made no sense. What a great (and fitting) way for me to kick off Monday morning!

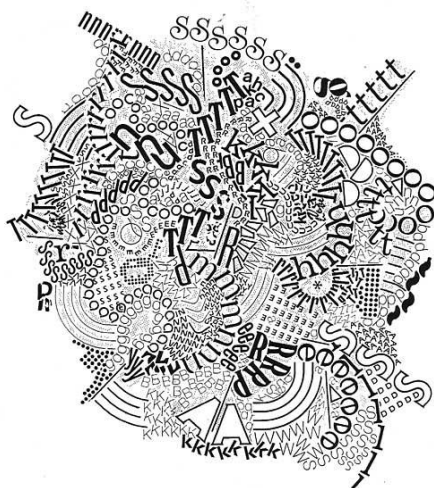
Anyway, you really will love this pasta, as you get a bunch of deliciousness without a whole lot of effort.

It's a great presentation if you're having company over (Does anyone have company over anymore? Do people still call guests 'company?' Or is that just another old term I've hung onto through the years, along with 'television set?' and 'fella?') or just makes a perfect weeknight meal.

Here's how to make it!



“I may be drunk, Miss, but in the morning I will be sober and you will still be ugly.”  
*Winston Churchill*



**Let It Be** John Lennon/Paul McCartney

G D  
When I find myself in times of trouble,  
Em C  
Mother Mary comes to me,  
G D C G  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.  
D  
And in my hour of darkness,  
Em C  
She is standing right in front of me,  
G D C G  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

**Chorus:**

Em Bm C G  
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be.

D C G  
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.

G D  
And when the broken hearted people  
Em C  
Living in the world agree,  
G D C G  
There will be an answer, let it be.  
G D  
For though they may be parted,  
Em C  
There is still a chance that they will see,  
G D C G  
There will be an answer, let it be.

**Chorus**

G D  
And when the night is cloudy,  
Em C  
There is still a light that shines on me,  
G D C G  
Shine on til tomorrow, let it be.  
G D  
I wake up to the sound of music,  
Em C  
Mother Mary comes to me,  
G D C G  
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.

Chorus

At the age of 18, Shakespeare married the 26-year-old Anne Hathaway. The consistory court of the Diocese of Worcester issued a marriage licence on 27 November 1582. The next day, two of Hathaway's neighbours posted bonds guaranteeing that no lawful claims impeded the marriage. The ceremony may have been arranged in some haste, since the Worcester chancellor allowed the marriage banns to be read once instead of the usual three times, and six months after the marriage Anne gave birth to a daughter, Susanna, baptised 26 May 1583. Twins, son Hamnet and daughter Judith, followed almost two years later and were baptised 2 February 1585.

---

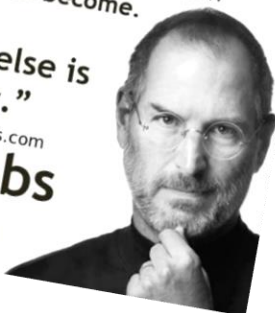
## G

"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma — which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become."

**"Everything else is  
secondary."**

[www.lifesayingquotes.com](http://www.lifesayingquotes.com)

**Steve Jobs**  
1955-2011



---

## *2 Literary history*

In order to better understand literary works, they are usually grouped according to various criteria (language they are written in, genres, poetic characteristics, and a literary period they emerged in). It is common knowledge that such groupings enable students and literary scholars to uncover distinctive characteristics of a particular literary work. Grouping literary works according to the time of their origin and poetics prevalent at that time is one of the most frequent classifications used in literary studies (it is used, for example, in many university courses). Drawing on the approach to the study of literary works from the aspect of individual historical periods, *literary history* is then (along with *literary criticism*, *literary theory*, and, perhaps, *critical theory*) one of the main branches of *literary scholarship*. It assumes that a particular historical culture within which the text was created is crucial for its comprehension. Thus to understand the historical meaning of a literary text, literary historians claim that it is necessary to know the cultural background within which the text was produced, or, in other words, the cultural dominant of a particular historical period – for there is no doubt that every historical period has its own unique dominant which is, in a hidden or open way, manifested in the work as its particular philosophical, religious, and scientific perspective. Moreover, each text was written under specific social and economic circumstances which may also have had a significant influence on the work.

In the context of *literary history*, the reciprocal relationship between a particular culture within which the text was created and a particular culture within which the reader exists is an important subject for comparative literary analysis.

---

## Periods of literary history

In literary history, as well as in the general history of arts, the following periods are traditionally distinguished:

**Ancient literature** is a term usually indicating literatures of the oldest civilisations and cultures (Egyptian, Syrian, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew, etc.). For the development of European literatures, of a crucial importance is the history of Greek and Latin literatures. They are traditionally dated to the period between approximately 500 B.C. and 500 A. D. and thought to exhibit, among other things, the following features: a young and beautiful human body as an ideal of beauty, natural love, *kalokagathia* - a sense of harmonious development of the soul and the body. The fact that literary works (poems, songs) were spread orally had important consequences for their poetics (frequent and petrified rhetoric figures). As for genres, the ancient times were typical for the popularity of tragedy, the lyric (odes, hymns, and bucolic) as well as epic poetry. No fictional genres in the modern sense of the word existed at that time. They only developed later on from epic poetry. Famous ancient authors of Ancient Greek drama and epic poetry include, to name just a few of them, Homer, Virgil, Horace, and Ovid.

The rise of Christianity in Europe brought important changes not only in political and social spheres, but also in culture and arts. A strong influence of Christianity can be seen in **medieval literature**. The term “medieval” (referring to the *Middle Ages*) is a translation from Latin *medius* (middle) and *ævum* (age). It names the period between antiquity and the Renaissance, i.e. 5<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries (the fall of Constantinople in 1453 is traditionally mentioned as an ending date) and can be considered only in the context of European literature and arts. Its basic characteristics include Latin as a universal language of literary works around Europe, strong poetic relationships between literary texts and the *Bible* as the most respected source of knowledge, and priority of religious characters, motives and topics in any literary texts. The ideal of a beautiful young human body was replaced by the characters of saints forgetting their bodies and living in desire for death and physical ascetics.

---

The typical features of medieval poetics include strict norms of writing, rhetoric of religious pathos, allegories, and symbols. Poetics was strongly influenced by the fact that texts were anonymous and rewritten several times which led to petrified rhetorical forms, as well as to many mistakes and deviations in manuscripts. The genres of *medieval* literature were the same as in *ancient* literatures, that is, the lyric and drama (there was, however, also a strong stream of the epic, such as Arthurian legends, Alexandreis epics, versified romances, etc.). Unlike ancient tragedy, however, medieval drama assumed mostly the form of religious *mystery* and *morality plays*. Romances and various epic poems sung by folk singers were also popular and influential in vernacular literature (oral and written). The canon of English medieval literature, for instance, includes the Germanic epic poem *Beowulf* (8<sup>th</sup> century, [online](#)), the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (written in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, [online](#)), and *Canterbury Tales* (1476 and 1483, [online](#)) by Geoffrey Chaucer (for more see Godden and Lapidge, 2013, or Manegris, 2011).

The period of European artistic and philosophical history following the *Middle Ages* is called **Renaissance**, meaning “rebirth” in French, since it is characterized by the revival of interest in classical antiquity. Its beginnings can be found in Italy in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the movement continued through the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries in the most developed countries of Western Europe. The *Renaissance* can be understood as a revolt against medieval scholasticism and sterility; while looking for sources in the “pagan” (Greek and Roman) ideals. The famous Renaissance authors, including Dante (1265- 1321) and Petrarch (1304-1374), imitated the Roman poets and their works with typical composition (e.g. Petrarch’s poems were written in Latin hexameter). The second period of the Renaissance was marked by the development of *Humanism* which had spread to many European countries and deeply influenced science (Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and Newton), fine arts (Raphael, Leonardo, Bellini, and Michel-Angelo), works of contemporary philosophers (Thomas More, Campanella, Bruno, Ronsard, Erasmus, and Copernicus), and even religious politics (Martin Luther



---

and his Reformation). The new philosophy, with its passion for knowledge and exploration, also led to great geographical discoveries of new continents and lands (America was discovered in 1492).

Within Renaissance literature, two interrelated streams can be recognized: the officially valued or “patronised” literature of lyric poetry, political and philosophical prose, and drama (tragedy and comedy), and the carnivalesque and grotesque writings “turning the world up-side-down”, e.g. famous *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (consisting of five books published in 1532-1564) by François Rabelais and *Don Quixote* (originally published in two parts in 1605 and 1615) by Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra. The English Renaissance began in the late 15th century with works of Sir Thomas More and Sir Thomas Wyatt, and it is usually divided into four sub-periods: the Elizabethan Age, the Jacobean Age, the Caroline Age, and the Commonwealth Period (also the *Puritan Interregnum*). Important Renaissance authors include William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, Sir Walter Raleigh, Ben Jonson, Francis Bacon, and John Milton.

Following the logic of alternation of antitheses, the *Post-Renaissance* or **Baroque** period refused the classical principles and ideals of the Renaissance and drew on traditional and conservative values of the Roman Catholic Church. The origins of the Baroque (the term being derived from the Spanish word for a pearl that is roughly shaped) date back to Rome around 1600. The main aim of Baroque literature and art in general was to awake the audience’s wonder, astonishment, and sensitivity by using rich metaphors and spectacle. The Baroque style is traditionally marked as monumental, decoratively allegorical, preferring external forms to content. In literature, the style employed classical forms and genres of the Renaissance, but adapted them to achieve grandiose, energetic, and highly dramatic effects. New forms and genres were developed as well, for example the *romanzo*, which is sometimes considered to be a predecessor of the novel. Famous Baroque authors include Torquato Tasso (*Gerusalemme Liberata*, 1584) and John Milton (*Paradise Lost*, approx. 1650-

---

1660, [online](#)); it has to be noted, however, that English literary historians are somewhat reluctant to apply the term to the 16<sup>th</sup>-century English literature.

In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century a new cultural period, **Neoclassicism** (*The Age of Reason, The Enlightenment*), was on the horizon. The European societies were strongly influenced by industrialisation and important mechanical inventions (the steam engine, telescope, thermometer, Newton's law of gravitation). This period also saw the rise of cities and the middle class. The arts reflected important changes in science and philosophy. Typical characteristics of literary Neoclassicism can be formulated as follows: emphasis on powers of mind ("I think, therefore I am," wrote René Descartes), strong traditionalism, distrust toward radical innovations, respect for classical writers, strong rationalism (see for example Boileau's *L'Art poétique*). Literary genres were rationally divided into high (e.g. hymns, odes, and tragedies describing the life and conflict of higher social classes using their "noble" language) and low (comedies showing the lives of low classes and using their "vulgar" language). Probably the most representative author of neoclassical theatre was Molière.

English *Neoclassical Period* (1660-1770) can be divided into three stages: the Restoration (including works of John Milton, John Dryden, John Wilmot 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Rochester, and John Locke), the Augustan Age (Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, and Daniel Defoe), and the Age of Sensibility (Samuel Johnson and Henry Fielding). Similarly, "popular" and "canonical" literature intersects e.g. travel narratives. In American literature, the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries were the period when Puritan writings and Revolutionary literature was developed.

European **Romanticism** as an artistic and intellectual movement in English literature originated with the publication of Coleridge's and Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798, [online](#)) and lasted through the first three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It stressed strong emotion, imagination, spontaneity, freedom, rebellion against social and artistic conventions, and exploration of nature and the supernatural. Romanticism favoured innovation instead of traditionalism, common language, and inspiration from folklore motives and genres (ballads,

---

folk tales, etc.). Romanticists preferred the exotic, the mysterious, the occult, and the monstrous. An ideal Romantic hero was an isolated rebel avoiding the company of other people. English Romanticism is represented especially by the works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats. In American literature, the influence of Romanticism was manifested in the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. The contested “revolts” of Romanticism against Classicism, against the Baroque – and its emphases on new forms of “subjectivity” – are rich areas for theoretical and historical study.

In the nineteenth century, the sensitive Romantic was replaced by its counterpart – the rational Realist who tried to reflect life without romantic idealization and subjectivism. Realist writers were interested in the everyday life of middle and lower classes, where the character is understood and shown as a product of social factors and environment (typical characters in typical circumstances). As a consequence of the dominance of *mimetic* principle (the subject is represented in such a way as to give a reader the illusion of actual and ordinary experience) and the use of middle-class language, realistic literature was the first period in which prose genres (a novel, a short story) were preferred. Important representatives of literary realism include Flaubert, Balzac, Dostoevsky and Ibsen (in drama).

In English literature, the period of **Realism** is connected with the Victorian Period (George Eliot, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Matthew Arnold, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, and Thomas Hardy), the Edwardian and the Georgian Periods (George Bernard Shaw, Herbert George Wells, William Butler Yeats, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, Henry James, and Edward Morgan Forster.)

The Realistic Period in American literature was characterized by the works of Mark Twain, Henry James, Bret Harte, and Kate Chopin, including the works of Naturalists - Stephen Crane, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser. Even though it

---

may seem that Realism as a literary movement exhausted itself in previous decades, many inspirational streams within the realistic tradition or independent literary works have still been underway (c.f. Pokrivčáková et al., 2004).

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by (up to that time) the worst war conflict ever – World War I. It influenced contemporary philosophy and art, since the war was considered a complete failure of Western civilisation and culture. It led to the refusal of all traditional values, including those of traditional artistic forms. The conditions for the emergence of “high modernism” were cast. Its nature was expressed by T. S. Eliot when he stated that the stable worldview, as presented in the nineteenth century literature, could not correspond to “the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” (Eliot, 1923, p. 483 or [online](#)). **Modernism**, on a philosophical basis, tried to break the rules of bourgeois morality, Victorian optimism, and, in general, drew a pessimistic picture of a culture based on apathy and moral relativism. One can say then that literary modernism conceals an intellectual revolt against traditional 19<sup>th</sup>-century literary forms. It tends toward a radical experiment with new forms and techniques (anti-realism, individualism, intellectualism, the disordering of structure, motives based on myths and archetypes, breaking up a narrative continuity, radical disruption of the linear flow of narrative and a coherent plot and character, violations of traditional syntax through stream of consciousness techniques, emphasis on expressionism, surrealism, and avant-gardes). Modernist trends work differentially across nations and cultures. They are also inherently contradictory and, one may say, some of them in fact extend older traditions.

In English literature, famous “modernist” works were produced by James Joyce, David Herbert Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, William Butler Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, and Seamus Heaney. American modernist authors include Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, e. e. cummings, William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, John Updike, Eugene O'Neill as well as writers of the so-called Jazz Age (Francis Scott Fitzgerald), the Harlem Renaissance (Langston Hughes and

W. E. B. DuBois), and the Lost Generation (Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Henry Miller and others). For more detailed analysis, study an excellent book by Martin Hilský (2017).

The term **postmodernism** was introduced in the late 20th century. It appears originally in architecture and later on in all branches of culture and arts. Literary critics (mostly Irving Howe, Leslie A. Fiedler, and Ihab Hassan) began to use it in the 1960s to mark the new wave of experimental fiction spread after the 1950s which was rather different from modernist classics. While modernist literature was a pessimistic reaction to the human disasters of World War I, postmodernism is, among other things, a reaction to events of World War II (fascism, the holocaust). In its literary forms, postmodern literature represents an anti-hierarchical, anti-dogmatic (“anything goes”) and a highly subversive mixture of everything from previous periods (intertextuality): popular culture, literature, and other media. Analogically, literary forms and genres are mixed as well, as expressed by the famous’s essay (Fiedler, 1982): “Cross the border, close that gap.” The list of outstanding postmodern authors includes Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, Vladimir Nabokov, John Irving, Richard Brautigan, Angela Carter and others (for more see Boxall, 2013 and McHale, 2015).

## Assignment 2: Literary history

Fill into the schema the names of literary periods, their representatives and their typical features.

Period	British literature	American literature
Ancient literature		
features		
representatives	XXX	XXX

<b>Middle English</b>		
Features		
Representatives	<u>Geoffrey Chaucer</u>	XXX
<b>Renaissance</b>		
features		
Representatives	<u>William Shakespeare</u>	Xxx
<b>The Restoration</b>		
features		
Representatives		
<b>Enlightenment</b>		
Features		
Representatives		
<b>Romanticism</b>		
Features		
Representatives	<u>Lord Byron</u>	
<b>Realism</b>		
Features		
Representatives		
<b>Modernism</b>		
Features		
representatives	<u>James Joyce</u>	
<b>20th century (Postmodernism)</b>		
features		
representatives		

---

## 3 *Literary criticism*

### **Literary criticism and interpretation**

**Literary criticism** (either in its narrow or broad aspect) draws on a process called interpretation, which is one of the most comprehensive ways to search for the meaning of a particular literary work. Literary meanings are not easily identifiable, not easily susceptible to a straightforward expression. The reason for this is the fact that, through literary works, writers usually try to say something significant about human life, love, hate, happiness, and suffering, i.e. about things which are not material facts, which cannot be relatively well described and defined, but which are of spiritual, sensual, intellectual nature, impossible to be counted, measured, or weighed. Such phenomena cannot be expressed in clear and precise language, but almost always only by means of indirect hints or images. Then, if readers want to discover what these hints or images possibly mean (and they always want to do that because the meaning is the purpose of their reading), they have to think about them. This “thinking about” a work is perhaps the simplest definition of interpretation. There are, of course, at least two levels of interpretive activity: 1, *natural* or *non-professional* (performed by average readers during the reading of a work and thinking about it), and 2, *scholarly* (performed by literary scholars trying to capture the meaning of a work in scholarly language (concentrating on the work’s language, composition, theme, characters, etc.) and transfer it to other scholars, students of literature or other professional public. The “scholarly” interpreter is thus a mediator between the two parties, interpreting to one of them what the other one says, either by explanation or translating into its language (Souriau, 1994, p. 374), or, to put it more simply, the person who helps someone understand the meaning of a text.

---

As far as the extent of its application is concerned, interpretation is broad and narrow by nature. According to Abrams (1999, p. 85), “in the narrow sense, to interpret a work of literature is to specify the meanings of its language by analysis, paraphrase, commentary; usually, such interpretation focuses on especially obscure, ambiguous, or figurative passages. In the broad sense, to interpret is to make clear the artistic purport of the overall literary work of which language is the medium; interpretation in this sense includes the explication of such aspects as the work’s genre, structure, theme, and effects”.

Characterising scholarly interpretation as a basic means for an identification, abstraction, explanation, and, finally, transfer of other, coded meanings by scholars to the readers calls for an inevitable question: Why do scholars do it? Why do they interpret? One of possible reasons for practicing interpretation in literature is that it is a natural element of literary communication. By writing a poem, a novel or a dramatic piece, writers express something that they expect, consciously or subconsciously, to be passed over to others, to the outside world. That something is usually a message of various levels of complexity, clarity or ambiguity, usually resulting from a complicated relationship of the author’s personality with the world. In some works, the message is obvious; it can be very easily derived from the words which are used primarily in their denotative sense and thus do not require any activity to decipher it. Such works tend to be considered didactic, not artistic enough. In other works, however, the message is more complex, not lending itself to be put forth straightforwardly, but having to be pointed to through interpretation of all the factors which can problematise it. Such works therefore demand from literary scholars greater concentration, sophistication and clarification power.

What is the nature of the meaning artists express and literary scholars explain, and where does it come from? By answering this question one gets to the essence of art and its interpretation. The most obvious source of the art’s “truths” would be its immediate or historical reality – the individual and social environment of the writer and the reader. Sir Philip Sidney, for example, claims that “there is no



---

art delivered to mankind that hath not the works of Nature for his principal object” (Sidney, first published in 1595, [online](#)). Using this perspective, a literary text can be defined as a more or less faithful representation or, as Aristotle has it, *imitation (mimesis)*, of reality, something which comes from what people consider reality, but is not identical with it. The (non-)identity of the text’s world with a real world is referred to as fictionality. The fictional world is governed not by the principles of physical nature, but by the principles of imagination. It is made up of *images* (e.g. *figures of speech, tropes*), and its meaning, or message it proposes to the reader, is almost always very difficult to establish (note the original Greek meaning of the word *trope* as *tropos* “turn, direction, the figure of speech”). To do it, it is necessary to analyse the work from different points of view. A text’s meaning is thus a result of a complex relation between real and fictional elements, played out in the background of the multiplicity of other conflicting forces (individual, social, historical, religious, philosophical, etc.). Because the relation between what is considered *reality* and *fiction* has been one of the most difficult problems to solve in *literary theory* (throughout history it has even constituted an important principle differentiating individual periods or movements - *romanticism, realism, symbolism*, etc.), the meaning of literary works still remains one of the most elusive, relative, but nevertheless fascinating notions in literary studies.

The elucidation of meaning through interpretation is not restricted only to literary studies but is significant for other human or social sciences as well. As Marshall (1992, p. 160) has it: “Since the early nineteenth century, philosophers of interpretation have pointed to three closely related ‘hermeneutic disciplines’, each centred on the problem of interpreting texts: law, religion, and literary study. Each of these has a long and complex history, and the nature of legal and religious interpretation continues to be vigorously debated. More recently, the importance of interpretation in anthropology, sociology, history, and other disciplines has been recognized”. These other “interpretations” differ from interpretation in literary studies mostly in the fact that they involve much more straightforward

---

relation to the real world. Thus, for example, in law the meaning “becomes concrete only when it is applied in a particular set of circumstance – a ‘case’ – by those who regard themselves as under its jurisdiction” (ibid., p. 160). A similar fact holds true for religious interpretation where “meaning is an act to be performed rather than a mere idea to be disclosed” (ibid., p. 160).

Speaking about the relation of literary interpretation to interpreting activities in other disciplines, it must be said that one of the most important events occurring in social and human sciences in the second half of the twentieth century is their increasing interconnection. As a result, the previously more or less clearly marked distinctions between “interpretations” have become vaguer, creating conditions for the emergence of more general methodological approaches seeking to identify common mechanisms of signification across several (human, social, and even natural) sciences. In literary studies, this tendency was manifested by attempts to return to interpreting literary works through other, non-literary disciplines (psychology, philosophy, sociology, etc.). Similarly, scholars working in non-literary fields considered literary signification a universal signification identified in all human, social, and even natural sciences. These new tendencies, however, brought some, rather more traditionally oriented, literary critics to claim that such “rule of interdisciplinarity” deprived literary interpretation of its uniqueness. In the last decades of the twentieth century, the clash of ideas resulted in an unhealthy “polarisation” of values and even in “culture wars”.

### **Theory and criticism**

As suggested above, interpreting literary works is a complex activity requiring critics to take into account many different phenomena and aspects of the literary process (Goulimari, 2014; Kush, 2016; Pokrivčák, 2018). Leaving out from the considerations the natural approach to literature (mostly adopted by common, non-professional readers), it can be said that, historically, professional scholars have approached criticism from various points of view. Most commonly, the

---

critical, interpreting activity has been associated with the discussing of particular works and writers. Critics usually employed, consciously or subconsciously, different methods or responded to different aspects of a particular work. When relating primarily their feelings, arising from a particular passage or a whole work, and expressing the responses the work evoked in them, they practiced the so-called *impressionistic criticism*. The opposite of impressionistic criticism was sometimes referred to as *judicial criticism*. A judicial critic used his/her individual judgement to explain and evaluate the effects or the meaning of a work. If the meaning of the discussed works was traditionally derived from, or related to, the circumstances of the author's life or a particular era, the *historical-biographical* criticism is considered. According to Guerin, such criticism "sees a literary work chiefly, if not exclusively, as a reflection of its author's life and times or the life and times of the characters in the work (Guerin et al., 2004, p. 22). As examples of the reflection of events the author lived through in his/her work Guerin mentions, among others, such well-known works as William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Milton's sonnets, Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, or John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. In addition to *historical-biographical* considerations in interpreting literary works, critics could also approach a work through the discussion of its moral and philosophical undertones. As Guerin has put it, "the basic position of such critics is that the larger function of literature is to teach morality and to probe philosophical issues" (ibid., p. 22). From among the commentators, critics, philosophers and writers, the names frequently mentioned in this regard include Plato, Horace, Samuel Johnson, Alexander Pope, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Matthew Arnold, Jean-Paul Sartre, etc.

The increasing identification of literary studies as an independent discipline in its own right has caused, however, that the discussions of literature became much more sophisticated and specialised. The twentieth century brought a gradual shift from the use of general stylistic and essayistic skills, commenting on broad questions of taste, value-judgement, or general historical or social issues, to looking at a work from a more specialised, "technical" point of view

---

(using either a newly invented specific literary terminology, or, in the late twentieth century, borrowing terminology from other social and human sciences). The increasing use of “technical language” resulted in the emergence of *critical approaches* which freed literary studies from its traditional outfit (characterised by the prevalence of historical, philological, moral, humanistic, and other similar considerations) and shifted the focus of critical activity to the literary itself. (It must be noted here, however, that the shift to the literary has never been clear-cut and well-demarcated. In addition to several approaches and critics using both literary and extra-literary principles and procedures (i. e. psychological, archetypal, or psychoanalytical approaches), the late twentieth century saw the return of the extra-literary in the form of post-structural approaches.)

In further chapters we will discuss the critical approaches which are considered to have most contributed to the changing attitudes to literary studies in the twentieth century. We will begin with what is considered to have been the most articulated shift in literary studies, i.e. the early twentieth-century turn to texts as primary objects of critical attention. Of the text-centred approaches, we will focus especially on Anglo-American *New Criticism* and *Deconstruction*. The two approaches were selected because they represent, especially in English and American critical practice, two temporal stages of text criticism – a structuralist and poststructuralist one. Naturally, concentrating on *New Criticism* does not in any way underestimate a founding role of two prominent European critical schools and movements, i.e. *Russian formalism* and Czech and French *structuralism*. In addition to text-based approaches, the twentieth century has been characterized by its deeper interest in factors of literary communication related to the author (a literary work being judged according to its ability to authentically express the poet’s feelings, his/her state of mind) as well as to the reader (Critics usually attempt to identify in the work evidence of the writer’s experience. One of the most significant approaches within subjective, expressive criticism is made up by the so-called *Geneva Critics*, or “the critics of

---

consciousness” whose aim is to “look” into a writer’s phenomenological world and to identify the processes of his/her consciousness by means of a text.) The most important factor for reader-based criticism is the study of the effect of a work of art on the reader.

### **New Criticism**

The movement of New Criticism (if one can speak about the movement at all, since the critics have never made up a coherent group) has been selected for a more detailed discussion especially because it forms, more or less, a hidden subsoil on which “stand” many players in the current American literary game. The origins of New Criticism could be traced back to the situation in England, when Victorian trends with their characteristic historicity, emphasis on the role of the literary character and critical judgements of an essayistic nature based upon taste and ethical-philosophical reflections, came to an end and, instead of them, a new modernistic sensibility emerged. According to Hilský (1976, pp. 14-15), New Criticism was a refusal of all the principles of Victorian criticism and its cult of paradox and irony “was an expression of the intellectual climate of the period and was internally related with the general emphasis on the disparate experience and relativisation of all existing human and aesthetic values”.

One of the first “New Critics” in English literary studies was I. A. Richards. Much clearer focus on what will later become basic imperative of the American New Criticism can be found in the work of Richards’s disciple William Empson, mainly in his most famous *7 Types of Ambiguity* (1930, revised edition in 1953) - despite the fact, though, that Richards’s influence was stronger and more stable. In addition to Richards and Empson New Criticism was also formed by the work of one of the greatest personalities in English and American literary studies – T. S. Eliot. Even though Eliot himself expressed doubts about such “formational” influence of his work on other critics, one cannot leave unnoticed direct relations especially between his early works and what later

---

crystallised as the main principles of New Criticism – i.e. hypostasising the text as an objective artefact (living its own life, not dependent on the personality of the author or the recipient) and generating the meaning primarily through its linguistic component parts. Thus in his famous essay *Tradition and Individual Talent*, Eliot claims that “Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry” (Eliot, 1949, [online](#)), and further, “Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality” (ibid.). In the same essay, he mentions the combination of positive and negative emotions and their balance, which actually foreshadows the new critical “ambiguity” of the literary work’s linguistic structures.

Moving from England to the USA, one has to emphasise the fact that theoretical activities of the American New Critics were never separated from the general social situation, as it is sometimes presented in current studies, but were part of the overall critical potential affecting social sciences in those times. First of all, it was the disagreement with the rise of modernistic, industrial society which was in the USA associated with the industrial North. All founding members of New Criticism, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren were Southerners and felt the need for an alternative against the dominant material culture of the capitalistic North. They published their ideas, together with 9 other Southern authors, in the collection of studies *I’ll Take My Stand* (1930, 2006). From the late 1930s, however, their attention gradually moved more specifically to literary issues, resulting in the publication of several works which were clearly established as part of formalist and structuralist thinking about literature. They included Brooks and Warren’s *Understanding Poetry* (1938), Ransom’s *The New Criticism* (1941), Brooks’s *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (1947), and, later on, *The Verbal Icon* (1957) by Wimsatt and Beardsley. In them, they elaborated what became the characteristic contribution of this Anglo-American theoretical movement to the world literary studies, the location of the work’s aesthetic value

---

and meaning primarily in its language (full of ambiguities, paradox, irony, verbal connotations and images), and its revealing by the critic in the process of “close reading”.

One of the first statements of this principle appeared in the prefatory letter “Letter to the Teacher” of the abovementioned *Understanding Poetry: An Anthology for College Students* (Brooks & Warren, 1938, p. 41):

“This book has been conceived on the assumption that if poetry is worth teaching at all it is worth teaching as poetry. The temptation to make a substitute for the poem as the object of study is usually overpowering. The substitutes are various, but the most common ones are:

1. Paraphrase of logical and narrative content;
2. Study of biographical and historical materials;
3. Inspirational and didactic interpretation.

Of course, paraphrase may be necessary as a preliminary step in the reading of a poem, and a study of the biographical and historical background may do much to clarify interpretation; but these things should be considered as means and not as ends. And though one may consider a poem as an instance of historical or ethical documentation, the poem in itself, if literature is to be studied as literature, remains finally the object for study. Moreover, even if the interest is in the poem as a historical or ethical document, there is a prior consideration: one must grasp the poem as a literary construct before it can offer any real illumination as a document”.

The idea that the meaning of a literary work has to be determined from the work itself, not from its author’s intention or perhaps from its impact on the reader, was offered later on in a more sophisticated manner in two essays from the *Verbal Icon*: “The Intentional Fallacy” and “The Affective Fallacy”. If one were to choose a work which would, however, most representatively embody the “New Critical” attitude to literature, one would probably choose Cleanth Brooks’s *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (1974). As the name suggests, Brooks’s book is a fine example of the “New Critical” power of close

---

reading. Instead of extra-literary considerations, Brooks says that “the language of poetry is the language of paradox” (Brooks, 1974, p. 3) and demonstrates it in several brilliant interpretations of selected individual poems.

Naturally, the focus on the complexities of the discussed literary text’s language has brought accusations of the “new critics”’ supposed un-historicity. In the following I would like to use the work of Allen Tate (another prominent member of New Criticism) to demonstrate that these views were, and still are, distorted and not based on a careful reading of their texts. In the essay “The Man of Letters in the Modern World” (from the collection of essays of the same name), Tate claims that in times when languages are devalued by mass control, the man of letters “must discriminate and defend the difference between mass communication, for the control of men, and the knowledge of man which literature offers us for human participation” (Tate, 1952, p. 11). He sees the task of the man of letters in the overcoming of the fragmentation of Western thinking, of the Cartesian dissociation of thinking from the whole human being, in fostering human participation at the expense of mere communication. The man of letters must not support the illiberal specialisation of the nineteenth century spreading out in the modern world, “in which means are divorced from ends, action from sensibility, matter from mind, society from the individual, religion from moral agency, love from lust, poetry from thought, communion from experience, and mankind in the community from men in the crowd” (ibid., p. 20).

The substance of Tate’s anti-rationalist vision of society is most strongly manifested in his interpretational probes to several great works of world literature and criticism. I use the word “probes” because Tate does not analyse here (as one, influenced by the signifying views of New Criticism, might expect) the general formal and thematic outfit of the work, but concentrates on the essence of artistic imagination, that is, on the philosophical and aesthetic dimensions of the work resulting from the nature of social sensibility in a historically concrete point of development (which subverts another myth – that of an unhistorical nature of New Criticism), and on the quality of individual being.



---

Attentive reading of Tate's essays betrays a critic who is miles away from reductionism, unhistoricism and mechanical, spiritless, formalism. His interpretations present works of art in relation to the whole being of man and society. Even if his concept of being is modernistic, attempting to overcome fragmentation and specialisation, it is not a rigid one, for the critic is able to identify the main future tendencies of social sensibility and critical thinking which would eventually take over many features of Tate's *angelic imagination* - superficiality, loss of sensual depth, and constant elusion of the meaning being most important of them. It is, however, necessary to point out that Tate considers the tendencies as negative and tries to struggle with them. Unlike this, the postmodern thinking would consider the *angelic imagination* as a highly positive element in the struggle with earthiness, naturalness, and the knowable reality. Also the postmodern treatment of the concept of fragmentation and univocity is different from the new critical one. Lyotard (1984), for example, identifies in the society the effect of similar material, technical and technological forces, including the importance of language, but his recommendation is rather different. Instead of a desire for the unification of man and nature, he proclaims a war on objective and deeply rooted values and calls for the contradictions and relativity. Despite this difference, there are frequent opinions that there is one point in which the New Criticism does not differ from postmodern critical theories – the intensive concentration on a literary work; its *close reading* is a predecessor of the deconstruction's verbal equilibristic.

### **Deconstruction**

While the New Criticism draws, above all, on the formalist-structuralist procedures and understanding of literature as an autonomous activity resulting in the creation of a specific, uniquely literary meaning, deconstruction is part of poststructuralist tendencies with their struggle against the autonomous nature of the literary meaning. Its aim is to "subvert" or "undermine" any claim of a text, be it literary, philosophical, or even scientific, to an "objective" meaning.

---

Philosophically, the approach is based on the effort to “subvert” western metaphysical tradition and its hierarchical oppositions: subject – object, idea – matter, form – content, centre – periphery, to name just a few, and show that there is no origin and end, and that the ruling principle in the world is that of *indeterminacy*.

In literary study, deconstruction uses a “close reading” of canonical literary texts, playing on verbal ambiguities, connotations and etymology of their elements. It treats literary works not as works, with the elements arranged into a hierarchical structural whole, but as texts based on intertextuality, citationality and relativity of their elements, claiming that the meaning of any text is an absolutely relative entity, radically open to contradictory readings (Pokrivčák, 1997). The most important representatives of deconstruction include Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, Joseph Hillis Miller, and Barbara Johnson.

To illustrate the shift in values between New Criticism and Deconstruction, i.e. between structuralism and poststructuralism, we will concentrate on deconstruction’s “handling” of one of the central New Critical principles – the autonomy of a work of art. According to Culler (1982, pp. 200-201), “for New Criticism an important feature of a good poem’s organic unity was its embodiment or dramatization of the positions it asserts. By enacting or performing what it asserts or describes, the poem becomes complete in itself, accounts for itself, and stands free as a self-contained fusion of being and doing”. Culler focused especially on Brooks’ introductory essay “The Language of Paradox” in which he analyses a well-known poem by John Donne “The Canonisation”. In the essay, Brooks claims that paradox is the essence of poetic language. It is the main device through which a poem acquires its effect. The poem is about lovers who by rejecting the world, find a much richer world in each other. Culler criticises especially Brooks’ interpretation of the following stanza from John Donne’s poem “The Canonization”:

---

*We can die by it, if not live by love,  
And if unfit for tomb or hearse  
Our legend be, it will be fit for verse;  
And if no piece of chronicle we prove,  
We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;  
As well a well-wrought urn becomes  
The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,  
And by these hymns, all shall approve  
Us canonized for love.*

Brooks identifies one of central paradoxes of the poem in the comparison of a tomb with an urn. The lovers are content if after their death their legend will be preserved in verses, because as a well-wrought urn is more than a half-acre tomb, the poem is more than a worldly legend. Singing out the power of love in verses and comparing verses to an urn, Donne, according to Brooks, created such an urn. The poem is a well-wrought urn. "The poem is an instance of the doctrine which it asserts; it is both the assertion and the realization of the assertion" (Brooks, op. cit., p. 17). However, according to Culler, such statement is impossible, because, mathematically, there can be no statement about itself – each statement about an X must be in a higher logical category than X. Similarly, "an assertion about poems is decreed to be of a different logical type from the poems it is about" (Culler, op. cit., p. 202). Following the method of deconstruction to find a weak chain in the text and then to take it apart *ad absurdum*, Culler developed this relatively understandable sentence into a tirade of speculative logical operations which supposedly proved that the poem is an example of infinite self-referential aberrations.

The post-deconstruction American literary criticism is full of subversions of basic, in a Derridean language, hierarchic oppositions of Western metaphysics, wiping out the borders between reality and its textual representation. New Criticism did not know this levelling of oppositions and pan-relativity, but already

---

anticipated it – in Tate’s *angelic imagination*, in Wimsatt’s *fallacies*, and especially in Brooks’ *language of paradox*. With regard to this, postmodern tendencies do not seem to be new at all; they only intensify what has been emerging for quite a long time.

### Other critical approaches

The above-discussed critical approaches are two examples of what has been going on in literary criticism since the beginning of the twentieth century. The scope of this textbook does not, naturally, provide enough space to cover most of them in some kind of sufficient detail. This is the reason why this chapter attempts to at least mention some other critical tendencies, and thus to make the picture a little bit more complex.

As suggested above, the beginning of the twentieth century is associated with the birth of text-centred approaches to literary criticism. One of the most prominent of such approaches is **Russian Formalism**, or “Russian Formal School”, as it has always been referred to. The movement originated in the 1910s and ended in the 1930s as a result of unfavourable political circumstances in the then Soviet Union. Russian Formalists revolutionised literary studies by insisting on the need for the scientific study of literature, consisting of the search for general or universal principles of literature, characteristic of every literary text. According to Roman Jakobson, one of such principles would be *literariness*, i.e. what differentiates a literary text from other texts. A key quality of a text’s *literariness* is its ability to produce the effect of *defamiliarisation*. As Shklovsky (1917, [online](#)), one of the leading members of the Russian Formal School has put it, “The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important* In addition to *literariness* and *defamiliarisation*, Formalists can also be credited to the elaboration of other terms, such as *motif*, *theme*, *fabula*, *subject*, etc.

---

After the forced disintegration of the “Russian formal school”, some of its members moved to Prague where they contributed to the work of the Prague Linguistic Circle. The Circle consisted of scholars whose aim was to discuss various issues related to linguistics and literature. Its members included, among others, Vilém Mathesius, Nikolay Trubetzkoy, Jan Mukařovský, as well as the ex-formalist Roman Jakobson and René Wellek (they both later emigrated to the USA). In their discussions, the members introduced the **structuralist analysis** of literature (the movement is also referred to as Prague Structuralism). As Jan Mukařovský has put in his article “Structuralism in Aesthetics and in the Study of Literature”, “a structural whole *means* each of its parts, and inversely each of these parts means this and no other whole” (Fokkema & Ibsch, 1995, p. 34). Mukařovský’s main contribution to literary theory is, however, his claim that the nature of the aesthetic lies in the aesthetic function. “Although ‘there are certain preconditions in the objective arrangement of an object (which bears the aesthetic function) which facilitate the rise of aesthetic pleasure’, Mukařovský maintains that ‘any object or action, regardless of how it is organised’ can acquire an aesthetic function and thus become an object of aesthetic pleasure” (ibid., p. 32).

As a method of analysis, structuralism found its fullest manifestation in French social and human sciences. Its beginnings can be traced back to the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss whose theories were also transferred to literary studies. Other prominent French scholars who could be termed “structuralists” include Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida (later the founder of poststructuralist Deconstruction), Louis Althusser, Tzvetan Todorov, Michel Foucault, etc.

An increased development of psychology at the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe and the USA found its reflection also in literature, especially in what is termed **psychological criticism**. The first psychological critics were actually prominent psychologists – Freud and his disciple Jung. In his landmark “Creative Writers and Daydreaming” (1908, [online](#)), Freud characterised art as

---

an “adult” form of play (when people grow up, they cannot continue to use children’s games and play, so they take art as a substitute for them) whose aim lies in the wish-fulfilment and prevention of neuroses. Art is a sort of safety valve, being able to free human (readers’ and authors’) tensions, a form of daydreaming. One of the consequences of a Freudian line of psychological approach is an introduction of psychological terminology into literary criticism (the ego, super-ego, Oedipus complex, Electra complex, the subconscious). A slightly different direction in relating psychology to criticism was taken by Freud’s disciple and a founder of depth psychology, Jung who, in his “Psychology and Literature” (first published in 1930, considered an artist to be a medium for the channelling of the collective wisdom of humankind, of the so-called collective subconscious. “The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realize its purposes through him. As a human being he may have moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is ‘man’ in a higher sense - he is ‘collective man’, a vehicle and moulder of the unconscious psychic life of mankind” (Jung, 2023, p. 429).

In the second half of the twentieth century, psychological criticism was developed into a poststructural version of **psychoanalytic criticism**, drawing on Freud’s work, but using also the results of modern psychoanalytic research, especially the work of Lacan (1977), whose main argument is that the unconscious is structured as language. Interestingly, it provided space also to elaborate certain feminist issues (e.g. the topic of the “castration complex”). As with all critical approaches, psychological criticism has its advantages and disadvantages. While one of its greatest advantages is definitely an increased awareness of the complexity of human inner, irrational life (its instincts and motives), among its greatest disadvantages usually cited by critics is its privileging of human sexuality.

The Jungian stream of psychological criticism developed into **archetypal criticism** which tends to emphasise mythical patterns in literary works (*mythical criticism*). Archetypes signify “narrative designs, character types, or images

---

which are said to be identifiable in a wide variety of works of literature, as well as in myth, dreams, and even ritualized modes of social behaviour” (Abrams, op. cit., p. 201). Some well-known and frequent archetypes (occurring especially in myths) are the Promethean rebel-hero, femme fatale, life as a journey, death-rebirth theme, e.g. cycle of seasons, seasons of human life, etc (ibid., p. 202). The most distinguished representatives of this type of criticism are Bodkin (*Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*, 1958) and Frye (*The Anatomy of Criticism*, 1957).

As mentioned above, the late twentieth century witnessed a shift from structuralist to poststructuralist (or postmodern) critical theories, with their strong emphasis on “cultural aspect”. Although varied in their origin and objectives, these theories share a tendency to examine how certain cultural categories, like gender, class, and ethnicity, are governing principles of literary representation, how they help structure interpretive communities and reader responses. The most common topics of the “interdisciplinary” criticism include especially problems of formerly under-represented, or even downright persecuted, minority groups within a particular national or world literature. Thus, for example, there is a strong tendency for **feminist, postcolonial** as well as **lesbian and gay critics** to explore writings and voices excluded by dominant culture. Let us explain the “cultural studies” critical approach by a longer quotation which, unlike complicated theoretical constructions, shows its essence through its practical application:

“A college class on the American novel is reading Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*. The professor identifies African literary and cultural sources and describes some of the effects of the multilayered narrative structure, moving on to a brief review of the book’s feminist framework and its critique of contemporary American gender and racial attitudes. Students and professor discuss these briefly, analysing some key passages in the text.

A student raises her hand and notes that Steven Spielberg’s film version drew angry responses from many African American viewers. The discussion takes off: Did Alice Walker ‘betray’ African Americans with her harsh depiction of African

---

American men? Did Spielberg enhance this feature of the book or play it down? Are whites ‘fairly’ portrayed? Another hand goes up: ‘Is Walker promoting lesbianism?’ ‘Spielberg *really* played that down!’ the professor replies.

A contentious voice in the back of the room interjects: ‘Well, I just want to know what a serious film is doing with Oprah Winfrey in it.’ With the professor’s guidance, class members respond to the question, examining the interrelationships between race, gender, popular culture, the media, and literature. They ask about the conventions – both historical and contemporary – that operate within novels, on ‘The Oprah Winfrey Show’, and in Hollywood films. They conclude by trying to identify the most important conventions Walker employs in constructing individual characters and their communities in *The Color Purple*. This class is practicing “cultural studies” (Guerin, op. cit., p. 239 – 240).

The above quotation makes it very clear that the **cultural studies approach** is a departure from what has traditionally been taken for literary study, though, in a way, it also draws on some older historical and ethical approaches to literature. First of all, the “cultural studies” critic does not specialise in one specific area, but in his/her interpretation is able to make use also of other theories across human, social, and sometimes even natural sciences. This very frequently provokes attacks from “traditional” literary critics who accuse him/her of the lack of depth in one particular area, saying that nobody can be a good expert in many different fields at once, and thus of producing only superficial evaluations. With the lack of depth is related the second characteristic feature of the new, “postmodern” cultural studies, i.e. its political dimension. Most relevant critics draw their inspiration from the political agenda of the New Leftist orientations reconsidering traditional arrangement of power distribution in the society – alongside political, gender and ethnic lines. Thus, for a cultural critic, literature is not a universal phenomenon with universal human values, an essential phenomenon in its own right, but is deeply embedded in a particular culture, being just one of the areas making up a person’s or group’s particular social and political status, which is worth more investigation than universal human values.



---

This brings literature, with its values and tastes, from the high pedestal of modernism's idealism, and perhaps also elitism, down to everyday life with its pragmatic social, political and other problems.

The most political of all the current approaches, more or less related to the cultural studies agenda, seems to be the **Marxist criticism**. However, Western Marxist critics, unlike their colleagues from former Central and Eastern European Communist countries, draw on the presupposition that economics is just one of the elements in the system of relationships within a society. One of the most important American Marxists, Fredric Jameson, considers literary works to be symbolic acts through which people experience and perhaps criticise social relations. As indicated above, another prominent interdisciplinary approach to literature has been, at least since the 1960's, **feminist criticism**. Its focus is on the factor of sexual difference in the production, reception, analysis and evaluation of the works of literature. Feminist critics believe that literature has traditionally been dominated by male writers exploring typically male themes; therefore, they concentrate on literature written by women and about women. The representatives of feminist criticism include Mary Ellmann, Kate Millett, Judith Fetterley, Ellen Mores, Sandra Gilbert, Elaine Showalter, Nina Baym, and others. Broader cultural issues have also been addressed by a critical approach called *New Historicism*. Its main principle is to juxtapose literary and non-literary texts and to analyse their interaction. New Historicists claim that literary texts are, first of all, cultural productions bearing the signs of the place and time of their origin. They are never only aesthetic artefacts, but always also evidence of political, economic, cultural, or ideological issues.

## Assignment 3: Literary Criticism

Put the numbers of the following critical approaches to the appropriate category:

- |                         |                                 |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1) archetypal criticism | 9) biographical criticism       |
| 2) black criticism      | 10) Christian criticism         |
| 3) deconstruction       | 11) feminist criticism          |
| 4) formalism            | 12) gay criticism               |
| 5) historical criticism | 13) intertextual criticism      |
| 6) linguistic           | 14) Marxist criticism           |
| 7) New criticism        | 15) psycho-analytical criticism |
| 8) Structuralism        | 16) textual criticism           |

Author-centred critical approaches	Text-centred critical approaches	Reader-centred critical approaches
	16, ...	
Ideological critical approaches	Transcendental critical approaches	Language-centred approaches

---

## *4 Intertextuality, or literary text in context*

So far, we have considered literature in terms of its relation to “reality”. Unique meanings of many literary works, however, emerge also from one work’s text-specific relation to another work’s text.

For instance, the fan of detective stories is usually well aware of the conventions of the genre, the style of expression, action and dénouement. Such a reader knows what to expect from the new detective story just because of its similarities to other detective stories. These similarities (**allusions**) may be either direct or indirect. Sometimes they are obvious but sometimes hidden and they need to be “decoded” by readers. Some intertextual works thus resemble well-structured verbal rebuses bringing enjoyment to experienced and informed readers. The more intertextual relationships the reader can decode, the more fun and enjoyment they experience. This could be very well explained by pointing to one of the most famous works of world literature – a highly experimental novel by James Joyce entitled *Ulysses*, in which the author covers one day in the life of Mr. Bloom in Dublin. Mr. Bloom’s walking through Dublin reminds the informed reader of the journey of an ancient Greek hero Odysseus to Ithaca.

Literary texts influence each other; they “talk” together and are “in dialogue”. Such process of mutual influence and continual dialogue between literary texts is called **intertextuality**. Intertextuality stresses that any literary text must be (and actually is) read in the context of other texts. “Intertextuality is not a literary or rhetorical device, but rather a fact about literary texts – the fact that they are all intimately interconnected. This applies to all texts: novels, works of

---

philosophy, newspaper articles, films, songs, paintings, etc.“ (*LiteraryTerms.net*, [online](#)).

The term is derived from the Latin *intertexto*, which means “to intermingle while weaving”. According to *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* ([online](#), p. 121), “intertextuality is the name often given to the manner in which texts of all sorts (oral, visual, literary, virtual) contain references to other texts that have, in some way, contributed to their production and signification”. It was first introduced by the French semiotician Kristeva in the late sixties who advanced the ideas about the “dialogic nature of literature” introduced by the Russian scholar Bakhtin (Bachtin, 1980). Kristeva claimed that a literary work is not just a product of a single author, but of its relationship to other texts and to the structures of language itself: “[a]ny text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 66). She understood literary texts in two axes: a horizontal axis (connecting the author and reader of a text) and a vertical axis (connecting the text to other texts).

The idea of intertextuality subverted the new Critical and the structuralist visions of the text as a self-sufficient unit as well as the status of authorship”. Intertextuality posits the author more as the text’s “orchestrator” than “originator” (Barthes, 1974, p. 21). “A text is... a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations... The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them” Barthes, 1977, p. 146). In this view, a literary text is in fact a palimpsest (from Greek word meaning „again-scraped”; palimpsests were originally parchment manuscripts which were over-written several times mixing previous and the later texts).

Other authors invent their own typologies which make intertextuality more complex, many times even confusing. The year 1982 brought one of such complex, though, confusing works. Gérard Genette’s *Palimpsests* (originally published in 1982 in French, English translation in 1997) originated from the

---

author's attempt to overcome the confusion in the field of intertextuality, especially (and paradoxically) by introducing his own terminology.

Based on Kristeva's and Genette's theories and classifications, the following subtypes of intertextuality may be identified:

- a) *intertextuality* – includes quotations, plagiarisms, and allusions,
- b) *architextuality* – the relation between the text and other texts of the same genre, that is, determination of a text as part of a genre,
- c) *paratextuality* – the relation between a text and its “surrounding”, for example a title, preface, acknowledgements, footnotes, illustrations, annexes, etc.,
- d) *metatextuality* – an explicit or implicit commentary of one text on another text,
- e) *hypotextuality* (earlier hypertextuality but the original term has obtained a radically different meaning under the influence of electronic texts) – the relation between a text and its “predecessors”, or hypotexts, i.e. texts which are adapted, transformed or modified by later works (including translation, TV adaptation, parody, etc.),
- f) *hypertextuality* – the relationship between computer-based texts, breaking the traditional linearity of the text and enabling an interactive reading (c.f. Douglas, 2000).

To make things simpler, it is possible to use the term intertextuality for all relations which texts or their parts enter into. Intertextuality would then be a root term for other “textualities” (introtextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, etc.). Such understanding of intertextuality accords with its first use in Julia Kristeva's works and corresponds with Genette's concept of transtextuality, which he characterises as everything that brings a text into a relation, hidden or manifest, with other texts.

**Deliberate intertextuality** occurs when one text makes an intentional reference to another. It is out of the question that in Anglophone literatures it is William Shakespeare who inspired most such references from other authors. For example Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* draws not only on the *Bible* but also on two Shakespeare's tragedies *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. Captain Ahab, obsessed with

---

his effort to kill the great white whale, is an allusion to both protagonists of Shakespeare's plays. Like them, he tries to subvert the natural order of things and his actions are doomed from the start.

**Latent intertextuality** is unintentional and may be the product of the author's cultural identity or previous reading experience. Latent intertextuality is sometimes recognized by readers or critics and not by the author themselves. Latent allusions should not be mixed up with **plagiarism** which is deliberate, intentional stealing of another author's work without giving him/her credit.

The most obvious techniques to build intertextual networks of literary texts include **imitation, repetition, direct reference, allusion, quotation, echo, palimpsest, and parody**. They create new aesthetics because they bring into play multiple meanings and open the way to numerous open interpretations. Intertextual networks are also generated by cultural discourses and the media.

Even though intertextuality is as old as literature itself (and much older than the term), it has become one of the most prominent and significant characteristics of postmodern literature (for more, see Pokrivčáková, 1997, 1998). Umberto Eco, the author of the famed multi-layer postmodern novel *Il nome della rosa* (*The Name of the Rose*, 1980) famously said that while working on the book, he became aware of the old truth about literature that books always talk about other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told (Eco, 1984). Focusing on Anglophone postmodern literature, great postmodern parodies of classic fairy tales by Angela Carter (*The Bloody Chamber*, 1985; *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales*, 2005) and Margaret Atwood (*The Edible Woman* which is in a continual dialogue with Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's books*) could be named.

Another popular contemporary example of deliberate intertextuality is **fanfiction** when readers of original stories become authors and create (and publish) their own stories inspired by original ones.

---

Intertextuality is to be distinguished from **intermediality**, which is generally understood as the relationships between individual media / individual art forms that are manifested in a particular work of art (Jambor, [online](#)). For example, intermediality can be defined as the relationship of a particular literary text to at least one other media product, e.g. music or paintings (for more see Žilka, 2015; Žilková, 2012). Going back to William Shakespeare as a source of (intermedial) inspiration, Sergei Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (1935) or Disney classic *The Lion King* (1994) based on *Hamlet* can be named.

### **Assignment 4: Analysing intertextuality**

- 1) Find a text, or its passage with intertextual (intermedial) references. Are they easily recognizable? Or, do they require a skilled and experienced reader?
- 2) Based on your existing knowledge and research, identify their meaning. Find any themes and messages that can be linked to the analysed text.
- 3) Do the intertextual references compliment or question the expected meaning of the text?

---

## 5 *Language of literature*

*One day, there was a blind man sitting on the steps of a building with a hat by his feet and a sign that read: "I am blind, please, help."*

*Mark Twain was walking by and stopped to observe. He saw that the blind man had only a few coins in his hat. He dropped in more coins and, without asking for permission, took the sign and rewrote it. He returned the sign to the blind man and left.*

*That afternoon the publicist returned to the blind man and noticed that his hat was full of bills and coins. The blind man recognized his footsteps and asked if it was he who had rewritten his sign and wanted to know what he had written on it.*

*Twain responded: "Nothing that was not true. I just wrote the message a little differently." He smiled and went on his way.*

*The new sign read: "Today is Spring and I cannot see it."*

The anecdote, either based on reality or made up, pertinently illustrates the power of language and sometimes surprising results that the author may achieve by using appropriate communication devices.

In the first chapter, we already mentioned that imaginative literature is the art of words and words (understood as language) are the only instrument by which the literary work can evoke aesthetic feelings in readers. Therefore, writers employ special language, procedures, and techniques; they employ words and phrases with special sounding; they play with several meanings, deliberately creating ambiguities, using irrational phenomena, etc. The overall texture of these activities is referred to as **literary language or a literary style**. As the way a writer expresses what he/she wants to say, literary style is one of the essential



---

elements of each literary work (for more see Beard, 2003 and Burton and Carter, 2006). An analysis of literary style is usually done within **literary stylistics (poetics)**, unlike linguistic stylistics which is concerned more with the style of non-literary texts or style in general.

Literary style can be characterised by the following features:

- a) **aesthetic function is dominant** to informative or other functions of verbal communication (it is more important for literary works to bring aesthetic experience than to simply inform, persuade, advertise, etc.),
- b) **rich inventory of language elements and structures** (including “strange”, exceptional words and their combinations, poetisms, idioms, expressive syntax, dialectal elements, etc.),
- c) **variability** (based on original combinations of words, semantic shifts, etc.),
- d) **ambiguity** (unlike the so-called informative texts where the clarity of meaning, with only limited secondary associations, is important - semantic ambiguities enable literary texts to express more ideas with fewer words, or to aim at expressing “inexpressible”, often transcendental, meanings using imagery and symbolism,
- e) **emotionality and expressivity** (literary texts’ proper province is human subjectivity, that is, the expression of the author’s and the awakening of the reader’s emotions).

The following parts of the chapter bring a brief overview of the most prominent and rather frequently occurring literary devices related to sound, lexis, and syntax of literary texts. The presented short definitions of individual literary devices can be developed by individual study of dictionaries of literary terms (e.g. Baldick, 2015; Childs and Fowler, 2006; Cuddon, 2014; Gray, 1992; *Hyperlexikon literárnovedných pojmov*, [online](#); Žilka, 2006 and others).

### Literary diction

The concept of *diction* was for the first time defined by Aristotle (op. cit.) as “the mere metrical arrangement of the words (...) the expression of the meaning in words”. In most contemporary definitions, it is the writer’s choice of words. To

---

achieve artistic effect, writers decide between various ways of expression, between different kinds of words - common or uncommon, pleasant or unpleasant, dignified or humorous, clear or vague, emotional or neutral, historical or current, archaic or new, standard or dialectal, abstract and concrete, technical and colloquial, etc. In doing this, they aim to obtain the effect of the uncommon, different, strange, “other”. Shklovsky (op. cit, [online](#)), for example, defined the effect of literature as “defamiliarisation”, or “estrangement”. Look at the example of “estranged” language taken from Jerome K. Jerome’s humorous novel *Three Men in a Boat* (1889, [online](#)):

*“Slowly the golden memory of the dead sun fades from the hearts of the cold, sad clouds. Silent, like sorrowing children, the birds have ceased their song, and only the moorhen’s plaintive cry and the harsh croak of the corncrake stirs the awed hush around the couch of waters, where the dying day breathes out her last.*

*From the dim woods on either bank, Night’s ghostly army, the grey shadows, creep out with noiseless tread to chase away the lingering rearguard of the light, and pass, with noiseless, unseen feet, above the waving river-grass, and through the sighing rushes; and Night, upon her sombre throne, folds her black wings above the darkening world, and, from her phantom palace, lit by the pale stars, reigns in stillness.”*

Very often, however, the effect of the uncommon may be achieved also by the use of common words. Thus Wordsworth (1800, [online](#)) explains the choice of words in his poems in the following way: “The Reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and are utterly rejected as an ordinary device to elevate the style and raise it above prose. My purpose was to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language”. Wordsworth was not the only artist who aspired to create the strange by means of the common. Ernest Hemingway’s short stories, for

---

example, are made up of simple words, but contain a complex meaning, hidden in between the lines.

Along with using words from different areas of human activity and of different registers (poetical, colloquial, scientific, official, substandard, vulgar, etc), writers can also choose between **connotative** and **denotative** words. The difference between connotation and denotation is the difference between the primary, dictionary meaning of the word (denotation of *a head* is a part of the human body) and a sum of its secondary meanings coming from the word's power of association and suggestion (connotations of *a head* are "a leader"; "a ruler"; "the top of something", e.g. a head of the stairs; "an upper part of something", e. g. a head of a lake; "a part of a law", e. g. The Head II; "a piece", e. g. twenty head of cattle, a cabbage head, etc.). Going beyond the primary, denotative meanings, writers in their works frequently enter the world of ambiguities, allusions, irrationality, sensations, fantasy, and dreams. Secondary or connotative meanings may be generated by various techniques, usually by means of synonyms, homonyms, heteronyms, antonyms, poetisms, affective words, historically determined words and other groups of words.

A wide group of words typically used in literary texts is made up of **affective words**, characterized by their ability to evoke readers' emotions, positive or negative. They include **diminutives** (words marking small objects, e. g. a cub, a bud, a pebble), **hypocoristic words** or laudatives (diminutives of names, e. g. Robbie, Susie), **augmentatives** (opposites to diminutives, usually with negative implications, e. g. using "a paw" instead of a hand, using "knob", "noggin", „napper" instead of a head), **euphemisms** (words that try to soften rough or unpleasant meaning, for example he died = he went away, he went to rest), **dysphemisms** (opposites to euphemisms, words expressing by their unpleasant form the author's negative attitude), **pejoratives** (words expressing negative attitude, e. g. an idiot, a beast, a monster, etc.). In some literary texts an important role is played by **historically determined words**. Some of them are **neologisms** (newly created words, e. g. a clone-baby) and **archaisms** (words of

---

old origin, not frequently used in contemporary everyday speech, e. g. pronoun *thee*, conjunctions *heretofore*, *hereunto*, etc.).

**Synonyms** are words of different form, with close or nearly the same meaning (for example *delicious*, *tasty*, *appetizing*, *luscious*, *delectable*; *bizarre*, *foolish*, *grotesque*, *insane*, *imaginary*, etc.), or, to put it differently, words with close (nearly the same) denotations, but different connotations. They occur almost in every literary work as devices refreshing the style and reducing the unwanted repetition of key words.

**Homonyms**, less frequent than synonyms, are words with the same pronunciation, but different meaning and different etymological origin (for example *mine* – as a colliery, an explosive tool, and as a possessive pronoun). There are two types of homonyms: pure homonyms and homophones, that is, words with the same sound, but different spelling (e.g. *steel* and *steal*). Since the poetical effect of homonyms lies in their potential of verbal ambiguity, writers use them frequently in paronomasia, puns and other word games. There are some examples taken from *Professor Branestawm's Dictionary* (1975) by Norman Hunter:

*Aaron. What a wig has.*

*abominable. A piece of explosive swallowed by a male cow.*

*abundance. A waltz for cakes.*

*allocate. A greeting for Catherine.*

*allotment. A good deal is intended.*

*analyse. Ann doesn't tell the truth.*

Similarly rare but important for the style of literary texts are **heteronyms** (homographs), that is, words with the same spelling but different meaning and different pronunciation (for example *lead* as a verb and *lead* as metal material). Since many authors like playing with words of several meanings, homonyms and heteronyms are rather frequent in the literary text, usually as a source of humour.

**Antonyms** are words that are synonymous except for one feature, for example “good” and “bad” are alike in that they are adjectives representing quality or

---

value of something. They differ in the level of the quality or value, in other words, they reflect their opposite extremes. Antonyms are usually used in oxymoron, paradoxes, antitheses, puns, etc., but they are also good instruments for expressing deeper philosophical truths, as in William Shakespeare's *Sonnet 146*.

The sonnet is built up on sharp contrasts (soul ↔ earth/body; within ↔ outward, large ↔ short, life ↔ death, etc.) illustrating the moral imperative that the human body exists at the expense of the soul and the only way to save the soul for heaven is to neglect the body.

A unique group of words with specific tone and atmosphere, usually newly originated for the purposes of literary texts, and not used in any other style, are called **poetisms** (for example *thou, thee* = you, *thy*=your, *thilke* = that, *brindle* = shake, *slithy* = slimy + lithe).

### ***Sonnet 146***

William Shakespeare

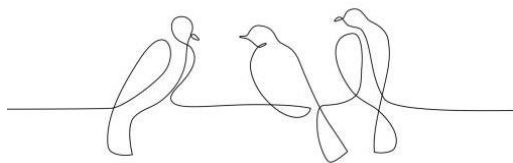
*Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,  
[...] these rebel powers that thee array;  
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,  
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?  
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,  
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?  
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,  
Eat up thy charge? is this thy body's end?  
Then soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,  
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;  
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;  
Within be fed, without be rich no more:  
So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,  
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.*

---

## Literary imagery

One of the functions of literature is to reflect the totality of human experience – in its complexity, variety, heterogeneity. As it can be understood from the following quotation, most of this experience, if not all, comes to us through our senses: thus the experience „of a spring day may consist of *seeing* blue sky and white clouds, budding leaves and daffodils, of *hearing* robins and bluebirds singing in the early morning; of *smelling* damp earth and blossoming hyacinths; and of *feeling* a fresh wind against my cheek” (Arp and Johnson, 2002, p. 566). To express such sensations adequately, writers must find means which would represent their intensive sensuality and convey the impressions of seeing, hearing, smelling, movement. Verbal devices which enable the literary texts to evoke sensual effects are called **images**. A complex of sensual images (an image = a verbal reference to something that can be experienced through senses) is frequently referred to as **imagery**.

In spite of the name, imagery is not restricted to pictorial impressions (**visual imagery**), but includes also **auditory** (sounds), **gustatory**, **olfactory**, **tactile** (touch), or **thermal** (temperature) images. Moreover, imagery can be **static**, **dynamic**, **free** (varies from person to person) or **tied** (fixed in some cultural community). A special case is **synaesthetic imagery** which mixes two senses, for example *colour of sound*. The understanding of patterns of images, whether literal or figurative, can enrich readers with new and deeper meanings, either in poetry or prose. Images make literary worlds concrete, familiar and plausible as well as imaginary, strange and surrealistic (see, for example, some of the poems produced by American *Imagists*).



What can you see in the picture? A simple line or can you recognize anything else?

---

The poem by Claude McKay named “Spring in New Hampshire” may be used as a clear example of complex imagery.

***Spring in New Hampshire***

***(To J.L.J.F.E)***

*Too green the springing April grass,  
Too blue the silver-speckled sky,  
For me to linger here, alas,  
While happy winds go laughing by,  
Wasting the golden hours indoor,  
Washing windows and scrubbing floors.*

*Too wonderful the April night,  
Too faintly sweet the first May flowers,  
The stars too gloriously bright,  
For me to spend the evening hours,  
When fields are fresh and streams are leaping,  
Wearied, exhausted, dully sleeping.*

In the poem, the elements of visual imagery (“green grass”, “blue” and “silver-speckled sky”, “golden”, “windows”, “night”, “bright stars”) are combined with elements of audial (“laughing”, “scrubbing”, the sound of leaping stream), thermal (“wind”, “evening”, “night”) and gustatory (“sweet” flowers) imagery. The result is a rich and vivid reflection of sensual perceptions expressing the special mood of spring.

The study of literary imagery belongs both to psychology and literary theory. While psychology is interested in the processes of the origin of various types of images in human minds, literary theory deals with *verbal imagery* (“pictures made out of words”; Lewis, 1947). According to the level of complexity, theory recognizes three levels of imagery:

- 1) the “simplest” level of imagery is formed by **direct descriptions of visible objects and scenes**,

- 
- 2) imagery becomes more complicated when, instead of simple descriptive words, writers use **tropes** (simile, metaphor and its subtypes),
  - 3) the most complex level of imagery is represented by **symbol** and its subtypes (allegory, myth, grotesque) and other multilevel ways of creating verbal images.

## **Tropes**

**Tropes** are words or clusters of words which, in addition to evoking sensual impressions, can express secondary meanings or, to put it bluntly, something else than what they literally say. According to Wellek and Warren (op. cit., p. 186), texts made up of tropes produce “the ‘oblique’ discourse which speaks in metonyms and metaphors, partially comparing worlds, précising its themes by giving them translations into other idioms”. Unlike “simple” images, the effect of tropes is more complex, because they use connotation to appeal, in a unique, non-referential way, both to senses and intellect. They are sometimes taken to be synonymous with **figures of speech**; however, in traditional poetics these two means are contrasted, since tropes are understood as affecting primarily the meaning of words, while figures of speech involve also the order or placing of words (for example anaphora, inversion, syntactic devices, etc.).

As the name suggests (trope – turn), tropes are based on the turning, shifting of readers’ attention from the primary significance of a word or a phrase to their secondary meaning. They are based on analogy because they always point to some other meaning than the literal one. Virtually all of them consist of **tenor** and **vehicle**. The “tenor” (in Latin ‘holder’) describes the first, starting, non-figurative denotation of the comparison; the “vehicle” marks the other denotation to which the tenor is compared. In the symbolical comparison by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. “*And like a thunderbolt he (the eagle) falls*”, the eagle is the tenor, and a thunderbolt is the vehicle. By comparing two dissimilar things (an eagle and a thunderbolt) are connected and the reader’s attention is set on their common features – speed, strength, and grace.



---

*The sun is a red, red joy* (Vachet Lindsay)

(“the sun” in the function of the tenor, is compared to a feeling of pure happiness, “a joy” = the vehicle, while this comparison is emphasised by mentioning red colour, which is a real colour of the sun in the morning, as well as the symbol of love, life and energy)

*Life is tale told by an idiot...* (William Shakespeare)

(“life”, the tenor, is compared to a chaotic and not well-organized “tale”, the vehicle, as if told by an idiot)

*Shall I compare thee to a summer day?* (William Shakespeare)

(“you” as the tenor is compared to “a summer day”, the vehicle, which expresses the positive, even love relation of the lyrical speaker to its addressee)

In the history of literary criticism, there have been several schools and authors especially interested in figurative language: New Criticism (W. K. Wimsatt), Russian formalism (Roman Jakobson), deconstruction (Harold Bloom; Geoffrey Hartman), etc.

Any trope is based on comparison, thus perhaps the simplest and most essential trope is **simile**. A simile compares two seemingly unlike things by using explicit means of comparison, words “like” or “as”. It serves as a base for all other figures whose poetic effect is often hidden and complex. Many similes have been fixed in an everyday language (e. g. as red as blood, as strong as iron, sly as a snake, etc.). To refresh their texts, authors tend to search for new, original similes, as those in the poem “Wind” by Ted Hughes:

*“The hills had new places, and **wind** wielded  
Blade-like, luminous black and emerald,  
**Flexing like the lens of a mad eye.**”*

*“The wind flung a magpie away and a black-  
Back **gull bent like an iron bar** slowly.”*

*“...**The house**  
**Rang like some fine green goblet** in the note  
That any second would shatter it.”*

---

As a special case, **negative simile** can occur (e.g. in Shakespeare's sonnet "*My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun*").

Analogically to simile, **metaphor** compares two seemingly unlike things, but without using "like" or "as", for example, *Your words are music to my ears*. The poem "The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyes incorporates the following set of three metaphors:

***The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,***  
***The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,***  
***The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,...***

Very often metaphor is thus referred to as an implicit comparison. In its transfer of meaning, it is based on either obvious or, very frequently, distant, but inherent, similarity in the appearance of both objects of comparison – the tenor and the vehicle. The tenor "holds" the first meaning, being the object or concept from which the comparison starts. It is implicitly compared to another object or concept called vehicle. The metaphorical mechanism is completed when the vehicle connects the two meanings and, consequently, helps carry human attention to an unexpected flash of the third, poetic and often philosophical, meaning or insight. The above mechanism makes metaphor draw the reader's attention to the implicit correspondences between the things, to the creation of shortcuts to new, fresh, instantaneous, unexpected, surprising, perspectives on things, which would otherwise have to be explained through indirect descriptions. Thus, metaphors show the world differently way by setting connections between various things.

Lazar (2003) names the following functions of metaphors giving thus explanation of why they are so frequent not only in literature, but in all types of written and oral texts:

- a) they help readers understand and idea more clearly,
- b) they play with language to create pleasure and a sense of beauty,
- c) they help create an emotional response to something, and
- d) they make the message more memorable.

---

Like similes, some metaphors have been used frequently in everyday language and, as a consequence, lost their poetic tension. They are referred to as **dead metaphors** (*leg of a table, back of a chair*, etc.). Considering their frequent occurrence in language, some authors suppose that language is metaphorical (that is, each word and structure is based on metaphor). In his famous “Defence of Poetry” (written in 1821, first published in 1840, available [online](#)), Percy Bysshe Shelley even claims that the language of first people originated from metaphors: “Their language is vitally metaphorical; that is it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until the words which represent them become through time signs for portions and classes of thoughts, instead of pictures of integral thoughts”.

Some metaphors are very old, re-occurring in the literature of all nations, thus taking the archetypal meaning. For example, there are many works comparing human life to a journey, to a path, or a tale; death is often compared to sleep, and woods are used to represent problems:

***A journey of thousand miles must begin with a single step. (Lao Tzu)***

***Every path has its puddle. (Old English proverb)***

***Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –***

***I took the one less travelled by,... (Robert Frost)***

***These woods are lovely, dark, and deep,***

***But I have promises to keep,***

***And miles to go before I sleep,***

***And miles to go before I sleep. (Robert Frost)***

The following lines from William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (first performed in 1606, available [online](#)) are great examples of **complex metaphor**, which is a multi-level metaphor combining several images in one resulting picture.

---

*Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
the way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
that struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing.*

In the first three lines, two metaphorical projections are established: **life is a year** and **life is a journey**. Life is here manifested as both a sequence of days and as a path leading to death. In the fourth and fifth lines, two previous metaphors are combined with a new image of **life as light**. In the sixth, seventh and eighth lines, **a man is seen as a player** playing his short insignificant part on a stage (**a stage = world, life = an individual dramatic play** that lasts only an hour). The meaning of life as a dramatic play is supplemented by the metaphor of **life as a story** told by an idiot, which means that human life is seen as chaotic, meaningless, and not worth of paying attention to.

Metaphorical projection is the basis of all the following tropes (metonymy, synecdoche, personification, epithet, etc.) that many authors consider to be types of metaphors.

While the metaphor is based largely on external similarity, **metonymy** capitalises on the existence of a certain internal relationship between the involved objects or concepts (“Westminster” as a metonymy of the Houses of Parliament, “Downing Street” as a metonymy of the Prime-Minister or his office). Metonymies are, again, used not only in poetic language, but in our everyday speech as well (*I read Shakespeare, champagne* as wine coming from the Champagne area, *orange* as the colour of a special kind of fruit, etc.).

---

**Synecdoche** is usually considered to be a kind of metonymy. It represents the object through its origin (for example, *she wears fox* = she wears the coat of fox fur; *I like Shakespeare* = I like plays by Shakespeare), or quantity relationships. In the latter case, two kinds of synecdoche can be recognized: *pars pro toto* (substituting the whole through its parts, for example, *Lend me a hand*), and *totum pro parte* (expressing the parts through the whole, for example *The city sleeps* = the inhabitants of the city sleep).

A special type of metaphor called **personification** (*prosopopeia*) gives human forms and characteristics to an animal, object, or idea, for example “*my little horse must think it queer/ to stop without a farmhouse near*” (R. Frost). Personification is frequent in fables, myths and fairy tales and is related to allegory. Sometimes a metaphorical image can be expressed by just one adjective or adverb, for example *azure sky, gusty wind, sweet grass, or stony eyes*. Such a type of metaphor is named **epithet**. Close to the structure of the epithet is **oxymoron**, which is an adjective or adverb of contrasting meaning to the related noun – for example *sweet hatred, painful joy, lazy bee*, etc. Such connection of two contradictory words brings fresh, expressive effect to the literary text.

**Hyperbole** is an exaggeration of meaning usually with comic, humorous, or satirical effects, for example *She told me ocean of words and said nothing*. Opposite to hyperbole is **litotes** (understatement), i. e. such combination of words that downplays the seriousness of something, usually with comic or humorous effect, for example, “*One could do worse than be a swinger of birches*” (Robert Frost).

**Paradox** is a combination of words that creates a witty contradiction that, surprisingly, is truthful upon closer inspection, for example *Never say never, or The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous*” (Oscar Wilde).

**Allusion** introduces secondary meaning of the word (words) by referring to some work of art or literature, to some well-known story, character, or situation, for example *His love for Tracy was his Achilles heel*.

---

**Periphrasis** states a longer descriptive and figurative phrase instead of the connotative, and usually shorter expression, for example *the country of bolero, corrido and flamenco* = Spain.

### **Symbol and other multilevel ways of building imagery**

**Symbol** is a universal term used in logics, mathematics, semantics, semiotics, epistemology, aesthetics, etc. A symbol can be defined as any object that suggests a larger meaning than itself. In such cases, a symbol often overlaps with trope or figurative language. It has to be said, however, that while figurative language pertains to connotations, symbol involves both denotative and connotative meanings, i.e. it designates itself as well as represents something else, e.g. Moby Dick in Melville's novel is a whale but, at the same time, it symbolizes nature and its strength (Ferber, 2002).

Symbols used in literary works are usually referred to as **poetic symbols**. They differ from, say, abstract symbols in the clarity of reference which is, in the case of poetic symbols, more diffused, heterogenic, and indefinite.

The complexity of a symbol lies in the fact that, unlike an image, a symbol combines many meanings which are organized in layers (primary, secondary, etc.). For example, in the poem "The Raven" by the American poet Edgar Allan Poe (first published in 1845, available [online](#)), the raven evokes the sensations of, darkness, horror, death, loss, remembrance, transcendence, depression:

*And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting  
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;  
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,  
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;  
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor  
Shall be lifted — nevermore!*

One of the most frequent symbols in literature is rose. In William Blake's poem from his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (first published in 1794, available [online](#)), a rose stands as a symbol of vitality which is inevitably destroyed:

---

*O Rose, thou art sick!  
The invisible worm,  
That flies in the night,  
In the howling storm,  
  
Has found out thy bed  
Of crimson joy;  
And his dark secret love  
Does thy life destroy.*

However, if influenced by the frequent occurrence of a rose as a symbol of love and feminine beauty, some interpreters can view a rose here as symbolizing a loss of virginity (Danziger and Johnson, op. cit., p. 31). The ability to interpret symbols is important and even crucial to an appropriate understanding of a literary text. Perrine and Arp (1992, pp. 197-198) offer some suggestions for identifying and understanding literary symbols:

1. The story itself must furnish a clue that a detail is to be taken symbolically - symbols nearly always signal their existence by emphasis, repetition, or position.
2. The meaning of a literary symbol must be established and supported by the entire context of the story. A symbol has its meaning inside not outside a story.
3. To be called a symbol, an item must suggest a meaning different in kind from its literal meaning.
4. A symbol has a cluster of meanings.

Symbols play a very important role in literary language. Symbols are usually used to represent abstract ideas or complicated images to seem more real, more interesting, and better understood. In some literary movements they were constitutive. One cannot, for example, think about Romanticism or symbolism without an immediate reference to symbols. They play an important role also in mythology, where they act as **archetypes**, representing universal human experience (summer = life, full vitality; winter = stillness, death). Using symbols

---

helps authors to express general human experience by means of concrete images and thus communicate ideas which are not fully obvious to the reader.

A literary figure which is frequently compared to the symbol is **allegory**. One of the most famous comparisons of the two terms can be found in Paul de Man's essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality" in which, de Man (1983, p. 188) says that "[this] appeal to the infinity of a totality constitutes the main attraction of the symbol as opposed to *allegory*, a sign that refers to one specific meaning and thus exhausts its suggestive potentialities once it has been deciphered". Put into a simpler language, allegory is based on one-to-one reference (dove representing peace), as opposed to the symbol which uses one thing to point to a multiplicity of diffused meanings (raven representing darkness, horror, death, etc). Because of the mechanism of allegorical representation, literary texts containing allegories are frequently considered less artistic and more didactic. In Anglophone literatures, there are many examples of influential texts based on allegory, for example, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, first published in 1678, available [online](#); Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, first published in 1850, available [online](#); or George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, first published in 1945, available [online](#)). In addition to characterising the allegorical mechanism of representation, it is useful to mention another distinction: that between allegory as a trope (e. g. dove = peace) or an allegory as a genre (a literary work using many allegories to point to a hidden meaning that was popular, especially in times of oppression, when certain things could not be said openly). To conclude, allegory is a very old genre (and figure), occurring in the Bible, medieval *morality plays* (using characters to represent moral values) as well as in modern literature.

**Grotesque** is a literary trope with a special type of complex image (transformed from fine arts to literature) which is created by paradoxical and disharmonic mixing of human, animal, and plant characteristics, usually in exaggerated or even in monstrous forms, by deforming reality, hyperbolization and by understanding the human existence as a part of cosmic harmony. The mixture of heterogeneous elements creates a specific receptive effect. Grotesque as a genre is usually understood as a short prosaic text with dominant



---

grotesque imagery. Examples of grotesque can be found in dramatic works by William Shakespeare and in short stories by Edgar Allan Poe. In cinematography, grotesque is reflected in short movies by Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, etc.). In contemporary literature, four types of grotesque can be recognized:

- a) **fantastic/magical/carnival** grotesque (for more, see Pokrivčáková, 2002),
- b) **demonic/tragic** grotesque (e. g. holocaust novels such as *The Painted Bird* by Jerzy Kosiński, published in 1965),
- c) **satirical** grotesque represented by Lawrence Sterne and Christian Morgensterne, and
- d) **transcendental grotesque** which was theoretically studied by Ruskin in his influential 3-volume book *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853).

### Sound characteristics of literary language

Literary texts have characteristic sounding as well. Typical is **auditory imagery**, that is, evoking images of sounds or imitating natural sounds, for example, sounds produced by animals, murmuring of water, chattering of leaves, etc. The higher level of sound imagery is called **sound symbolism**, which is the process of using different sounds produced by the speech organs to carry any special meaning.

The most distinguishing element of specific literary sound is **rhythm** which derives from the patterns of stress in words or utterances. Apart from other language styles, rhythm in literature tends to be regular, mostly in poetry. Individual units of rhythm and rhythmical patterns will be discussed in detail in the section on poetry.

A very frequent sound device of literary language is **alliteration**, which is the repetition of speech sounds in a sequence of nearby words, being a characteristic feature especially of Old English and Middle English poetry (such as *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*). Two types of alliteration can be recognized: **assonance**, which is the repeating of vowels, and **consonance**, which is the repeating of consonants with a change in the intervening vowel (for example live – love; ding – dong; in a summer, what soft was the sun...).

---

Alliteration enables the author to reinforce the meaning of words consisting of repeated sounds, to link related words, and to provide tone colour.

Some authors pay attention to the special psychological effects of some language sounds. It is believed, for example, that plosives [d], [g], [b], [m] are dark and their repetition evokes the feeling of fear, sadness, and tragedy. On the contrary, repetition of remaining plosives [p] and [t] brings the effect of energy, power and freshness. The sound [l] is marked as a “liquid sound”, because its sounding resembles the sound of running water. Similarly, fricatives [f], [v], [θ], [ð], [h], [s], [z], [ʃ], [ʒ] provoke the effect of pulsing energy (sound of streaming air) with both pleasant (freshness) and unpleasant (sound of tearing, smashing, exploding, etc.) connotations. Grouping of short vowels causes a quicker tempo of reading; and long vowels determine slower tempo of the text.

If alliteration appears at the end of a line or a sentence, **rhyme** is built there.

**Euphony** is a term applied to passages which sound pleasant and smooth, or musical. It evokes feelings of peace, comfort, pleasure and other pleasant emotions like in the poem “I like to see It Lap the Miles” by Emily Dickinson:

*I like to see it lap the Miles-  
And lick the Valleys up-  
And stop to feed itself at Tanks-  
And then – prodigious step...*

**Cacophony** (or dissonance), on the contrary, is the language which sounds harsh, rough, and unmusical. It evokes feeling of discomfort, nervousness, terror or other unpleasant things as in the poem “The Wreck of the Deutschland” by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Cacophony here is built upon complex consonance of fricatives [ʃ], [θ], [s], [f] combined with a “liquid” [l], which emphasises destroying and killing power of war:

*Oh, we lash with the best or worst,  
Word last! How a lush-kept plush-capped sloe  
Will, mouthed to flesh-burst,  
Gush! – flush the man, the being with it, sour or sweet  
Brim, in a flash, full!*

---

**Onomatopoeia** (or echoism) is applied to a word or a combination of words, the sound of which imitates the sound it denotes, for example *hiss, buzz, rattle, bang, murmur, “tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch”, “murmuring of innumerable bees”*.

One of the most obvious examples of an author's purposeful use of sound qualities is the poem by Robert Browning entitled “Meeting At Night” (1845).

In the first two lines, a three-coloured and many-shaped visual image of the grey sea, black land and yellow moon is combined with a peaceful audial image of the sea at night (seven-time repeating of a “liquid l” evokes the sound of the calm sea surface, here in combination with repeated “dark” consonant [d] and “low” vowel “o”. The “liquid” quality of the first two lines extends to the third and fourth lines (six more repetitions of [l]), now yet combined with more bright and energetic [p], [t] and [l]. The changed sound of the second couplet imitates the sound of water beaten by oars (the metaphor of the waves waking up from their sleep, “fiery ringlets” made after contact of an oar with water, etc.). The audial quality of the second couplet, in contrast to the “calmness” of the first couplet, expresses the eagerness of a man rowing a boat and hurrying up to see his girlfriend. The evidence of the contrast in the audial atmosphere is seen also in the pair of rhyming words: land – low; leap – sleep.

### ***Meeting At Night***

Robert Browning

*The grey sea and the long black land;  
And the yellow half-moon large and low;  
And the startled little waves that leap  
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,  
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,  
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.*

---

*Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;  
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;  
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch  
And blue spurt of a lighted match,  
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,  
Than the two hearts beating each to each!*

The sound of the third couplet is different from the previous two. As a man reaches the beach, no other “l” appears in the couplet. Instead, plosives “p” and “k” prevail here, imitating thus the sound of a boat hitting a shore. The last two words of the couplet, “slushy sand” create an onomatopoeical image of a man walking on a sandy beach. Onomatopoeia is again used in the fifth couplet. The man, after rowing the sea, walking a mile on a beach and running through three farms reaches his destination and knocks on the window (“tap at the pane”) of his girlfriend who immediately strikes a match (“a quick sharp scratch”), lights up and the romance can start.

The poem is a great example of how audial imagery is able not only to enforce the effect of visual images but also to build the atmosphere of the literary work by itself.

### **Literary syntax**

The poetic qualities of literary styles are recognizable not only on the level of diction, imagery, and sound but also on the level of sentence structure. **Figures of speech play an important role in literary syntax**, that is, rhetorical devices based on changes in word order or positions of words within a sentence, as well as by various deformations in sentence structures that bring syntactic ambiguity to the literary texts.

Although the majority of sentences in literary texts follow the rules of standard form of language, there are some structures and constructions which deviate standard language. These deviations are frequently based on breaking grammar rules (inversion, anacoluthon, zeugma, parenthesis, attraction, and

---

amplification), omission or overusing of some linguistic elements (asyndeton, polysyndeton, ellipsis, aposiopesis, propositiopesis), and repetition of words or structures (anaphora, epiphora, and tautology). Such deviations are always obvious, catching the reader's attention and bringing expressive (affective) qualities into the literary texts.

Literary syntax as a means of communicating mood, attitude, or characterization, always has to be analyzed along with other elements of style (diction, imagery). An example can be taken from the favourite nursery rhyme *Incy Wincy Spider*:

*Incy Wincy Spider climbed up the water spout,  
down came the rain drop and washed poor Incy out,  
Out came the sunshine and dried up all the rain,  
And Incy Wincy Spider climbed up that spout again.*

The brevity of a tiny, never giving-up spider is emphasized by showing it in the situation when it goes through two basic contracts: going up when sunshine and falling down when it is raining. The key words “up”, “spout”, “rain”, “out” are repeated to make the general image of the nursery rhyme catchier. **Repetition** of words, phrases, lines, even whole paragraphs or stanzas is an important and rather frequent syntactic device of literary language. Along with the effect of increasing importance and putting stress on the repeated words and other items, repetition also helps to keep the literary text coherent and united.

In the above-mentioned nursery rhyme the contrast is emphasized by the reversal of a normal order of words in the second and third lines. Such a syntactic device is called **inversion** (also **anastrophe**). By means of inversion the key words “down” and “out” are moved to the most exponent, i. e. initial position in the lines.

Moreover, not only independent words but even the whole inverted syntactic structure of the second line (“down came the rain”, i.e. adverbial – verb – subject) is later echoed in the third line (“out came the sunshine”: adverbial – verb – subject). Such repetition of the syntactic structure, built upon the principle of

---

antonymy, is the basis for another syntactic figure called **antithesis**. Opposite to antithesis is **parallelism**, when the structure is repeated to emphasize related or similar ideas, e. g. *“First, I had the great pleasure of reading tales, over and over, to my children. Then, they had the great pleasure – and triumph – of reading tales, faster and faster, back to me”*.

Some syntactic devices are assessed as negative in other language styles, but in literary texts they are used to express the mental state of characters or to characterize (even to mock) some individuals or social groups. One of them is **tautology**, which is the repetition of already conveyed meaning by useless or redundant words. **Zeugma** is a figure of speech in which a word is used to modify or govern two or more words although appropriate to only one of them or making a different sense with each, as in the sentence *Mr. Pickwick took his hat and his leave* (Charles Dickens). **Parenthesis** is a phrase (and usually marked by brackets or dashes) inserted into a sentence or passage with which it is not grammatically connected. The example is taken from Kenneth Grahame’s book *The Wind in the Willows*: *“Do you know, I’ve never been in a boat before in all my life.” “What?” cried the Rat, open-mouthed. “Never been in a – you never – well, I – what have you been doing, then?”* Parenthesis is here, as usual, used to express the speaker’s emotional state, surprise and excitement.

**Attraction** is a change in the form of one linguistic element caused by the proximity of another element, for example, *She smiled and leaved*. **Aposiopesis** is the term marking an unfinished utterance. As a usual rhetorical device, it has got the form of sudden breaking off the utterance (a sentence, clause) without continuing. The emotional effect of aposiopesis (here together with proposiopesis and ellipses) is well illustrated in the following extract from *It was a Dark and Stormy Night* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg: *“What kind of beach is this? said the chief.*

*“...racing in from the right ...and massive sharks churning up the waters of the bay, and...” Antonio cudgelled his brain for more ideas.” A crocodile-infested swamp behind them, killer parrots in the palm trees, and...and...” He paused again to catch his breath and work out, if he could, what happened next.*

---

Similar to aposiopesis is **proposiopesis**, which is an utterance without beginning, for example ...*and thus he left*.

Both asyndeton and polysyndeton are easily recognizable and emotionally strong syntactic figures. **Asyndeton** is the omission of a conjunction between the parts of a sentence, e.g. *We played, sang, danced*. **Polysyndeton** is the overuse of conjunctions in close succession and positions are not strictly necessary, for example *The baby cooed **and** laughed **and** rocked the pram/ When I came in, **and** I was embarrassed* (Seamus Heaney).

**Ellipsis** (also **eclipsis**) is the term marking the omission of words or parts of a sentence. **Anaphora** is the repetition of a word or a phrase at the beginning of successive sentences or clauses. Anaphora is the basic principle of composition in the poem *My Heart's in the Highlands* by Robert Burns.

***My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,***  
***My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer,***  
*A-chasing the wild deer and following the roe –*  
***My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go!***

On the contrary to anaphora, **epiphora** is the repetition of a word or a phrase at the end of a sentence, or clause. Examples can be found in the nursery rhyme *Incy Wincy Spider*, in which the word “out” is repeated at the end of the second and the beginning of the third line, as well as in the poem *My Heart's in the Highlands*- repeating the phrase “a-chasing the deer” in the second and the third lines.

---

## Assignment 5: Identifying literary devices

Identify the elements of literary language in the following literary fragments:

- 1 *In the bleak midwinter*
- 2 *Frosty wind made moan*
- 3 *Earth stood hard as iron*
- 4 *Water like a stone*
- 5 *My love is like a red, red rose.*
- 6 *He is a huge hill of flash.*
- 7 *Three grey geese in a field grazing;*
- 8 *Grey were the geese and green was the grazing*
- 9 *And custom lie upon thee with a weight*
- 10 *Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life.*
- 11 *My little nephew is a real monkey.*
- 12 *Curtains in deep coral would have looked heavy, but the sunshine that streams through the blinds keeps the overall effect light.*
- 13 *I am weaker than a woman's tear.*
- 14 *Eye, gazelle, delicate wanderer,*
- 15 *drinker of horizon's fluid line.*
- 16 *Could you put a thread to the eye of a needle?*
- 17 *Time's cruel hand*
- 18 *The city that never sleeps*
- 19 *A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other*
- 20 *like pale flags, twisting them up toward the frosted wedding-cake of the ceiling,*  
*and then rippled over the wine-coloured rug, making a shadow on it as the wind does at sea.*
- 21 *She told me ocean of words and said nothing.*
- 22 *The skin of the fowl was crisped to gold, odoriferously swathed in a thick creamy sauce, golden also, piled with fleshy mushrooms.*
- 23 *Just because we are deaf, it does not mean we have nothing between our ears.*
- 24 *She's been working on the project all week, but she's starting to run out of steam.*



---

25 I hate this country of cows, flies and machos.  
26 The face of the clock was blue with shining silver stars.  
27 You bite a hand that feeds you.  
28 I would like to buy Styron.  
29 Joseph entered into rest.  
30 The love came and kissed me.  
31 He would wait for me for ages but I will never come.  
32 I'll look to like, if looking liking move  
33 Hope is a thing with feathers.  
34 Goodbye, English rose  
35 I know this is a joyful trouble for you.  
36 The banjos rattled and the tambourines  
37 Jing-jing-jangled in the hands of queens!  
38 Helen of Troy was not a bed-looking woman.  
39 My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;  
40 It rains and the wind is never weary;  
41 My thoughts still cling to the mouldering Past;  
42 But the hopes of youth fall thick in the breast;  
43 and the days are dark and dreary.  
44 One short sleep past, we wake eternally  
45 and death shall be no more; Death, thou shall die.  
46 She was staring at the back of a chair.  
47 Your words are music to my ears.  
48 I close my eyes, i'm goin` out of my head  
49 Lost in a fairytale ...  
50 It can be a sweet dream or a beautiful nightmare  
51 You do not know what you have until you lose it.  
52 'Twas brillling and the slithy toves  
53 Did gyre and gimble in the wabe  
54 All mimsy were the borogroves  
55 And the mome raths outgrabe  
56 My father saw red when I told him I was going out with my friends.  
57 Don't go on that side of the city, it's a grey area.  
58 My friend gave me the green light to head to his home.

- 
- 59 *I'm a bitch I'm a lover*  
60 *I'm a child I'm a mother*  
61 *I'm a sinner I'm a saint*  
62 *I do not feel ashamed*  
63 *I'm your hell I'm your dream*  
64 *I'm nothin' in between*  
65 *You know, you wouldn't want it any other way*  
66 *Doreen is a mule when it comes to changing her travel plans.*  
67 *The factory town was a dreary place; its houses told a sad story of poverty and neglect.*  
68 *On the trellis, a weedy vine was crowding the old rosebush out of its rightful place.*  
69 *Her words were music to his ear.*  
70 *Wow, this exercise is not bad at all! It is not an ordinary task.*

---

## 6 *Literary kinds and genres*

Even though each work of art is unique and individual, it also displays features which can be found in other works as well. Such features allow critics to place it into a larger group, called *genre* (from Latin *genus* = type, kind). A part of literary theory studying genres is called *genology*.

As for the content of the concept of *genre*, that is what is understood by the term, there are differences between, say, Slovak and Anglo-American approach. While for the former genres tend to be rather narrower groupings (novels, poems), the latter one views them freely, including the above-mentioned novels or poems as well as broader concepts of lyric, epic, and drama, which in Slovak literary theory are referred to as ***literary kinds***.

Why are literary works grouped into genres? The most obvious reason would probably lie in the fact that readers as well as critics like the idea of ordering and classification since it puts them on a more secure ground and suggests possible meanings or ways of interpretation even before the reading of a work. If one knows that a work is a short story, one naturally expects a short, relatively compressed text, with a few characters depicted through the language of suggestion. If, on the contrary, a work is a poem, one is able to “get ready” for a different set of qualities – extensive use of tropes, the meaning hidden in connotations, etc.

One of the earliest generic divisions can be traced back as far as to antiquity and its classification of literary works into dramatic, epic and lyric. Throughout historical development, two of these groupings have undergone a transformation (Aristotle’s *lyric* evolved into present-day poetry, *epic* into *prose*), while the third one, *drama*, stayed more or less the same.

---

In some historical periods, generic divisions were used almost for “ideological” purposes. Such divisions were, for example, very strongly felt in Renaissance and Classicism when some genres were considered to be “high” (tragedy) and therefore more valuable, while some were “low” (comedy) and thus less valuable. In some other historical periods or movements, ideological criteria were substituted for artistic ones. Thus while Romanticism gave preference to poetic genres, realists made extensive use of prose. Here the differences stem from different views of reality and art as well as different social, technological and philosophical backgrounds for artistic activities. This can be demonstrated also by contemporary attitudes which emphasise interdisciplinarity, lack of strict divisions and limits, and thus naturally “ignore” traditional artistic labelling, introducing, instead of them, many new sub-genres and hybrids.

Although generic “mixtures” are typical mainly for the contemporary artistic scene, it has never been simple to strictly define features typical for individual genres, for great literary works have always been complex and resistant to systemising efforts. To decide to which genre a particular literary text belongs is usually a very difficult task, as the numerous genres can overlap and mix and one work can bear characteristics of two or more genres. Despite this, a generic approach to the study of literature is still considered to be useful. The following are the most frequent reasons given by some literary critics to demonstrate this usefulness (Danziger and Johnson, op. cit., p. 85):

- 1) A genre puts a work into a group of similar works so the readers are able to perceive it in relation to other works (e. g. while reading a novel we compare it with other novels – not poems - we have already read),
- 2) Readers can experience pleasant psychological experiences caused by reading a familiar literary form.
- 3) A genre usually provides a code important for the understanding of a literary work (e. g. reading a comedy we expect a humorous tone).
- 4) To work within a framework of an already defined genre can be stimulating for authors who can probe their literary craftsmanship.

Unlike the phenomenon of readers' expectations and its facilitation of the process of perception and interpretation, the breaking of generic conventions can have a shocking effect on readers, e. g. Lawrence Sterne's novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, (originally published in nine volumes in 1759-1767, [online](#)), breaking nearly all the rules of narration and novel writing), bringing them to a closer reflection of the work. If, however, the choice of genre does not correspond with the theme, it can result in a comic effect, e.g. Alexander Pope's mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock* (originally published in 1712, [online](#)). All in all, it may be worth noting that an insufficient orientation in the system of literary genres can cause some difficulties in understanding the structure of a literary work or in recognizing the significance of some important details.

The systems of genres into which literary works have been classified are numerous, and criteria for such classifications have been highly varied. There has been, however, a tendency to distinguish three main **literary genres** (or, in Slovak terminological language, **kinds**): **poetry** (earlier designated as *lyric*), **prose** (*epic*), and **drama**.

In what follows, we will offer the description of particular literary kinds (and genres), drawing especially on their basic compositional characteristics (we believe that composition, construction, of a literary work is considered to be one of its most obvious differentiating features).

<b>POETRY</b>	<b>PROSE</b>	<b>DRAMA</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> person	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	2 <sup>nd</sup> person
eternity	past	present
condensed, highly stylized language	colloquial language	performance
expressing author's inner attitudes, moods, emotions	telling a story (narration)	immediate presence of audience in action

---

### Cultural determination of historical development of literary kinds

When thinking about the nature and functions of literary kinds, for a long time in literary history, the **rules of appropriateness and decorum** were followed both by authors and readers (critics). Literary kinds were clearly defined and strictly separated from each other. For example, in Ancient Greek literature, topics of honour and duty were reserved for hymns and tragedy. They would never be combined with "a low", colloquial language and humorous situations. They were, on the other side, reserved for comedy and folk genres. Their mixing would be considered unthinkable, unethical and artistic blasphemy.

In addition, each period in artistic history set a contemporary fashion and artistic values which resulted in the fact that different literary kinds are dominant in different historical periods. Thus, drama (theatre) was a dominant kind in both classical and neoclassical periods. In the period of Romanticism, the only valued literary kind was poetry. Since the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, when a new powerful social group of middle-class traders and merchants emerged, interested in new themes and with different reading needs, prose was slowly building momentum, finally becoming a dominant literary kind in the period of Realism.

This shows that the probability whether the literary kind or genre becomes dominant depends on a number of **genre-generating factors** including economic, social and cultural circumstances, philosophical background, the educational status of the society, technical aspects of producing literature, as well as reading characteristics and preferences of the reading audience.

Kiss and Matuska (2013, [online](#)) illustrate the process of cultural determination of literary kind as follows: *"In the Elizabethan period in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, somebody writing novels or narratives could hardly become successful or even make a living, since books depend on many cultural elements: you need a reading public, for a reading public you need a literate and educated population, for an educated population you need a welfare state and an advanced social system. But it is not enough to have a literate public, because books also need to be edited, printed and distributed, so you need a literary institution with people earning money from the book trade. Books also have to be*

---

*purchased by the reading public, so you need a relatively well-to-do population which can afford buying books, and the books have to be about topics that the public is interested in and which can be renewed again and again. These conditions were not present in Shakespeare's time. The population was mostly illiterate, the literary institution was just about to take shape, and people had no money to spend on books that were very expensive at the time. Thus, this was not the time for the novel to flourish – it was the golden age of drama. The reason for the dominance of drama as a genre is very simple: plays did not have to be purchased and read, because they were staged in live performances in the very popular Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres."*

With continual social and cultural changes, as well as changing aesthetic needs of the reading audience, boundaries of literary kinds (and genres) became less strict and limiting. The changes resulted in mixing previously strictly separated literary devices and in the formation of new literary genres and subgenres.

## Assignment 6: Defining literary genres

- 1) Work individually or in pairs.
- 2) Look at the following list of various literary genres. Can you define them?

<i>action stories</i>	<i>dark academia</i>	<i>humour books</i>	<i>song lyrics</i>
<i>autobiographies</i>	<i>dystopian plays</i>	<i>movie screenplay</i>	<i>sonnet</i>
<i>adventure stories</i>	<i>fairy tales</i>	<i>musical</i>	<i>stand up</i>
<i>ballad</i>	<i>fantasy</i>	<i>mystery</i>	<i>thriller</i>
<i>beach reads</i>	<i>graphic novels</i>	<i>opera libretto</i>	<i>time travel</i>
<i>chic fiction</i>	<i>haiku</i>	<i>romance</i>	<i>tragedy</i>
<i>comedy</i>	<i>horror movie</i>	<i>romantic comedy</i>	<i>travel book</i>
<i>cookbooks</i>	<i>how-to guides</i>	<i>science fiction</i>	

- 3) Decide to which literary kind they belong and add them to the table below. Ignore the genres which do not meet the criteria set for imaginative literature in pp. 10-11.

<b><i>POETRY</i></b>	<b><i>PROSE</i></b>	<b><i>DRAMA</i></b>
1 <sup>st</sup> person	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	2 <sup>nd</sup> person
eternity	past	present
condensed, highly stylized language	colloquial language	performance
expressing author's inner attitudes, moods	telling a story (narration)	immediate presence of audience in action
<b>Genres:</b>	<b>Genres:</b>	<b>Genres:</b>

- 4) Based on your reading experiences or the search in bookstore catalogues, find and name at least book as an example of each literary genre.



---

## 7 Poetry

### **Poetic characteristics**

The term **poetry**, in Aristotle's terminology *lyric* (from Greek *lyre* = a song), is considered to be probably the most concentrated kind of writing with special "poetic diction". The general aesthetic aim of poetry is not to tell the story but to express the author's state of mind, his thoughts and feelings. A special emotional effect of poetry is the result of rich imagery, figurative language, rhythm (metre), and often (but not necessarily) rhymes (c.f. Hurley and O'Neill, 2012).

Being an excellent example of visual imagery, the poem "The Deserted House" by Mary Coleridge describes the hopeless physical appearance and strange atmosphere of the house.

### **The Deserted House**

Mary Coleridge

*There's no smoke in the chimney,  
And the rain beats in the floor;  
There's no glass in the window,  
There's no wood in the door;  
The heather grows behind the house,  
and the sand lies before.*

*No hand hath trained the ivy,  
The walls are grey and bare;  
The boats upon the sea sail by,  
Nor ever tarry there;  
No beast of the field comes nigh,  
Nor any bird of the air.*

---

All visual signs imply that the house was abandoned a long time ago; however, the author does not give the reason. The extraordinary behaviour of animals expressed in the last two lines brings to readers' minds the concept of something transcendental, ghostly, and horrific. The power of the poem thus does not lie in the precise description of the house or explaining the reasons for its state (in the form of a story), but in evoking the strange and scary atmosphere of such a place.

### ***Rhythm in poetry***

One of the most obvious poetic features of poetry and, at the same time, an important component of its musical quality is a marked and audible rhythm. Its patterns are not only formal "beats", but help convey the author's ideas and attitudes (what is usually forgotten by unconscious readers).

**Rhythm** is a regular (predictable) or irregular pattern of beats that is formed by the intentional arrangement of syllables of contrasting qualities (e. g. stressed and unstressed syllables, or long and short syllables).

There are several ways (**prosodic systems**) that the rhythm of poetry can be constructed and measured: *accentual prosody*, *syllabic prosody*, *accentual-syllabic prosody*, and *quantitative prosody*.

**Accentual prosody** is a rhythm typical for the English language. It is characterized by the regular number of stressed syllables regardless of the total number of syllables in each line. Many examples of accentual prosody can be found among nursery rhymes (their rhythmical pattern children usually intuitively accompany by clapping the hands in each stressed syllable), e. g.

**Baa**, baa, **black** sheep,  
**Have** you any **wool**?  
**Yes**, sir, **yes**, sir,  
**Three** bags **full**;  
**One** for the **mas**-ter,  
And **one** for the **dame**,  
And **one** for the **lit**-tle boy  
Who **lives** down the **lane**.

---

Although the numbers of syllables in individual lines vary (4-5-5-4-3-5-5-7-5), the number of stressed syllables is in each line the same – 2 (in the text the stressed syllables are written in bold letters).

**Syllabic prosody** is rhythm created by the same number of syllables in each line, regardless of the number of stresses. The example is taken from the poem “Especially When The October Wind” by Dylan Thomas. Here each line contains of 10 syllables:

*Especially when the October Wind  
With frosty fingers punishes my hair,  
Caught by the crabbing sun I walk on fire  
And cast a shadow crab upon the land,  
By the sea’s side, hearing the noise of birds,  
hearing the raven cough in winter sticks,...*

**Accentual-syllabic prosody** is a combination of two previous. A decisive criterion for its character is both the regular number of syllables in lines along with the regular number of stresses. In the following example taken from Robert Frost’s already quoted poem “Stopping by woods on a snowy evening”, there are eight syllables with four stresses (written in bold letters) in each line:

*These **woods** are lovely, **dark** and **deep**,  
But I have **promises** to **keep**,  
And **miles** to **go** before I **sleep**,  
And **miles** to **go** before I **sleep**.*

**Quantitative prosody** is rather rare in English literature. Its rhythm is based on regular altering of long and short syllables.

The basic unit of rhythm is **foot** which usually contains one stressed syllable and several unaccented/unstressed syllables. Traditional poetics distinguishes several types of feet (the pronunciation of a particular foot’s name usually suggests the rhythm itself):

- **iamb** [ai’æmb] – unstressed +stressed, e.g. be-low, Ja-pan
- **trochee** [’træuki:] – stressed + unstressed, e.g. dou-ble, mo-ther

- 
- **anapaest** [enəpi:st] – unstressed + unstressed + stressed, e.g. en-ter-tain
  - **dactyl** ['dæktɪl] – stressed + unstressed + unstressed, e.g. mur-mur-ing
  - **spondee** [spondi:] – stressed + stressed, e.g. pen-knife

As a type of joke, Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote a poem illustrating five feet and their sensual effect:

*Trochee trips from long to short.  
From long to long in solemn sort  
Slow spondee talks; strong foot! yet ill able  
Ever to come up with Dactyl trisyllable.  
Iambics march from short to long.  
With a leap and a bound the swift Anapaests throng.*

The regular rhythmic pattern (alternating stressed and unstressed, or short and long syllables, in regular intervals) is called **metre** (from the Greek word for *measure*). According to the number of feet in a line, the following types of lines can be classified: if there is one foot in a line, it is a monosyllabic line, or **monometer**; the line consisting of two feet is called **dimeter**; three feet = **trimeter**; four feet = **tetrameter**; five feet = **pentameter**; 6 feet = **hexameter**; 7 feet = **heptameter**; 8 feet = **octameter**. Lines with a higher number of feet are very rare and they are referred to as “nine foot line,” “ten foot line,” etc.

Some of the most frequent metrical patterns in English poetry are **ballad metre** that is used in ballad stanzas, e. g. the ballad *The Wife of Usher's Well* begins as follows:

*There lived a wife at Usher's Well,  
And a wealthy wife was she;  
She had three stout and stalwart sons,  
And sent them o'er the sea.*

---

William Shakespeare wrote many of his plays and sonnets in **blank verse** which consists of unrhymed ("blank") lines of iambic pentameter. The example is from the play *Hamlet*:

*O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!  
Is it not monstrous that this player here,  
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,  
Could force his soul so to his own conceit  
That from her working all his visage wan'd;  
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,  
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting  
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!*

A special case is **free verse** (in French *verse libre*), which is poetry that has no fixed pattern of metre, rhyme, line length, or stanza arrangement as in the poem „I Dream'd in a Dream“ by Walt Whitman:

*I DREAM'D in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the  
whole of the rest of the earth,  
I dream'd that was the new city of Friends,  
Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love, it led  
the rest,  
It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city,  
And in all their looks and words.*

### **Rhyme**

Together with rhythm, a special musical effect of poetry is attained also by **rhyme**, that is the repetition of sounds in words that appear close to each other in a poem. The most frequent type of rhyme is **end rhyme** appearing at the ends of lines. End rhymes are usually arranged into a scheme - **rhyme scheme** – that is traditionally designated by letters of the alphabet to each new rhyme (e.g. *aabb* or *abcabc*).

---

The position of rhyme is not restricted to the end of a line. There are also **initial rhymes** (at the beginning of sequencing lines) and **internal rhymes** (repetition of sounds in the middle and the end of a line). According to the number and quality of repeated sounds, **perfect rhymes** (both consonants and vowels in all the rhymed syllables are identical) and **imperfect rhymes** (containing some kind of deformation of an ideal, e.g. far – heart) can be distinguished. Moreover, **eye rhyme** involves repeating visual signs (letters) without regarding their different pronunciation, e.g. love–move. **Assonant rhyme** is based on repeating vowels while consonants are different (e.g. male – wave), and **consonant rhyme** contains identical consonants with different vowels (e.g. ship – shape, tip - top).

According to the length of rhymed parts of lines, the following categories can be recognized: one-syllable rhyme (**masculine** or **male rhyme**, e.g. new – view, hands – lands - stands), two-syllable rhyme (**feminine** or **female rhyme**, e.g. stranger – danger, master – blaster), or longer three-syllable rhymes and four-syllable rhymes which are very rare in English poetry (e.g. laborious – victorious).

### **Strophe and stanza**

Next point that distinguishes poetry from other literary kinds is a specific graphic appearance of words on the page, being usually arranged in lines and groups of lines (strophes). **Strophe** is the unit of several lines graphically divided from the following and preceding groups of lines. There is no limit to number of lines in one strophe, even the regular metre or rhyme is not necessary. If a strophe consists of a fixed number of lines, with a prevailing kind of metre, and a consistent rhyme scheme, it is called **stanza**.

According to number of lines in a stanza, the following can be distinguished: the one-line stanza, the two-line stanza (**couplet**, e.g. *heroic couplet*), the three-line stanza (**triplet**, e.g. *terza rima*), the four-line stanza (**quatrain**, e. g. *ballad stanza*, *Sapphic stanza*), the five-line stanza (**quintet**, e.g. *limerick*), the six-line stanza (**sestet**), the seven-line stanzas (**septet**, e.g. *rhyme royal*), the eight-line stanza (**octave**, e.g. *ottava rima*, *triolet*), the nine-line stanza (e. g. *Spenserian stanza*), longer stanzas (e. g. *sonnet* consisting of 14 lines, *ballade*, *rondel*, etc.).

---

Stanza is a form of paragraph in poetry. That means that one stanza should develop one idea. Some exceptions are possible, of course, e. g. when a sentence (the idea) does not end at the end of stanza, but it runs on to the following stanza. The “run on verse” is called **enjambement**. If the sentence ends before the end of a line, such a pause is called **caesura**.

The examples of both can be found in the poem „somewhere i have never travelled“ by e. e. cummings

*nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals  
the power of your intense fragility: whose texture  
compels me with the color of its countries,  
rendering death and forever with each breathing*

*(i do not know what it is about you that closes  
and opens; only something in me understands  
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)  
nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands*

### **Genres of poetry**

For better orientation, three types of poetry can be distinguished: *lyric poetry* (in which dominance goes to the expression of emotions), *narrative poetry* (which tells a story), and *dramatic poetry* (which is performed by a character).

The most well known genres of *LYRIC POETRY*, ode and elegy, originated in Greek ancient literature and they were sung and accompanied by a play of the lyre (= lyric). **Ode** is a long, serious in tone poem which celebrates love and life. **Elegy** is, analogically, a long and serious poem, but, on the contrary, it is a form of lamentation about any tragic events, life situations, or death. Close to an ode is a **hymn** which is praise to god.

In later periods, one of the most popular and frequent stanzas was a fourteen-line lyric poem called **sonnet**. There are two main types of sonnet rhyme scheme: Petrarchan (Italian) and Shakespearean (English) sonnet. **Petrarchan sonnet** is composed of fourteen lines that are divided into an octave and a sestet. The

---

rhyme scheme is usually *abbaabba* + *cdecde*, or *cdccdc*. **Shakespearean** or **English sonnet** is composed of three quatrains rhyming *abab cdcd efef* and a final couplet *gg*. Writers were used to connect several sonnets into **sonnet sequences**, or cycles, that are linked by a common theme.

Genres of *NARRATIVE POETRY* include **epic poem** (the most famous example is Old English *Beowulf*) which is a long poem describing the adventures of great heroes and heroines. This type of poetry later developed into prose. A very popular genre in Romantic poetry was **ballad**, based on a form of **folk ballad**, written in quatrains of strict rhyme scheme and containing specific themes, usually sad and tragic. Ballad usually contains a **refrain**.

Typical genres of *DRAMATIC POETRY* are **dramatic monologue** (performed by a single character to an audience), **dramatic dialogue**, **opera**, **musical comedy**, etc.



---

## Assignment 7: Self-diagnostic test

**1. Poetry as a literary kind is characterized by**

- a) 1st person
- b) 2<sup>nd</sup> person
- c) 3<sup>rd</sup> person

**2. The basic unit of lyric rhythm is**

- a) foot
- b) prosody
- c) stress
- d) rhythm

**3. A regular rhythm of the poem is called**

- a) foot
- b) metre
- c) a stanza
- d) a heroic couplet

**4. The similarity in sound of the ends of words in verses is called:**

- a) rhyme
- b) end verse
- c) rhythm
- d) metre

**5. A group of verses in a poem is called**

- a) a line
- b) a foot
- c) a stanza
- d) a sonnet

**6. A line of verse with seven feet is known as**

- a) hexameter
- b) heptameter
- c) pentameter
- d) heptaline

**7. A foot of two stressed syllables is**

- a) spondee
- b) anapaest
- c) dactyl
- d) trochee

**8. The foot consisting of unstressed +stressed syllables is called**

- a) iamb
- b) trochee
- c) anapaest
- d) dactyl

**9. The foot consisting of stressed + stressed syllables is called**

- a) dactyl
- b) spondee
- c) iamb
- d) trochee

---

**10. Dactyl's schema is**

- a) unstressed + stressed syllable
- b) stressed + unstressed + unstressed syllable
- c) stressed + stressed syllable
- d) stressed + unstressed syllable

**11. The regular number of syllables in the line is decisive for:**

- a) quantitative prosody,      b) accentual prosody,
- c) syllabic prosody,          d) accentual-syllabic prosody.

**12. Quantitative prosody is based on**

- a) an alternation of long and short syllables,
- b) a combination of stressed and unstressed syllables,
- c) a regular number of syllables in each line,
- d) a combination of the regular number of syllables and number of stresses in each line.

**13. A regular combination of stressed and unstressed syllables determines:**

- a) quantitative prosody      b) accentual prosody
- c) syllabic prosody          d) accentual-syllabic prosody.

**14. The rhyme that is based on repeating visual signs (letters) without regarding their different pronunciation is called**

- a) imperfect rhyme                      b) eye rhyme
- c) assonant rhyme                      d) male rhyme.

**15. A lyric poem of fourteen lines is called**

- a) a sonnet                                  b) Shakespearean stanza
- c) Italian poem                              d) quatrain

**16. Which of these is not a poetic genre**

- a) sonnet                                      b) ode
- c) a nursery rhyme                      d) caesura

**17. The rhyme containing some kind of deformation of an ideal is called:**

- a) initial rhyme                      b) internal rhyme
- c) imperfect rhymes                      d) assonant rhyme

---

**18. The dominant foot in the following lines is**

*No hand hath trained the ivy,  
The walls are grey and bare;*

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| a) dactyl  | c) iamb    |
| b) trochee | d) spondee |

**19. The dominant foot in the following lines**

*There's no glass in the window,  
There's no wood in the door"* is

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| a) dactyl  | c) iamb    |
| b) trochee | d) spondee |

**20. The rhyme in the same lines is**

- |            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| a) perfect | b) imperfect |
|------------|--------------|

**21. The rhyme "the floor – the door – before" is**

- |         |           |
|---------|-----------|
| a) male | b) female |
|---------|-----------|

**22. The rhyme in the Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 is:**

- |            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| a) perfect | b) imperfect |
|------------|--------------|

**23. The rhyme in the 2nd and 4th lines is**

- |         |           |
|---------|-----------|
| a) male | b) female |
|---------|-----------|

**24. The dominant foot in the following lines is**

*While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,  
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.*

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| a) dactyl  | c) iamb    |
| b) trochee | d) spondee |

**25. The dominant foot in the following line is**

*Especially when the October wind  
With frosty fingers punishes my hair*

- |            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| a) dactyl  | b) anapaest |
| a) trochee | d) spondee. |

**26. Syllabic prosody is based on**

- |  |
|--|
| a) alternation of long and short syllables according to a regular pattern, |
| b) regular combination of stressed and unstressed syllables,               |

- 
- c) the regular number of syllables in lines,
  - d) a number of syllables and number of stresses are combined within a regular pattern.

**27. The following poem has a rhyming scheme of**

- a) couplet
- b) triplet,
- c) quatrain,
- d) blank verse.

*'Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill  
Appear in writing, or in judging ill;  
But of the two, much greater is th' offence  
To tire the patience, than mislead the sense*

**28. Iambic pentameter verse that rhymes in couplets is known as**

- a) heroic verse
- b) ode
- c) Shakespearean sonnet
- d) triplet.

**29. The rhyme scheme of the following poem is**

- a) couplet
- b) quatrain
- c) sonnet
- d) blank verse

*Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,  
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;  
Along the cool sequestered vale of life  
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way*

**30. The appearance of similar sounds somewhere in the middle of a verse is called**

- a) end rhyme
- b) irregular rhyme
- c) double rhyme
- d) internal rhyme.

**31. The rhyme appearing at the ends of lines is called**

- a) perfect rhyme
- b) male rhyme
- c) normal rhyme
- d) end rhyme

**32. The ballad consist of**

- a) 14 lines
- b) 15 lines
- c) 16 lines
- d) variable number of lines.

---

**33-40. In the following poem determine:**

- a) a metre (e.g. dimeter) .....
- b) a prosody (e.g. quantitative) .....
- c) a dominant foot (e.g. a spondee) .....
- d) a rhyme scheme (e.g. couplet) .....
- e) a genre of the poem (e.g. a sonnet) .....
- f) its point .....

**The Road Not Taken**

*Robert Frost*

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way  
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

---

## 8 Prose

**Prose** as one of three basic literary kinds is relatively opposite to poetry, mainly because of its language and graphical organization. It is mainly its rather colloquial language (style) that is usually described as ordinary and words such as “dull”, “boring”, “banal”, “colourless”, “common”, “everyday”, “matter-of-fact” are mentioned as synonymous to “prosaic”.

The **language of prose** is relatively contradictory to poetry, even if it can employ tropical and figurative language and rhythm. It means that the language of a prose work is not as “artificial” as the language of poetry, and it is very close to colloquial style of everyday life. Understandably, some authors use specific, poetic and highly expressive language enriched by rhymes and metrical patterns, as well as by tropes and figures of speech, but this is not a necessary and distinctive feature of prose.

As for graphical organization, the term *prose* is often used for all discourses, spoken or written, which are not patterned into lines and rhythms, although this is also possible.

Prosaic writing is sometimes synonymously named *narrative prose*, as narration is one of the most typical features. The term *fiction prose* indicates the made-up plot introduced by the story, which is in opposition to *non-fiction* or *factual prose* (prose based on facts, e.g. essays, biographies, autobiographies, documentaries, etc.).

The basic principle of any narration is **plot** (story), that is, a series of events which, in Aristotle’s simple definition, “has a beginning, a middle, and an end”. Later he adds: “A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well-constructed plot, therefore,

---

must neither begin nor end haphazardly, but conform to these principles” (Aristotle, [op.cit.](#)). It means that in narration all elements (events) must be justified, functional and well-arranged. A good plot does not include any irrelevant turns, no false leads, and no misleading information (however, there are some genres based on such techniques, e.g. detective stories, anti-novel, etc.).

The plot is traditionally divided into five parts: it begins with *exposition* that introduces characters and conflict and the function of which is to catch the reader’s attention and curiosity (usually by means of *the narrative hook* = interesting situation or complicated problem). Exposition is later developed to the *rising action* with intensified conflicts. Rising action brings readers to the *climax* which is the point of the highest emotional pitch after which the *falling action* leads action to the logical result (*the resolution*) of narration.

This enormously simple schema is then filled by other narrative elements that are unified by a theme.

**Theme** is the dominant idea of narration (but logically of poetry and drama, too), and not the "moral" of the story, as many students usually believe. Johnson and Arp (2017) summarized the following characteristics of the theme:

- ✓ A theme must be expressible in the form of a statement - not „motherhood“ but „Motherhood sometimes has more frustration than reward“.
- A theme must be stated as a generalization about life; names of characters or specific situations in the plot are not to be used when stating a theme.
- A theme must not be a generalization larger than is justified by the terms of the story.
- A theme is the central and unifying concept of the story. It must adhere to the following requirements:
  1. It must account for all the major details of the story.
  2. It must not be contradicted by any detail of the story.
  3. It must not rely on supposed facts - facts not actually stated or clearly implied by the story.

---

The plot is peopled by **literary characters** (the previous term “hero” is not appropriate any more and is used only in the case of ancient tragedies). One of them is usually in a more important position than others providing the focus to the action – the **protagonist** (*major character*). If there is a character that is in sharp opposition to the protagonist, it is marked as the antagonist. Characters of secondary importance are called **minor characters** (*figures*). The character who tells the story is called the **narrator**.

For describing and developing the personality of a character, authors usually use several methods of **characterisation**. If a narrator explicitly describes characters’ personalities and provides direct statements and evaluation or does it through other characters, he uses **direct characterization**. However, more valued and from the literary theory’s point of view more interesting is **indirect characterization** where a narrator characterizes characters by means of their utterances, thinking, behaviour, or dreams.

According to the depth of characterization, characters can be **round** (revealing complex personalities, very close to living human beings) and **flat** (there is only a restricted set of personal characteristics known to readers, the character is like an unloving figure). The special cases are a **stock character** (highly schematized personality, e.g. a beautiful but stupid blonde girl, a cynical detective, etc.) and a **foil** (that is a character existing only to create contrast to another character). Considering a character’s development and changes within a plot, characters can be **static** (character remains the same) and **dynamic** (character is under changes).

In the role of “an engine” that moves the plot of narration forward is **conflict**, which is the fight between two opposing characters, forces, ideas. Literary theory recognizes two basic types of conflicts: *external* - if a character fights against another character, society, God, etc., and *internal* – within which a character fights with himself, his own ideas, emotions, and attitudes.

Literary characters, analogically to human beings, are influenced by their surrounding (they are in a continual and mutual relationship) that is a part of the **setting**. The fundamental elements of the setting are time and place, creating



---

thus a physical context or background for the plot of the story. Setting can be very effective in creating the atmosphere and mood of the story. However, there are some literary works or genres that “resign” on a coherent setting (e. g. absurd drama and antinovel).

The narrator’s relationship to the story, **point of view** or perspective, is very important for the composition of a literary work. There are several fundamental types of point of view:

1. A **third-person point of view** is the oldest and most traditional one. The narrator who knows the thoughts and emotions of all characters and who is informed about all details from the history, presence and future of the story, provides a **omniscient** point of view. There are some special cases within this category: a **limited** point of view (the story is told through the perspective of one of the characters but that character is referred to as “he” or “she”) and a **camera eye** point of view.

2. If the story is told by one character referred to as “I”, the **first-person point of view** is involved. Such perspective offers a more personal tone giving the possibility to look into narrator’s mind.

3. Rather experimental is a **second-person point of view**, through which the narrator directly addresses the reader.

### **Genres of prose**

Prosaic works are sometimes classified according to their length into *long prose* (usually more than 50,000 words, e. g. a novel), *intermediate prose* (more than 20,000 words, e. g. a novella, and a short story) and *short prose* (up to 20 000 words, e. g. a fable, anecdote, etc.).

**Novel** is a literary work of prose fiction which tells a long, rather developed and complex, story that is peopled by many characters. The first novel in Europe appeared in 1600 (*Don Quixote* by Miguel Cervantes) and since those times numerous subgenres have been developed. The earlier forms of novel were the **picaresque novel** (e. g. Miguel Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*, or Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones*); the **chivalric or trivial novel** and the

---

**gothic novel** (e. g. Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*; novels by Robert L. Stevens, Walter Scott, and Edgar Allan Poe's short stories). Some novels are specific for their technique of writing, among them **the epistolary novel** (written in the form of letters, e.g. Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*), **the impressionistic novel** (based on modernist stream of consciousness technique, e.g. James Joyce's *Ulysses*), and **anti-novel** (breaking all traditional rules of novel writing).

According to the theme, novels can be categorized as **family novel** (S. Richardson's *Pamela*), **the historical novel** (Walter Scott's novels *Waverley* and *Ivanhoe*), **the utopian and dystopian novels** (Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*; Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*; George Orwell's *Animal Farm*), **the science fiction novel** (Jules Verne, Ray Bradbury, Arthur Charles Clark, Isaac Asimov, Michael Crichton, etc.), **the adventure novel** (Robert L. Stevenson; Arthur Conan Doyle; Jack London), **the detective and spy novel** (Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Ian Fleming), **the novel of travel** (e.g. Henry James's *Daisy Miller*), **psychological novel** (James Joyce, Virginia Woolf), **biographical novel** (Irving Stone's *Lust for Life*) and many other sub-genres and their combinations.

Regarding the dominant function of the novel, the following sub-genres can be recognized: **didactic novel** (bringing new pedagogical concepts, e. g. Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*), **bildungsroman** (describing a personal development of a literary character, e. g. Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joanne K. Rowling's Harry Potter's books), and **the philosophical novel** (introducing philosophical theories).

If the dominant tone of narration is recognizable **the humorous novel** (e. g. Charles Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*), **the satirical novel** (George Bernard Shaw's novels), or **the ironic novel** (Jane Austen's novels) can be distinguished.

Finally, according to the time of occurrence, **the sentimental novel** (e. g. books by Samuel Richardson and the Brontë sisters), **romantic novel** (Walter Scott, Ralph Waldo Emerson), **realistic novel** (Charles Dickens, John

---

Galsworthy, Herbert George Wells, Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, Henry James, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, Jerome David Salinger, Norman Mailer), **naturalistic novel** (Jack London, Theodore Dreiser, John Dos Passos), **existential novel** (Ralph Ellison, William Styron, Saul Bellow), **postmodern novel** (John Irving, Vladimir Nabokov, Kurt Vonnegut, Richard Brautigan, Angela Carter) can be named. To learn more about contemporary forms of the novel, study Boxall, 2015.

A genre predecessor of the novel is **the romance**. Romances originally told stories describing the adventurous life of knightly heroes and their looking for love. Nowadays, the term also depicts a story that involves some supernatural apparatus, or where the goal is to affect readers' emotions.

**The short story** as a genre is a successor of **the fabliau**, **the exemplum** and **the legend**. It, similarly to a novel, includes all elements of narration: plot, theme, characters, setting and recognizable point of view but in reduced measures, i.e. the plot is less complex, developing only one or two conflicts involving fewer characters than a novel (for more, study Einhaus, 2016).

The myth and the fable belong among the oldest prosaic literary genres spread in Europe. **The myth** tells the story with the aim explaining repeatedly experienced events. There are numerous myths explaining the origin of the earth, planets, gods, natural phenomena, etc. myths created by the particular culture or civilizations are grouped into **mythologies** (a united system of myths). **The fable** is a very brief story with mostly animal characters, the function of which is to teach a moral, that is why a fable is usually considered as a genre of moral or didactic literature. The famous authors of fables in Anglophone literatures were George Orwell, Ambrose Bierce, and Rudyard Kipling.

Another frequent genre with a long-lasting tradition is **a folk tale**, originally an orally spread prosaic genre of a specific structure and usually didactic function, with its numerous sub-genres: **animal**, **fantastic** (fairy), **realistic**, **legendary**, and **allegorical** (close to the fable or the parable).

**The anecdote** (introducing a brief entertaining plot), **the joke**, **the saying**, and **the proverb**, etc. can be named as frequent representatives of short prose.

---

## Assignment 8: The self-diagnostic test

### 1. A group of works with similar composition is called ...

- a) palimpsest
- b) literary kind
- c) literary genre
- d) national literature

### 2. Prose as a literary kind is characterized by

- a) 1st person
- b) 2<sup>nd</sup> person
- c) 3<sup>rd</sup> person

### 3. The genre developed by Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding was

- a) a sentimental short story
- b) a novel,
- c) a romance
- d) an adventurous story.

### 4. Which of these is not a prosaic genre

- a) novelette
- b) proverb
- c) novel
- d) ballad

### 5. Which of these is not a genre of short fiction

- a) parable
- b) fable
- c) legend
- d) epos

### 6. The plot is traditionally divided into 5 parts. Mark their correct order

- a) exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution.
- b) exposition, climax, rising action, falling action, resolution.
- c) exposition, falling action, climax, rising action resolution.
- d) exposition, rising action, climax, resolution, falling action.

### 7. A direct genre predecessor of the novel is

- a) the romance
- b) the legend
- c) the myth
- d) the fable

---

## 9 Drama

### **Poetic characteristics**

What differentiates **drama** from other literary kinds most is the fact that drama is primarily designed to be performed (and watched), not read (an exception is **closet drama** intended for reading only and represented for instance by John Milton's *Samson Agonistes* (1671), George Gordon Lord Byron's *Manfred* (1817) and other works. Drama can have the form of both prose and verse (**poetic drama**). The typical metre of poetic drama in English literature is blank verse, though in the Restoration Period, the most favourite metre was heroic couplet.

Corrigan in his work *The World of the Theatre* (1992) formulated so-called Corrigan's Big Three, i. e. characteristics that distinguish drama (theatre) from other art forms:

- **Living presence of the actor:** The audience receives the actor equally in both the empirical (a real person) and the symbolic senses (an image being of special aesthetical, usually symbolical, meaning).
- **Perpetual present tense:** In a play while on a stage, everything is happening now, in the present time, however, containing its own past. Every performance is different from previous and later ones, as the external circumstances (audience, interaction between actors and audience, psychological status of actors, etc.) changes.
- **Mode of destiny:** Everything in a drama has its purpose, as nothing exists there at random. All events have their motivation and consequences that lead to purposeful conclusions.

---

The characteristics mentioned are fully adaptable only in traditional plays, as modern drama (on an extreme level the absurd one) tried to break these strict rules.

The term drama is usually interchanged with **a play**, which is in literary genealogy understood as both written works of dramatists and as the complete theatrical performance of such. The text of drama consists mainly of *dialogues* and *monologues*, but *a prologue, epilogue, author's preface and notes, instructions for actors, stage directions, and descriptions of scenes* are also its parts.

While the primary “material” of poetry and prose is language itself, drama integrates a number of heterogeneous elements, such as: **stage, scenery, lighting, actors, costumes, makeup, sound, audience, publicity, theatre building, house management**, etc.

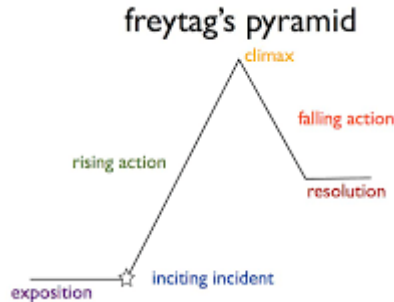
To characterize the composition of drama, the same headings as in the case of prose can be useful: characters, plot, setting, etc.

What has been said about **characters** in prose can be fully applied to drama as well. However, characters in drama are in an exclusive position, as they are the only mediators of a dramatic text (a play) to the audience. (The special case of drama is represented by the **monodrama** played only by one actor). Actors perform the text in the form of dramatic **dialogues** or **monologues**. If a character is performing its monologue alone on a stage, such monologue is called **soliloquy** (usually the most important ideas of a play are presented through soliloquies). A special type of dramatic monologue that is presented on the stage as if other characters cannot hear it and an actor is addressing it only to an audience is called **aside**. Aside is one of the elements of **dramatic irony**, the situation when the audience knows more than the characters in a literary work do.

A drama piece (a play) is usually divided into several formal parts: scenes and acts. **An act** is a part of a play in which the group of actors on stage do not change. An act can consist of one or more **scenes**, that is, a part of a play in which localisation (on a stage) is changed. Today, one-act plays are extremely popular.

---

As drama has to catch an audience's attention for several dozens of minutes, its composition is usually tectonic (this composition was a custom for writers of classic dramas till the end of the 19th century). The traditional drama composition (which has been adopted in prose, as well) can be depicted by the "Freytag's pyramid" (Freytag, first published in 1863, the German edition from 1905 is available [online](#)):



### ***Dramatic genres***

Within a literary kind of drama, two basic dramatic genres can be distinguished: tragedy and comedy, both originated in ancient Greece (tragedy being even older than comedy) and stand in relative opposition to each other.

**Tragedy** (a term derived from the Greek originally meaning "goat-song", as the first actors wore goat skins). The origin of tragedy can be traced back to the religious rites of early Greek mythology. Aristotle's definition of tragedy states that a tragedy is a dramatic genre which is serious and complete, consisting of incidents that arouse pity and fear with the effect of a **catharsis** (emotional cleansing). The language of tragedy is pleasurable, and appropriate to the situations occurring on a stage. The protagonist of a tragedy is always extraordinary ("better than ourselves"), facing a threat of Destiny and tragic downfall.

In the Middle Ages, the genre of tragedy was enriched by several sub-genres, such as **miracle plays** (based on lives of saints), **mystery plays** (dramatisations of episodes of the *Old and New Testament*, e.g. *Wakefield cycle*), and **morality**

---

**plays** (depicting struggles between Christian, i.e. good, and non-believing, i.e. bad, way of life). As a good example of morality plays *Everyman* can serve.

In the Period of Renaissance **history plays** (dramatizations of events chronicled in historical records), and **Shakespearean tragedy** originated (to learn more, see McEachern, 2013). In English Renaissance literature, the most successful authors of tragedies were William Shakespeare (*Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet* and others), Christopher Marlowe (*Tragedy of Dr. Faustus*, *Tamburlaine*), and John Webster (*The White Devil*).

In American literature tragedy is rather a rare genre; however, a great American play writer Arthur Miller created several successful modern tragedies (*The Crucible*, *Death of a Salesman*).

In contemporary drama two more genres can be considered tragic subgenres: **problem plays** and **absurd drama**. As a contemporary sub-genre of tragedy **monodrama** (a play by one actor) can be considered, as well.

In the past, any play that ended happily was marked as a **comedy**. The essential difference between tragedy and comedy is in the depiction of human nature: tragedy shows greatness in human nature and human freedom whereas comedy shows human weaknesses and limitations.

Similarly to the history of tragedy, over centuries several subgenres of comedy have developed: **commedia dell' arte** (a form of improvisational theatre that originated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Italy and is based on rough situations and stock characters) is a genre forerunner of **situation comedy** that is very popular even today and led to the development of other “integrated” forms of drama, e.g. *animated cartoons* and *professional wrestling*. The range of comedy subgenres is wider. The older ones can be named, such as **burlesque** (based on earthy humour and short turns in action), **grotesque** (based on exaggeration of any of dramatic elements), **masque** (originally played in masks and paying enormous attention to costumes and stage decorations), **farce** (built up the extravagant but still possible situations, mistaken identities, and vulgar verbal humour including puns and sexual allusions), **the comedy of manners**, **satiric comedy**, **romantic**



---

**comedy, black comedy, dark comedy, high comedy, sketch comedy, slapstick, cabaret, etc.**

Since the clear division of drama genres in tragedy and comedy is not always possible, mixed genres must be considered as well, e. g. as early as in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras **tragicomedy** as a genre combining tragic and comic elements was very popular.

The special group of dramatic genres is formed by the ones which combine dramatic language with music (**musical theatre**). They involve **melodrama** (a play with a romantic, sensational plot containing also songs or music as interludes), **opera** (a complex genre combining text – *libretto*, music, visual art and acting), **operetta** (light, comic opera), and **musicals** (since the 20th century extremely popular dramatic genre developing traditions of opera through modern dramatic and music elements, such as popular music, and procedures).

### **Research box 1:**

#### **Literary genres and reading preferences of contemporary readers**

##### **Introduction**

Continuously, reading habits, interests, and preferences have long been the object of systematic empirical research. Numerous research studies confirmed that sex, age, education, regional, social and economic factors are the factors with the strongest effect on contemporary readers' reading choices. Many research studies observed significant differences between the reading habits and preferences of female and male readers. They learned that females enjoy reading more than males (e.g. Clark and Foster, 2005; Clark, 2012; McKenna, Kearn, and Ellsworth, 1995; Norvell, 1973; Shafi and Loan, 2010). According to research results, females read more than males, i.e. they read more literary texts over an identical time and they spend more time reading in general (Hopper, 2005; Ross, 2002; Shafi and Loan, 2010; Stenberg, 2001). It was also proved that

---

females prefer reading literature for pleasure to other reasons (McKenna, Kearn, and Ellsworth, 1995; Hughes-Hassell and Rodge, 2007; Moyes, 2000).

When comparing readers of different ages, researchers found that younger people are more avid readers than older (Ross, 2002). The influence of education was manifested in the fact that highly-educated people read more than less-educated people (Stenberg, 2001). Socio-economic determinants of reading habits and preferences were confirmed by the findings that urban people read more than people from rural areas (Lone, 2011), and people from privileged social classes read more than people of lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Clark and Akerman, 2006).

When asked about their reading preferences related to literary kinds and genres, nearly all research studies confirmed prose as the most read and preferred literary kind (Vakkari and Serola, 2012; Wicks, 1995). Among prosaic genres, novels seemed to be the first choice of most respondents (Tella and Akande, 2007).

The results of research on students' reading and genre preferences conducted among Turkish students in their last year of high school (Akyel and Yalcin, 1990) showed that students considered the novel as the most effective genre for developing their own communicative competence and cultural awareness. They identified poetry as the least effective (*ibid.*, p. 176).

The most popular literary genre for study among 110 Malaysian students surveyed by Ghazali (2008) were short stories (marked by 80%) of the respondents because they have "interesting plots and fast-paced" and reading them is like "watching a movie". Almost 70% of the respondents expressed a negative attitude towards poetry and novels. They found reading poetry very difficult because "every word has a hidden meaning" (*ibid.*, p. 8). Novels, on the other hand, were perceived as too long with "confusing" plots.

Turkish students who took participation in Yilmaz's research (2012) cited short stories (86.6%), novels (79%), plays (66.2%), and poems (62.9%) as the most appropriate for their study.

---

## **Methodology**

In 2020, Pokrivčáková conducted a survey of the reading preferences of students at the University of Trnava within a more complex research study aimed at identifying English teacher trainees' attitudes towards the study of Anglophone literature (Pokrivčáková, 2020).

To identify which literary genres are preferred and read by students (research objective 2), the author used an original electronic questionnaire (in Survio). The questionnaire section aimed at fulfilling the second research objective offered the respondents the list of 17 literary genres and they were asked to assess their attitude in 17 separate Likert scales. Respondents were asked to comment on each genre by marking one of the five levels of the scale: my favourite - I have no problem reading it - neutral attitude - not my favourite - I don't read it at all.

The list of literary genres included: classics, horror, poetry, romantic stories, drama, fantasy, historical novels, science fiction, detective novels, digital literature, adventure stories, children's literature, comics, graphic novels, travelogues, biographies/autobiographies, and nonfiction.

Responses of 149 students were collected and analysed by simple statistic operations.

## **Results and conclusions**

By far the most popular genre among our respondents is fantasy (67 students = 44.96%). This is followed by romance stories (50 students = 33.55%) and detective stories (42 students = 28.18%). The popularity of these genres is confirmed by the data, considering the sum of the responses indicating very positive ("my favourite") and relatively positive attitudes ("I have no problem reading it"). In this case, the popularity of fantasy rose to 67.78%, romance stories to 65.77% and detective stories to 63.76%. Digital literature received the least number of unequivocally positive responses (9 students = 6.04%), which is likely because students are unfamiliar with this genre and do not come into contact with it often. Following digital literature according to this criterion are nonfiction (10 respondents = 6.71%), classics, poetry, and travelogues (all 11

---

respondents = 7.38%). Similar is the structure of the genres with the lowest popularity after summing up the two positively tuned responses ("my favourite" and "I have no problem reading it"). Surprisingly, however, graphic novels emerge as the genre with the lowest cumulative number of positive responses when this method of attitude assessment is used (34 respondents = 22.82%). This is followed by digital literature (37 - 24.83%) and poetry (45 respondents = 30.20%).

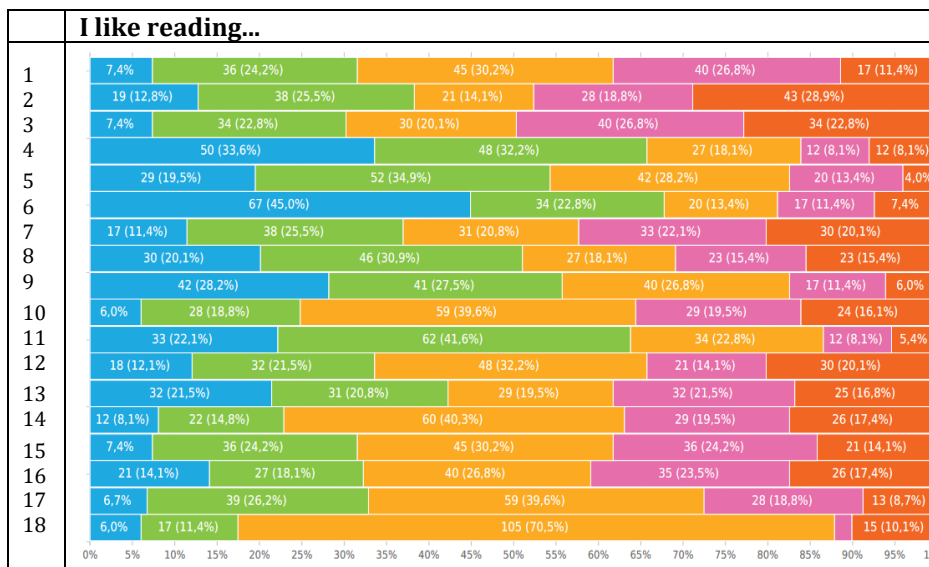
In the respondent group, the least popular genre is horror literature, which is not read at all by 43 students (28.86%). This is followed by poetry, which is not read at all by 34 students (22.82%), and then historical novels and children's literature (both indicated by 30 students = 20.13). When cumulatively adding up the negative ratings ("not my favourite" and "not read at all"), the following genres emerge as least favourite: poetry (74 respondents = 49.66%), horror (71 respondents = 47.65%), historical novels (63 responses = 42.25%), and autobiographies/biographies (61 responses = 40.94%).

The most distinct attitudes of the students are towards fantasy, to which only 20 students (13.42%) and horror genre (21 students = 14.09%) expressed neutral attitudes. Respondents expressed the least pronounced attitudes toward graphic novels (60 students = 40.27%), followed by digital literature and nonfiction (both of which received 59 neutral labels = 39.59% each).

Respondents' answers are consistent and unambiguous in this section of the questionnaire. Genres for which respondents formed positive reading attitudes include fantasy, romance stories, and detective stories. At the other end of the scale are horror literature, poetry and historical stories.

The results confirmed that prose is the most appreciated literary kind among contemporary young readers. In contrast to the results of other published studies, TRUNI respondents preferred fantasy (unlike respondents in Vakkari and Serola's study (2012) who preferred thrillers (35.9%), horror (22.4%) and romance (18.4%).

Graph 1: Literary genres favoured and read by future teachers of English at TRUNI (source: Pokrivčáková, 2020).



### Legend:

Lines: 1 - classics; 2 - horror; 3 - poetry; 4 - romance; 5 - drama; 6 - fantasy; 7 - historical novels; 8 - science fiction; 9 - detective fiction; 10 - digital literature; 11 - adventure stories; 12 - children's literature; 13 - comics; 14 - graphic novels; 15 - travelogues; 16 - biographies/autobiographies; 17 - nonfiction; 18 - other

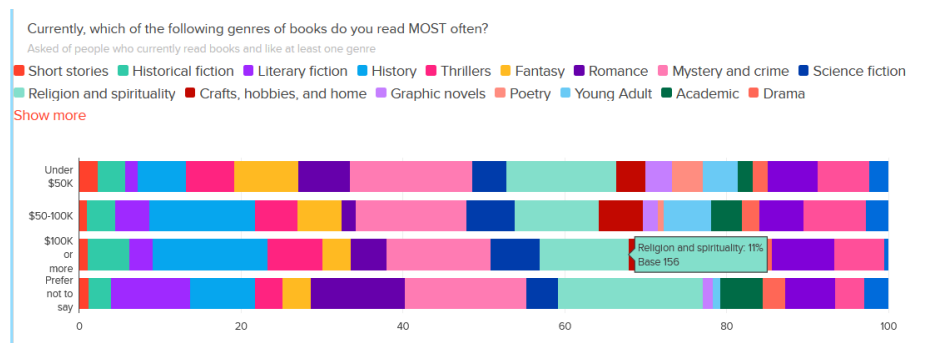
Columns: blue - my favourite genre; green - I have no problem with reading this genre; yellow - neutral attitude; pink - not one of my favourites; red - I don't like it at all

These results are in line with a recent survey conducted by YouGov (Dumitru, 2022) which asked a representative sample of respondents (among 1,000 U.S. adult citizens) about the book genres they grew up reading and the ones they are reading now.

Its results showed that the most popular genres for Americans to read when they were growing up were mystery and crime (40%), short stories (39%), and

history (39%). Following closely were fantasy (36%), science fiction (36%), and Young Adult (30%). The least popular types of books polled were religion and spirituality books (19%); crafts, hobbies, and home (16%); and graphic novels (14%).

Graph 2: Book genres read most now by Americans (source: Dumitru, 2022)



Some of the genres they had read most while growing up remain popular with Americans today too: 28% who read at least one book genre say they read mystery and crime and 27% say they read history books. Mystery and crime is the genre that the biggest share of Americans who read a book genre say they read the most (14%). Current book-genre preferences pointed out to some gender differences. Among women who read book genres, 18% say mystery and crime are the genres they read the most, compared to 10% of men. History was the top genre for most-read among men (14%), compared to 7% for women.

In general, the top two most-read genres remain consistent across all age groups: mystery and crime, and religion and spirituality — not always in that order.

## Discussion

In complete agreement with international findings (Akyel and Yalcin, 1990; Ghazali, 2008; Hirvela and Boyle, 1988; Yilmaz, 2012), respondents from the

---

Slovak university strongly preferred reading prose genres over poetry and drama. Poetry was among the least preferred genres among readers. The most popular genres within prose included fantasy, romance stories, and detective stories. Which may lead to the hypothesis that the respondents have so far approached literature mainly as a means of entertainment and relaxation (escapist conception of literature).

---

## *10 Literature in the digital era*

The global rise of digital technologies has also reshaped literature. The Digital Age, which began with the widespread use of the Internet in the late 1980s, is marked by the ubiquitous presence of various digital technologies—such as computers, the Internet, email, digital games, and multimedia—across all aspects of life. Often referred to as the "Information Age" or "Computer Age," this era has left its mark on culture, including literature.

Digital technologies have impacted literature at every level, changing how it is created, consumed, and critiqued. This has given rise to new forms of "born-digital" literature and alternative reading platforms (Hammond, 2016). In some ways, the change has been profound. As Heick (2012) put it, "For strict traditionalists, digital poetry may challenge their idea of what poetry should be, resembling more an interactive website or irreverent game than Wordsworth's emotional outpourings." The blending of traditional written texts with multimedia elements has led to the emergence of entirely new forms and genres, significantly shifting literary communication theories, such as hypertextual communication, and altering how readers engage with literature.

Basically, digital literature can occur in two forms:

- a) **digitized literature**: entails "texts that exist originally in printed form and that are then as transferred for the virtual environment with programs such as PDF or EPUB" (Kirchhof, 2017, n.p.);
- b) **digital literature** (also *e-literature*, or *electronic literature*): is a sum of "digitally originated literary texts" (Unsworth, 2006). It is "digital born" (not digitized) and meant to be read on a computer (Hayles, 2007). Here, the reader's interaction is required to some degree, e.g. by clicking on the text, letters can move, grow, or vanish.



---

## Kinds and genres of digital literature

Digital literature encompasses nearly all genres known in printed literature, but also contains some new ones, unique to digital technologies.

Regarding the media used and readers' senses involved, genres of digital literature may be divided into (c.f. Pokrivčáková, 2019):

- a) **verbal digital literature:** includes e-books, multimedia linear stories, and hypertexts that work only with a medium of verbal texts or, if other elements are incorporated, a verbal component remains a dominant element of the work (for more, see Glazier, 2014);
- b) **graphic and visual literature:** combines verbal and visual elements, the latter ones being dominant for readers' perception;
- c) **audial literature:** combines verbal texts and sound elements (audiobooks, audial poetry, etc.);
- d) **kinetic literature:** consists of digital texts which have the ability to change their form in time and space, e.g. letters and words move after clicking on them, or the text changes its form and appearance after each reading. More sophisticated effects include: a running text with a changeable pace of movement, freezes, replays, time lapses, time scans, stretching and shrinking texts, stroboscopic flashing etc. (ibid).
- e) **3D literature:** combines various effects of visual and kinetic literature, e.g. rotating, rolling, flipping, zooming, scaling, or stratifying individual letters or blocks of text. It questions some reading stereotypes, e.g. the text may be composed in the form of a cube with several "layers" of text, which allows reading from front to back or reading overlapping texts. The process of "layering" the text brings into contact whole blocks of texts which create new "word clusters" or "sentence clusters" which, consequently, may invoke new meanings.

Hayles (2007) defines the following genres of digital literature:

- a) **hypertext fiction:** the term marks literary texts which break the traditional linear composition by including external hypertextual links which have

---

become the distinguishing feature of the genre. Contemporary hypertext fiction (and hypertext literature in general) incorporates a much wider scale of navigation tools and schemes, including interface metaphors (Glazier, 2014).

- b) *network fiction*:** is very close to hypertext fiction, but in this case, hypertext links are interrelated and create a networked text of its own, or, as Ciccoricco (2007, p. 7) has it, it is digital fiction that “makes use of hypertext technology in order to create emergent and recombinatory narratives”.
- c) *interactive fiction*:** is built upon continual interaction between the reader and a programme. It is very close to hypertext and network fiction, but it partakes of a more significant game aspect (Monfort, 2003). To run on a screen, it requires active participation (including physical responses) of the reader (clicking, touching, moving a mouse in a space, etc.).
- d) *locative narratives*:** integrate virtual narrative with real-world locations, or as Hayles (2007, p. 8) has it, it is “short fiction delivered serially over cell phones to location-specific narratives keyed to GPS technologies”. For example, to read a digital story set in a particular city, readers need to move around the city because they can receive parts of the narrative only in respective places (located by GPS or another location technology).
- e) *installation pieces*:** are multimodal artistic works using various electronic tools to create the illusion of 3D texts the reader might be involved (“incased”) in.
- f) *codework*** – plays with and integrates two semiotic systems: human-only language and machine-readable code. Hence its other name: “poetry for (AI) machines”.
- g) *generative art*** – is the product of either generating a text according to some randomized scheme or rearranging pre-existing texts (for a more detailed definition, see Bootz, 1999). In a generative work, the reading process can result in “an unpredictable output that neither author nor reader can preview”. This means that when the reader reads the same story (with the

---

same beginning), it can finish with countless endings generated randomly by the program with a genetic code.

h) **flash poems**: are short, impromptu written technology-based poems (Ciccoricco, 2007).

New genres of digital literature have been emerging at a rapid pace, among them **cell-phone novels**, **Facebook fiction**, **blog fiction**, **transmedia stories**, **twitterature**, **e-mail novels**, **touchscreen stories**, **chatbot novels**, etc. and it will require some time to analyse them and evaluate their potential.

### **Literary criticism in the digital era**

Digital technology has become part of all human activities and humanities are no exception. **Digital humanities** is an area of research in the humanities that uses modern technology to perform operations that would otherwise be very difficult or impossible to carry out (Burdick et al., 2012; Kirschenbaum, 2012; Svensson, 2012). The basic operations are text and data mining, NLP (natural language processing), crowdsourcing, computer text analysis, and digital mapping. The informatics aspect of digital humanities involves the encoding and decoding of linguistic data, its storage, representation, processing, categorization, manipulation, and dissemination (e.g., the creation of datasets and corpora). The aim of this chapter is to provide a basic overview of existing digital tools already in use in literary studies and research.

### **Essential digital resources for the analysis of English language texts**

The essence of philological study is working with text, using and examining texts of all functional styles and registers. Within this hybrid group, literary texts have a special place, examined by specific literary-theoretical, literary-historical, and literary-critical procedures.

Today, literary scholars have a rich array of digital tools at their disposal, many of which integrate elements of artificial intelligence. A typical procedure for their application is that the user scans sets of documents that are written in one of the natural (vernacular) languages and utilizing the digitized version of the

---

applications. The applications extract or categorize linguistic data from the text (using NLP processes) according to the criteria specified by the user. The final interpretation of the data thus processed remains the task of the user. Sources for philological research can be whole or only parts of books, scientific studies, journal studies, citation records, Internet sources, keyword databases, bibliographies, indexes, dictionaries, etc.

As an example of this process, using the free-access application [TagCrowd](#) for visualization of word frequency in any text can be mentioned. After uploading the selected literary text, the application provides the user with a visually attractive graph where the frequency of the word's occurrence is represented by its size. This can help literary critics or students of literature understand the diction of the literary texts and in some cases the composition of the text, or the hierarchy and relationships between characters, as is the case in Fig. 1 showing the visualized Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. Fig. 2 shows the frequency of words computed in the same literary text as processed by [Wordle.net](#).

For the study of English language texts, the following digital sources are most commonly used (in alphabetical order):

- *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (ABELL)* - this corpus has existed since 1920 and collects works on English phonology, syntax, lexicology, semantics, stylistics and dialectology. It also stores English literature including poetry, prose, drama, folklore texts, and other cultural artefacts. Since its inception, it has collected more than 860,000 entries, which include monographs, journal studies, critical editions of literary works, reviews, and collections of essays published worldwide.
- *Academic Search Complete (ASC)* - is a corpus focused on scholarly texts. It collects daily the contents of all issues of more than 6,000 academic journals (including more than 5,000 peer-reviewed scholarly journals), indexes and abstracts of more than 10,000 other journals, and more than 10,000 other scholarly monographs, reports, conference proceedings, etc.



- 
- *British Academic Written English Corpus (BAWE)* - a collection of written work by students at British universities
  - *British Academic Spoken English Corpus (BASE)* - contains transcripts of university lectures and seminars
  - *Corpus of Contemporary American English External (COCA)* - contains over a billion words from 8 genres: colloquial, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, academic texts, TV and film subtitles, blogs, websites. It is the only genre-balanced corpus of American English.
  - *Interactive platform for Corpus Analysis and Research tools (ICARUS)* - a tool developed at the University of Stuttgart. It enables dependency-based search and visualization.
  - *International Corpus of English Externals (ICE)* - has been under construction since 1990 and aims at the comparative study of English language texts produced around the world.
  - *Linguistic Bibliography Online (LBO)* - is a corpus supported by the international organization UNESCO and is globally recognized as a standard research tool for linguistic analysis. With over 400,000 bibliographic references to scholarly works in the field of linguistics, it is the most comprehensive bibliography of its kind. Approximately 20,000 entries are added each year.
  - *MLA International Bibliography (MLAIB)* - contains nearly 2 million bibliographic records (and links to their full versions) of journal studies, book publications, and qualifying papers in linguistics, literature, folklore, and film.
  - *Project Gutenberg* - contains more than 60,000 digitized literary works, from the earliest classics to modern copyright-free works, so users can use them for free. Digitized texts are immediately available for analysis with digital tools.

### **Digital tools for literary research and literary criticism**

Digital technologies can significantly streamline research work with textual material, mainly due to their speed and accuracy, which is unattainable for human researchers (Craig and Kinney, 2009; Craig and Whipp, 2010). An important aspect of digitally assisted literary research is the fact that programs

---

and software can analyse the text (identify elements, and components), but the actual interpretation of the data and drawing conclusions remains the responsibility of the researcher.

The integration of digital technologies into literary research is not meant to be an end in itself. Newly developed applications and their outputs should not only accelerate traditional research procedures, but also point to new correlations, relationships, and more effective ways of displaying (visualizing) data that would lead to a deeper understanding of the principles of the functioning of language and the nature of literature (Damian-Grint, 2008; Lohr, 2013; Moretti, 2005, 2017; Saltz, 2008; Travis and DeSpain, 2018; van Peer, Zyngier, and Viana, 2010; Walsh, 2008).

Here are some examples of freely available digital tools that researchers analysing verbal texts in English can choose from when performing a specific analytical task:

- annotating all types of verbal texts, including audio - AGTK: Annotation Graph Toolkit; NotaBene
- automatic tagging - CLAWS, Saplo, Spary, GENIA, MorphoDiTa, TreeTagger
- data mining from texts - Weka 3
- corpus analysis - CLaRK, WMatrix, IntelliText, @Philostei
- normalization - @Philostei, PICCL
- tokenization and lemmatization - Text Tonsorium, PICCL, CST's lemmatizer, FreeLing, GATE
- tools for creating short dictionaries and collocation lists - MonoConc
- user-friendly program for NLP - Natural Language Toolkit
- creation, management and analysis of spoken corpora - EXMARaLDA
- phonetic analysis and transcription of spoken speech and video recordings - Praat, Transana, Voicewalker
- text analysis and categorisation - JGAAP
- comparison and collation of multiple versions of text - Juxta
- sentiment analysis and opinion mining - Etuma Customer Feedback Analysis

- 
- Statistical processing, classification and clustering of natural language texts - MALLET - MACHine Learning for Language Toolkit
  - creating graphs and maps for literary texts - MindView, MapView, TimeLine, and Ngram Viewer
  - creating timelines from text - Time Mapper
  - visualization of verbal texts and other ways of processing them - R, Word Seer, WordTree.

The above reviews of resources and tools for computer-assisted philological research are by no means complete. New databases are being created every day, and application and software designers are constantly coming up with new and more sophisticated digital tools.



---

## *11 Literary education*

Reading and studying literature is an inseparable part of the general curriculum in any country. Reading texts of famous authors and subsequent disputes was the basic educational strategy from the times of Plato's Academia.

Despite the fact that literature is generally understood as a natural and unquestionable part of primary and secondary education, students still keep asking legitimate questions: Why should people study literature? What is its purpose?

The term **literary education** covers two broad areas: learning about literature and learning about life and humankind through literature. The concept is based on the belief, proved also by much research, that using literature in education (literature-based instruction) helps all students become better readers and better people. The overall aim of literary education is to prepare students for independent reading of literature and to make them critical readers.

Literature is present in a child's education from its very first day at school, or even earlier (bedtime stories, nursery rhymes, and fairy tales told by parents, children's jokes, songs, etc.). At school, literature is an integral part of literacy development, as an ideal material for training basic communication skills. Children go through four phases of early literacy development (**emergent reader – early reader – early fluent reader – fluent reader**) which cover the period between the ages of five to eight.

To become a reader able to understand literature as a language art takes much longer time than the entire literacy development. Describing this process, some authors name three types (or stages) of the reader (Žilka, 2006, p. 102): a **naïve reader** identifies events in the literary text with reality, a **sentimental reader** reads literary stories sensitively, mainly through his/her emotionality, and

---

a **critical (discursive) reader** is able to read a literary text as a sign and to construct its personally determined meaning.

The goals of literary education are much wider and broader than the goals of literacy development. Many works by the most respected thinkers and educators of previous millenniums, including Aristotle, Quintilianus, Confucius, Augustine, Comenius, Herbart and others, are linked by the common leitmotif: nothing contributes so much to personal growth and cultivation as the reading and studying of literature. Reading literature teaches us about beauty, provokes imagination and creativity (aesthetical development), gives us lessons in ethics and morality, and brings relaxation, enjoyment and excitement, or as Norton (1991, p. 2) wrote: “Literature entices, motivates, and instructs. It opens doors of discovery and provides endless hours of adventure and enjoyment”.

Literary texts are a good means for the improvement of students’ personal integrity. Since literary texts usually deal with serious and notable events in human life, they provide the opportunity for students/readers to confront their personal experience with what they have just read. In other words, there is no better material for the discussions about serious and crucial problems of contemporary life than literary texts.

Last but not least, reading literature fosters one’s cognitive skills (understanding chronological order, cause- and-effect relationships, creating overall meaning from parts and comprehending, etc.) and allows examining one’s **critical thinking**.

Although teaching critical thinking skills can be successfully applied in a broad range of areas, literature is the subject which, when not approached from a dogmatic perspective, opens space for an almost unlimited application of creative and critical thinking strategies. They are basic constituents of literature’s most natural activity - the process of interpretation (see the section on interpretation above) of its works on various levels of intellectual encounter. Moreover, many scholars see literature as a subject that provides readers with many opportunities to consider ideas, values, and ethical questions. The acts of interpretation of literary works also demonstrate, more than anything else, the

---

crucial role of the ethical aspect in critical thinking. This has always been emphasised, since the time of Socrates, as one of the most important dimensions of education. Its importance, however, is strengthened by our movement towards the information age with its alienating, and often dehumanising, technological tendencies.

### **Literature and foreign language education**

Reading and studying literature plays a role also in teaching foreign languages. Work with literary texts is important for future teachers, translators, interpreters and, naturally, philologists.

The use of literary texts belongs to some of the oldest techniques of organised language teaching and learning. In the ancient as well as medieval times, languages were learned through the reading of famous treatises or literary works written in the target language (mostly Greek or Latin). The teachers strictly adhered to the grammar-translation method. The method consisted of the “direct” reading and memorising of texts, their translation to a mother tongue and a consequent acquisition of grammatical structures and rules through the examples taken from the text.

The influence of the twentieth century’s reforming pedagogy deprived the grammar-translation method of its status of the most suitable language teaching method, and, consequently, weakened the position of literary texts as well. The “enemies” of using literary texts in language teaching usually point to a complicated, emotional lexis and frequent morphological and syntactic deformities in the texts’ structures. Literary texts, however, regained their lost status, especially through their aesthetic qualities, rich sensation (visualisation and audialisation), playfulness, fantasy, storytelling, humour, etc. No one would nowadays deny the fact that if teaching is methodologically well organised and carried out, literary texts provide an effective stimulus for the building of vocabulary, fixation of morpho-syntactic phenomena and a purposeful development of all four communication skills: reading, speaking, listening, and writing.

---

In the classical "didactics" of foreign languages (with its origins in ancient Greece and medieval Latin classrooms), literary texts held a special place - scholars saw literary texts as the highest form of language, and therefore they were the backbone of teaching and the main means of instruction. A foreign language (Greek or Latin) was taught exclusively through the translation of classical texts and the analysis of their grammar, giving rise to the traditional grammar-translation method. With the advent of alternative methods in the 20th century, literature fell into the background or disappeared from the syllabus of foreign language education altogether, since it was viewed as a distant, inauthentic form of language with significant features of elitism (Maley, 1989a). The situation changed with the advent of the communicative approach to foreign language teaching, and in 1989 Maley was able to announce that "literature is back, it is just dressed in different clothes" (Maley, 1989b, p. 59). To learn more, read Pokrivčák's study "Return to the Text" (2018).

Regarding the perception of the position and function of the study of literature within foreign language education, we can trace two relatively contradictory directions in contemporary foreign language didactics, which Tehan, Yuksel and Karagul (2015, p. 45) refer to as non-essentialist and essentialist.

Non-essentialists believe that literature is in no way necessary or essential to the development of foreign language communicative competence, and that it represents only one style (type) of language with which learners may or may not become familiar with.

A second, significantly more numerous group of authors, advocates that the study of foreign language literature should be an integral part of the study of a given language because literature facilitates a better understanding of cultural concepts, the development of critical thinking, aesthetic awareness, and the overall development of the learner's personality (Akyel and Yalcin, 1990; Arafah, 2018; Hall, 2005; Khan, and Alasmari, 2018; Lazar, 1993; Paran, 2008; Parkinson and Thomas, 2000; Pokrivčák and Pokrivčáková, 2006; Shanahan, 1997; Scott and Tucker, 2002).

---

In the next part, the issue of teaching Anglophone literature and integrating literature education into the development of foreign language communicative competence, which is somewhat flatly referred to in the Anglophone literature as "using literature in TEFL" is discussed.

This issue is currently being addressed by a large group of researchers who have long been following the position and roles of literature education within English language teaching in general (Akyel and Yalcin, 1990; Brumfit, 1981; Carter and Long, 1991; Ghazali, 2008; Hall, 2005; Hirvela, and Boyle, 1988; McKay, 1982; Lazar, 1993; Parkinson and Thomas, 2000; Tseng, 2010; Tucker, 2006) and undergraduate teacher education and philology programs separately (Alfauzan & Hussain, 2017; Davis, Gorell, Kline, and Hsieh, 1992; Padurean, 2015; Yilmaz, 2012).

In the linguodidactic literature, we encounter 4 main ways of looking at the interrelationship between foreign language education and literature:

- 1) Probably the largest group of researchers and experts approach literary texts as authentic linguistic material, the reception ("using") of which enables learners to perceive a specific type of written text and thus develop their foreign language communicative competence in a dominant way (literature is seen as a supportive means of language learning),

- 2) If the reading of literary texts in foreign language education focuses dominantly on literary aesthetic interaction, on the perception of the literary text as a specific artistic phenomenon and on the development of literary taste and literary competence, we speak of foreign language literary education (literary education in a foreign language);

- 3) If in the study of literature, we focus most on acquiring knowledge about foreign language literature, e.g. about the historical development of a given national literature, we are witnessing foreign language literary education.

- 4) It is also possible to approach literary texts as cultural artefacts and focus on the role of literature as part of cultural awareness and intercultural competence.

---

## Functions of literature in foreign language education

According to Lazar (1993), literature should have a place in any language course for a number of reasons, of which we select just a few:

- Reading texts in a foreign language develops students' language awareness,
- reading foreign language literature is usually motivating and enjoyable for learners,
- foreign language literary texts are authentic language material,
- literature as such contributes to the general development of learners,
- foreign language literature helps to understand foreign language culture,
- the reading of foreign language literary texts facilitates the non-violent, natural (indirect) acquisition of a foreign language,
- guided reading of literary texts in school develops students' analytical and interpretive skills,
- reading foreign language literature and then discussing it in a non-violent way leads students to talk about their opinions and feelings.

However, some authors also point out the possible risks associated with reading literary works in the context of foreign language teaching. This debate has basically settled on two aspects that language teachers should beware of (O'Sullivan, 1991):

- the linguistic difficulty of literary texts (including frequent distortions and increased expressiveness of language),
- the need for a deep knowledge of the cultural context not only of the foreign language but also of the phenomena being described if the reader is to understand the literary work adequately.

The presence of literary studies in the English language **curriculum** brings, however, also another important asset – a possibility to teach a foreign language purposefully. The acquisition of a foreign language should not be an ultimate end of language education, but a means for the real communication and the acquisition of new ideas, for the development of cultural (as well as intercultural)

---

understanding of universal human values. For this purpose, the following strategies typical for literary education to develop learner's critical reading and constructing the meaning should be included:

**Modelling:** presenting model texts and their model interpretations, demonstrating response strategies and discussions.

**Scaffolding:** an advancing turn from the transmission of ready-made knowledge from a teacher to students to learning literature through transaction between the teachers and students. The procedure of scaffolding is as follows: from strong teacher's support at the beginning through continual weakening of his/her help to rising students' independence. Scaffolding aims at shifting responsibility from the teacher to students).

**Cooperative learning:** reading texts in groups of peers followed by cooperative activities, e. g. group discussions, etc.

Techniques of **responding to literature** (based on independent close reading include outlining, retelling, rewriting, summarizing, mapping, analysing, generalizing, evaluating literary texts, etc. These techniques are then in focus of literary education at universities.

### **Literary education at Slovak universities**

Compared to the situation where literary education is not part of the core syllabus for English as a subject at primary and secondary schools, literary education in universities has a prominent position in the preparation of language professionals (including teachers, translators, and intercultural mediators). Research probes on this issue from the context of Slovak universities have been rather scarce, so far published in Blight (2012, 2018), Hriňák (2022, 2023), Javorčíková (2017), Kostelníková (1998, 2001, 2008), Pokrivčáková (2020), and Sucháňová (2022).

The study programmes of foreign language teaching (within the broader group of academic subjects for secondary education) are traditionally divided into 3 components at Slovak faculties of education and philosophy:

- linguistic component

- 
- literary (and intercultural) component
  - didactic component.

In her detailed analysis of the structure of these curricula, Blight (2018) found that in almost all faculties, the core of the literary component is compulsory literary-historical subjects (history of English and American literature), which are usually supplemented by elective literary-interpretive or specific literary subjects.

## **Research box 2**

### **Students' attitudes towards the study of Anglophone literature**

#### **Introduction**

Research on students' attitudes toward the study of Anglophone literature has not yet received systematic attention in Slovakia (the only exception being the study by Pokrivčáková, 2020). On the contrary, this area is relatively well treated in the international context. Hirvela & Boyle (1988) conducted research among English students at a Hong Kong university whose native language was Cantonese and who were beginning to study Anglophone literature (they had just taken an Introduction to Literature Studies course). Respondents found the literature course challenging because they perceived literary texts as a very different form of English. The main reason for the students' uncertainty was that they did not have enough experience with literature from high school. They had a strong preference for prose genres (novels and short stories) in their studies, and the greatest source of anxiety and frustration for them was reading poetry.

In a Turkish university setting, Yilmaz (2012) conducted his research by examining the attitudes of 105 third-year English teaching students (their ages ranged from 18-19 years) towards literature and its study through a 27-item questionnaire administered after they had taken two literature courses. A significant majority of respondents indicated that they found the study of literature desirable and "personally enriching". Of the teaching methods,



---

respondents indicated small group work (87.6%) as the most popular, followed by collaborative discussions (70%). Lectures received the lowest score in the ranking of effective methods for teaching literature (49.5%).

The aim of the research conducted by Zorba (2013) was to find out the views of prospective teachers of English as a foreign language on literature courses. The results showed that the students (89.8%) considered literature courses essential because, according to them, they provide language enrichment, improve reading skills, and supplement cultural information about the foreign language they are studying (Zorba, 2013, p. 1917). Students also suggested that literature courses should be enriched by watching TV or film adaptations, which would make them even more enjoyable.

The attitudes of 110 Malaysian students towards the study of English literature using a combination of three methods (questionnaire, interview and testing) were investigated by Ghazali (2008). She found that the respondents had highly positive attitudes towards their studies and found the study of literature enjoyable (90.9%).

Shakfa (2012) investigated the attitudes towards the study of English literature (specifically English drama) held by students at the Islamic University of Gaza (N = 133). The questionnaire research found that Arab students rated the study of English literature as very challenging because they had problems with the complex syntactic structure of English sentences, and at the same time, the metaphoric structure of English was alien to them, which resulted in additional difficulties in understanding the literary texts studied and their poetics (tropes, i.e. metaphors, similes, symbols, and some stylistic figures, caused particular problems for the students).

Padurean (2015) investigated the preferences and attitudes of Romanian students in the 3rd year of the Bachelor's degree at the University of Arad (N = 47 respondents) who studied English language and literature combined with Romanian language and literature. Using a 15-item questionnaire and focus groups, she found that 70% of her respondents found reading literature useful and important, while the remaining 30% were not interested in reading literature.

---

40% of the respondents read literature to develop language skills and cultural awareness, 36% said that reading literature was very difficult. 15% of the respondents found literature useless for their professional development and 9% found reading literature boring. Padurean also received interesting responses when asked what activities students would like to see in literature courses. Respondents reported that they were bothered when literature is taught in a "one-way" fashion, where the only activity students do is to write lecture notes. They would prefer to discuss literary works and present their own opinions and interpretations, which teachers should respect (sadly, a large proportion of respondents believed that they could not express their own opinions and that teachers would not accept their interpretations).

Tehan, Yuksel, and Karagul (2015) investigated the attitudes of Turkish MA students of English (N = 21). In this research, the majority of the students expressed their positive attitudes towards reading and studying literature, and 65% of the respondents stated that they thought literature courses should be compulsory (not elective).

The same issue in the Algerian context has been followed by Fehaima (2017). She conducted her research with a group of 63 English 1st year students at the University of Tlemcen through semi-structured interviews. The results (*ibid.*, p. 61) indicated a general dissatisfaction of the respondents with the way literature is taught (clear focus on the teacher, low student motivation and activity, lack of students' reading competence).

In 2017, Alfauzan & Hussain published another thought-provoking study (2017, pp. 1-17), in which they reported on research conducted among male undergraduate English students at a major university in Saudi Arabia. The research sample consisted of 59 students who provided quantitative data in the form of questionnaire responses and qualitative data in the form of retrospective essays. Respondents (to the surprise of the authors) initially showed generally positive attitudes towards the study of literature, but the authors observed dynamic changes in attitudes throughout the course (control measures were

---

taken at the middle and end of the semester), with a resulting significant shift towards negative values at the end of the semester.

Turkish students' attitudes towards integrating literature into English language teaching were also investigated by Karakaya and Kahraman (2013) using an attitudinal questionnaire (N = 14) administered to A2-level students in a private language school. They found that students were interested in learning literature as part of their English language learning and were not very satisfied with the traditional curriculum and textbooks (without literature). These students also agreed that English classes with integrated literature developed their critical thinking (71.3%) and creative skills (64.2%).

## **Research objectives**

In her analysis of the attitudes towards the study of literature reported by students of English at the Slovak university (Pokrivčáková, 2020), along with the objective to map students' reading preferences (as showed in Research box 1 in chapter 5), the author followed two more research objectives:

- To find out the attitudes of student teachers (combined English language teaching and single subject English language teaching) towards the study of Anglophone literatures within their programmes of study.
- To find out with what expectations students study literature.

## **Methodology**

The research study was conducted as a survey based on the original 25-item electronic questionnaire (in Survio). The responses of 149 students were collected in the beginning of the winter semester 2020/21 and later processed by simple statistic operations.

## **Results**

More than a third of the respondents (57 respondents = 38.26%) said that they wanted to study literature (without using the word must and without referring to the obligation to study literature). More than half of the participating students (76

respondents = 51.00%) said that although they must study literature, they like to read and look forward to studying literature. Thus, 133 students (89.26%) expressed a positive attitude towards studying. Only one tenth of the respondents (16 students = 10.74%) did not express a positive attitude and perceived studying literature more as an unwanted obligation within their study program.

The next item asked respondents to rate their reading skills. They were asked to classify themselves into one of the following categories: avid reader, good reader, reluctant reader and 'non-reader'. The data obtained are summarized in Table 4.8. Less than one-tenth of the respondents (13 students = 8.72%) considered themselves to be avid readers. More than half of the respondents (76 students = 51%) perceived themselves as good readers. This shows that almost 60% of the students have a positive attitude towards reading literature. Almost one-third of the respondents (45 students = 30.20%) identified themselves as reluctant readers and one-tenth of the respondents (15 students = 10.06%) categorized themselves as non-readers).

Tab 1: How do students evaluate themselves as readers?

<b>I evaluate myself as ...</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
an avid reader	13	8.72
a good reader	76	51.00
a reluctant reader	45	30.20
a non-reader	15	10.06
<b>total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100.00</b>

In the third part of the questionnaire, respondents expressed their expectations related to the study of literature and the ideas they would recommend to their literature teachers to make their study more effective.

To ascertain students' expectations, we compiled a list of eight possible benefits, which we had respondents rank in order of their personal perceived importance. The item with the highest importance would be given an average

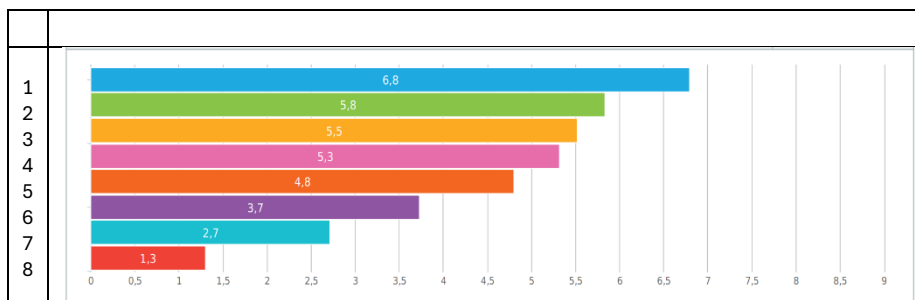
rating of 8.00 and the item with the lowest assigned importance would be given a rating of 1.00. The results obtained are shown in Table 4.9 and Figure 4.3.

Respondents assigned the highest degree of importance (6.8 out of 8) to improving their foreign language communication level by reading books in the original (English) language. Respondents also gave high importance (5.8 out of 8) to becoming familiar with the basic principles of literature. Comparatively high importance (5.5 out of 8) was attached to being able to read books and then discuss them (5.5 out of 8), and to getting tips on interesting and valuable books.

Tab 2: Expected benefits related to reading literature

	<b>I expect the following benefits:</b>	<b>Index of importance out of 8</b>
1	improving foreign language communication skills by reading books in their original language	<b>6.8</b>
2	becoming familiar with the basic principles of literature	<b>5.8</b>
3	reading books and discussing them	<b>5.5</b>
4	getting tips on interesting and valuable books	<b>5.3</b>
5	learning about the history of Anglophone literatures	<b>4.8</b>
6	learning how to write critical essays about literature	<b>3.7</b>
7	getting inspiration for my own writing	<b>2.7</b>
8	I cannot see any benefits	<b>1.3</b>

Graph 3: Expected benefits related to reading literature



---

The last (open-ended) item of the questionnaire was a question directed at what teaching methods and means students would value in literature courses. Here, students most often answered in the form of a short list of favourite methods or less often in the form of a few short sentences. Therefore, the tem was evaluated qualitatively.

The category of desirable/favourite methods for teaching literature was most often associated with students discussing works with the teacher and classmates and being able to work in groups. Students clearly identified lecture as their least favourite method for literature education. Self-study, watching film adaptations, quizzes, and analyses of works of students' own choosing were also among the educational practices cited as desirable by respondents. Items such as 'reading classic works' and 'making presentations' were among the less popular practices.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

The results obtained by our questionnaire research are fully consistent with existing research results from studies in other countries.

The respondents in our research showed a predominantly positive attitude towards literature and its study. Almost 60% of the students considered themselves to be enthusiastic or good readers. Only 16 respondents out of the total sample of 149 respondents (10.76%) said that they would study/study literature without any personal interest. These results are consistent with the findings of several international authors (Ghazali, 2008; Karakaya and Kahraman, 2013; Padurean, 2015; Tehan, Yuksel and Karagul, 2015; Tseng, 2010; Yilmaz, 2012; Zorba, 2013). The author was particularly pleased by the finding that her respondents included students who are themselves literary active and produce their own literary texts.

Even on the question of students' expectations in conjunction with the study of literature, the results obtained were not significantly different from previous findings of foreign authors (Akyel and Yalcin, 1990; Fehaima, 2017; Padurean, 2015; Yilmaz, 2012). Our respondents perceive the study of foreign language

---

literature dominantly in the context of foreign language education and they mainly expect literature courses to improve their foreign language communicative competence. Correlated with this is the preference for discussion methods and group work, in which students have the opportunity to 'hone' their communication skills, which is the primary focus of the students' study. From the data obtained, it can be assumed that students at this stage of their studies perceive literary texts more as linguistic material that can be reflected upon and discussed. These students' attitudes are (also given the institutionally established position of literature in foreign language education) understandable and expected, and also reflect the dominant communicative approach to literary education. However, our results also show that the formative aspect of literature (i.e., that working with a literary text and understanding it more deeply can lead to the reader's own personal cultivation) remains either unnoticed by students or significantly subordinated to language cultivation.

---

## References

- Abrams, Meyer Howard. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Heinle & Heinle, Thomson Learning, 1999.
- Akyel, A. and E. Yalcin. "Literature in the EFL class: A study of goal-achievement incogruence". *ELT Journal*, vol. 44, no. 3, 1990, pp. 174-180. DOI: 10.1093/elt/44.3.174
- Alfauzan, Abdullah H., and Abduljabbar G. Hussain. "Attitude towards and Perception of Literature in EFL Setting: A Case Study on QU Male Undergraduate Students". *English Language Teaching*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2017, pp. 1-17, doi: 10.5539/elt.v10n1p1.
- Arafah, Burhanuddin. "Incorporating the Use of Literature as an Innovative Technique for Teaching English". *AICLL, KnE Social Sciences*, 2018, pp. 24-36. DOI: 10.18502/kss.v3i4i.1914
- Aristotle. *Poetics*. Available on: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1974>
- Arp, Thomas. R., and Greg Johnson. *Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense*. New York: Heinle and Heinle, 2002.
- Bachtin, Michail M. *Román jako dialog*. Praha: Odeon, 1980.
- Baldick, Chris. *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1974.
- Barthes, Roland. *Image-Music-Text*. London: Fontana, 1977.
- Beard, Adrian. *The Language of Literature*. Routledge, 2003.
- Bennet, Andrew, and Nicholas Royle. *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*. Routledge, 2023.
- Beowulf*. Available on: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16328/16328-h/16328-h.htm>



- 
- Blake, William. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Project Gutenberg. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1934/1934-h/1934-h.htm>
- Blight, Dagmar. „An Analysis of Undergraduate and Graduate Literature Courses in a Teacher Training Programme“. *Studies in Foreign Language Education*, vol.4. Nümbrecht: Kirsch-Verlag, 2012.
- Blight, Dagmar. The status of literature courses in undergraduate and graduate English language teacher training programmes across Slovakia. *Return to the Text: Návrat k textu*. Trnava: Trnavská univerzita, 2018, pp. 66-84.
- Bodkin, Maud. *Archetypal patterns in poetry: Psychological studies of imagination*. New York: Vintage, 1958.
- Bootz, Philip. “The Functional Point of View: New Artistic Forms for Programmed Literary Works.” *Leonardo*, vol. 32, no. 4, 1999, pp. 307-316.
- Boxall, Peter. *Twenty-First-Century Fiction: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Boxall, Peter. *The Value of the Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Brooks, Cleanth. *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974.
- Brooks Cleanth, and Robert Penn Warren. *Understanding Poetry: An Anthology for College Students*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938.
- Brumfit, Christopher J. “Reading skills and the study of literature in a foreign language”. *System*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1981, pp. 243 – 248.
- Buda, Agata, and Anton Pokrivčák. *Images of the Anglophone world: Representation of culture through literature*. Radom: University of Technology and Humanities, 2021.
- Bunyan, John. *Pilgrim's Progress*. Project Gutenberg. Available on: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/39452/39452-h/39452-h.htm>.
- Burdick, Anne, Johanna Drucker, Peter Lunenfeld, Todd Presner, T., and Jeffrey Schnapp. *Digital Humanities*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012.
- Burton, Ben, and Ronald Carter. “Literature and the Language of Literature”. In Brown, K. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*. 2nd edition. Elsevier, 2006, pp. 267-274. DOI:[10.1016/B0-08-044854-2/00522-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-044854-2/00522-8)

- 
- Carter, Ronald, and Michael N. Long. *Teaching Literature*. New York: Longman, 1991.
- Cascardi, Anthony J. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Childs, Peter, and Roger Fowler. *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2006  
Available on:  
[https://www.uv.es/fores/The\\_Routledge\\_Dictionary\\_of\\_Literary\\_Terms.pdf](https://www.uv.es/fores/The_Routledge_Dictionary_of_Literary_Terms.pdf)
- Ciccoricco, David. *Reading Network Fiction*. The University of Alabama Press, 2007.
- Clark, Christina. *Children's and young people's reading today: Findings from the 2011 National Literacy Trust's annual survey*. London: National Literacy Trust, 2012.
- Clark, Christina, and Rosie Akerman. *Social inclusion and reading—an exploration*. London: National Literacy Trust, 2006.
- Clark, Christina, and Amelia Foster. *Children's and young people's reading habits and preferences: The who, what, why, where and when*. 2005. Available on: [www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/Reading\\_Connects\\_survey.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/Reading_Connects_survey.pdf)
- Corrigan, Robert W. *The World of the Theatre*. 2nd edition. Brown & Benchmark, 1992.
- Craig, Hugh and Alfred F. Kinney (Eds.). *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mystery of Authorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Craig, H., and R. Whipp. "Old spellings, new methods: automated procedures for indeterminate linguistic data". *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, 2010, vol., 25, no. 1, pp. 37-52.
- Cuddon, J. A., and M. A. R. Habib. *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. Penguin Books, 2014.
- Culler, Jonathan. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. Ithaca. New York: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- Culler, Jonathan. *Culler's Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

- 
- Damian-Grint, Peter. *Eighteenth-Century Literature in English and Other languages: Image, Text, and Hyertext*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.
- Danziger, Marlies. K., and Wendel Stacy Johnson (1966). *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*. Boston: d. C. Heat and Co.
- Davis, James N., Lyn Carbón Gorell, Rebecca R. Kline, & Gloria Hsieh, G. "Readers and Foreign languages: A survey of Undergraduate attitudes toward the study of literature." *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 76, no. 3, 1992, pp. 320-332.
- de Man, Paul. *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1983.
- Douglas, Yellowlees J. *The End of Books – Or Books Without End? Reading Interactive Narratives*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000.
- Dumitru, O. "What kinds of books did Americans read growing up, and what do they read now?" *YouGov Today*, 2022. Available on: <https://today.yougov.com/entertainment/articles/43270-reading-books-yougov-poll-july-19-22-2022>
- Eco, Umberto. *Postille a Il nome della rosa*. Milano: Bompiani, 1984.
- Einhaus, Ann-Marie. *The Cambridge Companion to the English Short Story*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Empson, William. *7 Types of Ambiguity: A Study of Its Effects on English Verse*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1953.
- Eliot, T. S. "Ulysses, Order, and Myth,". Rev. of *Ulysses* by James Joyce. *The Dial*, 1923, vol. 75, no. 5, p. 483. Available online. [http://www.ricorso.net/rx/library/criticism/major/Joyce\\_JA/Eliot\\_TS.htm](http://www.ricorso.net/rx/library/criticism/major/Joyce_JA/Eliot_TS.htm)
- Eliot, T. S. "Tradition and Individual Talent", 1949. Available on: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69400/tradition-and-the-individual-talent>.
- "Expressionism". *The Free Dictionary*. Available on: <https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/expressionism>

- 
- Fehaima, Amaria. "EFL Learners' Responses and Attitudes towards Literary Texts: The Algerian Context." *European Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 5(3), 2017, pp. 58 – 62.
- Ferber, Michael. *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Fiedler, Leslie A. "What Was Literature?" *Class Culture and Mass Society*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.
- Fokkema, Douwe Wessel, and Elrud Ibsch. *Theories of Literature in the Twentieth Century: Structuralism, Marxism, Aesthetics of Reception, Semiotics*. London: C. Hurst and Co., 1995.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming", 1908. Available on: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5441df7ee4b02f59465d2869/t/588e9620e6f2e152d3ebcffc/1485739554918/Freud+-+Creative+Writers+and+Day+Dreaming%281%29.pdf>
- Freytag, Gustav. *Die Technik des Dramas*. Project Gutenberg. Available on: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50616/50616-h/50616-h.htm>
- Frye, Northrop Frye. *The Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton University Press, 1957.
- Genette, Gérard. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.
- Ghazali, Siti Norliana. "Learner Background and their attitudes towards studying literature." *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research*, vol. 4, 2008, pp. 1-17.
- Glazier, Loss Pequeño. *Digital Poetics: Hypertext, Visual-Kinetic Text and Writing in Programmable Media*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Kindle). University Alabama Press, 2014.
- Godden, Malcolm, and Michael Lapidge (2013). *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Goulmari, Pelagia. *Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to Postcolonialism*. Routledge, 2014.
- Gray, Martin. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Pearson Education Limited, 1992.
- Guerin, Wilfred L. et al. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

- 
- Hall, Geoff. *Literature in language education*. New York: Palgrave, 2005.
- Hammond, Adam. *Literature in the Digital Age: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*. Project Gutenberg. Available on: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25344/25344-h/25344-h.htm>.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *Electronic Literature: What is it?* 2007. Available from: [eliterature.org/pad/elp.html](http://eliterature.org/pad/elp.html)
- Hilský, Martin. *Anglo-americká „Nová kritika“*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 1976.
- Hilský, Martin. *Modernisté*. Praha: Argo, 2017.
- Hirvela, Alan and J. Boyle. "Literature courses and student attitudes." *ELT Journal*, vol. 42, no. 3, 1988, pp. 179-184.
- Hopper, Rosemary. "What are teenagers reading? Adolescent fiction reading habits and reading choices". *Literacy*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2005, pp. 113-120.
- Hriňák, Jakub. "Anglophone literature and culture in literary education of future teachers." *EDULEARN22 Proceedings*, 2022, pp. 7806-7810, DOI: doi: [10.21125/edulearn.2022.1822](https://doi.org/10.21125/edulearn.2022.1822)
- Hriňák, Jakub. "Mapping the English language and literature students' attitudes towards active reading strategies." *INTED2023 Proceedings*, 2023, pp. 3679-3684, DOI: doi: [10.21125/inted.2023.0988](https://doi.org/10.21125/inted.2023.0988)
- Hughes-Hassell, Sandra, and Pradnya Rodge. "The leisure reading habits of urban adolescents." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2007, pp. 22-33.
- Hunter, Norman. *Professor Branestawm's Dictionary*. Puffin, 1975.
- Hurley, Michael D., and Michael O'Neill. *Poetic Form: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

- 
- I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*. 75th anniversary edition. Library of Southern Civilization. 2006.
- "Intertextuality". *LiteraryTerms.net*. <https://literaryterms.net/intertextuality/>
- "Intertextuality". *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*, pp. 121-123. Available on: [https://www.uv.es/fores/The\\_Routledge\\_Dictionary\\_of\\_Literary\\_Terms.pdf](https://www.uv.es/fores/The_Routledge_Dictionary_of_Literary_Terms.pdf)
- Jambor, Ján. "Intertextualita". In *Hyperlexikon literárnovedných pojmov*. Bratislava : SAV. Available on: <https://hyperlexikon.sav.sk/sk/pojem/zobrazit/terminus/a/intertextualita>
- Javorčíková, Jana. "Motivation, Engagement and Achievement in the EFL Literature Class: 21st Century Perspectives." *Teaching Literature for the 21st Century : Vyučovanie literatúry pre 21. storočie*. Nitra: SlovakEdu, 2017, pp. 89-115.
- Johnson, Greg and Thomas R. Arp. *Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense*. 13th edition. Cengage Learning, 2017.
- Jung, Carl Gustav. "Psychology and Literature", 1930. In *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*. Routledge Classic, 2023.
- Karakaya, Elif, and Aihan Kahraman. "Students' Attitudes Towards Literature Use and its Effects on Vocabulary Learning." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, vol. 2, no. 5, 2013, pp. 155 – 166. DOI: 10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.2n.5p.155
- Khan, M. Shamsur Rabb, and Alasmari, Ali Mohammad. "Literary Texts in the EFL Classrooms: Applications, Benefits and Approaches". *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, vol. 7, no. 5, 2018, pp. 167 – 179.
- Kirchof, Edgar Roberto. "Brazilian children's literature in the age of digital culture." *The Routledge Companion to International Children's Literature*, edited by John Stephens et al. Routledge, 2017.
- Kirschenbaum, Matthew G. "What is Digital Humanities and What's It Doing in English Departments?" *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, edited by M. K. Gold. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2012, pp. 3-11.

- 
- Kiss, Attila, and Ágnes Matuska. *Introduction to the Study of Cultures and Literatures in English*, 2013. Available on: <http://www.jgypk.hu/mentorhalo/tananyag/introduction/index.html>
- Klarer, Mario. *An Introduction to Literary Studies*. 4th edition. Routledge, 2023.
- Kosiński, Jerzy. *The Painted Bird*. Houghton Mifflin, 1965.
- Kostelníková, M. "Práca s literárnym textom vo výučbe cudzích jazykov." *Cizí jazyky*, vol. 42, no. 7/8, 1998, pp. 120-122.
- Kostelníková, M. "Raising language awareness and cultural awareness by using literary texts in the process of foreign language learning in Slovakia." *Cultural awareness and language awareness based on dialogic interaction with texts in foreign language learning*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 79-102.
- Kostelníková, M. *Dialog with Text in Foreign Language Teaching*. Bratislava: Lingos, 2008.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
- Kush, Celena. *Literary analysis: The basics*. Routledge, 2016.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Écrits: A Selection*. New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977.
- Lazar, Gillian. *Meanings and Metaphors*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Lewis, C. Day. *Poetic Image*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1947.
- "Literature". *Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus*. Available on: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/literature>
- "Literature". *Oxford Learners Dictionaries*. Available on: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/literature?q=literature>
- Lohr, Steve. "Dickens, Austen and Twain, Through a Digital Lens". *The New York Times*, January 26 2013. Available on: [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/27/technology/literary-history-seen-through-big-datas-lens.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/27/technology/literary-history-seen-through-big-datas-lens.html?_r=0).

- 
- Lone, Fayaz Ahmad. "Reading habits of rural and urban college students in the 21st century". *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 2011. Available on: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1617&context=libphilprac>
- Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.
- Magennis, Hugh. *The Cambridge Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Maley, A. "Down from the pedestal: Literature as resource". In R. Carter, R. Walker & C. Brumfit (Eds.), *Literature and the learner: methodological approaches*. Modern English Publications and the British Council. Edited by R. Carter, R. Walker & C. Brumfit, 1989a, pp. 1-9.
- Maley, A. "A comeback for literature?" *Practical English Teacher*, 10, 1989b, p. 59.
- Marshall, D. G. (1992). "Literary interpretation". *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*. Edited by Joseph Gibaldi. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.
- McEachern, Claire. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- McHale, Brian. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- McKay, Sandra. "Literature in the ESL classroom". *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1982, pp. 529-536. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3586470>
- McKenna, Michael C., Dennis J. Kearns, and Randolph A. Ellsworth. "Children's attitudes toward reading: A national survey." *Reading Research Quarterly*, 30, 1995, pp. 934-95.
- Meyer, Jim. "What Is Literature? A Definition Based on Prototypes." *Work Papers of the Summer Institute of Linguistics*, University of North Dakota, Session 41(1), DOI:[10.31356/silwp.vol41.03](https://doi.org/10.31356/silwp.vol41.03). Available on: <http://arts-sciences.und.edu/summer-institute-of-linguistics/work-papers/files/docs/1997-meyer.pdf>



- 
- Monfort, Nick. *Twisty Little Passages: An Approach to Interactive Fiction*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003.
- Moretti, Franco. *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History*. London and New York: Verso Books, 2005.
- Moretti, Franco. "Patterns and Interpretation". *Literary Lab Pamphlet* 15, September 2017. Available on: <https://litlab.stanford.edu/assets/pdf/LiteraryLabPamphlet15.pdf>
- Norton, Donna E. *Through the Eyes of a Child: An Introduction to Children's Literature*. 3rd edition. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991
- Norvell, George Whitefield. *The reading interests of young people*. Michigan State University Press, 1973.
- Orwell, George. *Animal Farm*. Project Gutenberg. Available on: <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks01/0100011h.html>
- O'Sullivan, Radhika. "Literature in the Language Classroom in MELTA". *The English Teacher*, vol. XX, October 1991).
- Padurean, Alina. "Approaches to teaching literature in EFL classrooms." *Journal of Romanian Literary Studies*, no. 6, 2015, pp. 195-200.
- Paran, Amos. "The role of literature in instructed foreign language learning and teaching: Anevidence-based survey." *Language Teaching*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2008, pp. 465-496.
- Parkinson, Brian, and Hellen Reid Thomas. *Teaching literature in a second language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000.
- Perrine, Laurence, and Thomas R. Arp. *Story and Structure*. 8th edition. Harcourt, 1992.
- Plato. *The Republic*. Project Gutenberg. Available on: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1497/1497-h/1497-h>
- Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Raven*. Available <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/17192>.
- Pokrivčák, Anton. "Cez prizmu dekonštruktivizmu". *Literatúra a bytie*. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa, 1997, pp. 27-34.
- Pokrivčák, Anton. "Return to the text". In Pokrivčák, A. et al., *Return to the Text/Návrat k textu* (pp. 13-26). Trnava: University of Trnava, 2018.

- 
- Pokrivčák, Anton, and Silvia Pokrivčáková. *Focus on literature*. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa, 2003.
- Pokrivčák, Anton, and Silvia Pokrivčáková. *Understanding literature*. Brno: MSD, 2006.
- Pokrivčáková, Silvia. "Krátka úvaha o postmodernej intertextualite". *Romboid*, vol. 32, no. 8, 1997, pp.68 - 71.
- Pokrivčáková, Silvia. "John Irving, Order, and Myth". *Tracing Literary Postmodernism*. Edited by Tibor Žilka. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa, 1998, pp. 129 - 132.
- Pokrivčáková, Silvia. *Karnevalová a satirická groteska*. Nitra: Garmont, 2002.
- Pokrivčáková, Silvia. *Anglophone Literature for Children and Juvenile Readers*. Trnava: University of Trnava, 2019.
- Pokrivčáková, Silvia. "Postoje budúcich učiteľov angličtiny k štúdiu cudzojazyčnej literatúry". *Literatúra v odbornej príprave učiteľov materinského a cudzieho jazyka*. Hradec Králové: Gaudeamus, 2020, pp. 48-66.
- Pope, Alexander. *The Rape of the Lock*. Available on: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/9800/9800-h/9800-h.htm>
- Ransom, John Crowe. *The New Criticism*. New Directions, 1941.
- Ross, Cathrine Sheldrick. "Reading in a digital age". *The digital factor in library and information services*, edited by G. E. Gorman. London: Facet, 2002, pp. 91-111. Available on: <https://camls.org/ce/ross.pdf>
- Ruskin, John. *The Stones of Venice. Volume 1*. Project Gutenberg. Available on: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/30754/30754-h/30754-h.htm>
- Ruskin, John. *The Stones of Venice. Volume 2*. Project Gutenberg. Available on: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/30755/30755-h/30755-h.html>
- Ruskin, John. *The Stones of Venice. Volume 3*. Project Gutenberg. Available on: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/30756>

- 
- Saltz, David Z. (2008b). "Digital Literary Studies: Performance and Interaction". *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies*, edited by Ray Siemens and Susan Schriebman. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. Available on: [https://companions.digitalhumanities.org/DLS/?chapter=content/9781405148641\\_chapter\\_18.html](https://companions.digitalhumanities.org/DLS/?chapter=content/9781405148641_chapter_18.html)
- Scott, Virginia M., and Tucker, Holy. (Eds.). *SLA and the literature classroom: Fostering dialogues*. Boston, MA: Heinle, 2002. Available on: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED481411.pdf>
- Shanahan, Daniel. "Articulating the relationship between language, literature, and culture: Toward a new agenda for foreign language teaching and research." *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 81, no. 2, 1997, pp. 164-74.
- Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Project Gutenberg. Available on: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1533/1533-h/1533-h.htm>
- Shakfa, Mahmoud Dawoud Ali. "Difficulties students face in understanding Drama in English literature at the Islamic University of Gaza." *English Language Teaching*, vol. 5, no. 9, 2012, pp. 95-103.
- Shelley, Percy Bussye. "A Defence of Poetry". La Insignia. Available on: [https://www.lainsignia.org/2006/diciembre/cul\\_002.htm](https://www.lainsignia.org/2006/diciembre/cul_002.htm)
- Shklovsky, Viktor. "Art as Technique", 1917. Available on: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/undergraduate/modules/fulllist/first/en122/lecturelist-2015-16-2/shklovsky.pdf>
- Sidney, Phillip Sir. "An Apology for Poetry". Available on: [https://bidoonism.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/philip\\_sidneys-defense-of-poesy.pdf](https://bidoonism.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/philip_sidneys-defense-of-poesy.pdf)
- Sir *Gawain and the Green Knight*. Available on: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/66084>
- Souriau, Étienne. *Encyklopedie estetiky*. Translated by Zdeněk Hrbata. Praha: Victoria Publishing, 1994.
- Stenberg, C. "Reading research in Sweden—a short survey". *67th IFLA Council and General Conference*, August 16-25, 2001, Boston.

- 
- Sterne, Lawrence. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. Available on <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/39270/39270-h/39270-h.htm>.
- Sucháňová, Zuzana. "Mapping the Slovak university students' attitudes towards literature courses and extensive reading in English. *EDULEARN2022 Proceedings*, 2022, pp. 7652-7656, DOI:10.21125/edulearn.2022.1782
- Svensson, Patrik. "Beyond the Big Tent". *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, edited by M. K. Gold. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2012, pp. 36-49.
- Tate, Allen. "The Man of Letters in the Modern World", 1952. <https://bradbirzer.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/tate-man-of-letters-1952.pdf>
- Tehan, Patricia, Dogan Yuksel, and Banu Inan Karagul. "The Place of Literature in an English Language Teaching Program: What Do Students Think About It?" *The Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2015, pp. 45 – 52.
- Tella, Adenyinka, and Samson Akande. "Children reading habits and availability of books in Botswana primary schools: Implications for achieving quality education." *The Reading Matrix*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2007, pp. 117-142.
- Tolstoy, Lev Nikolaevich. "What is art?", 1904. Project Gutenberg. Available on: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/64908/64908-h/64908-h.htm>.
- Travis, Jennifer, and Jessica DeSpain (Eds.). *Teaching with Digital Humanities Tools and Methods for Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. University of Illinois Press, 2018.
- Tseng, Fan-ping. "Introducing literature to an EFL classroom: Teacher's presentations and students' perceptions." *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2010, pp. 53-65.
- Unsworth, Len. *E-literature for Children: Enhancing Digital Literacy Learning*. Routledge, 2005. Available at: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781134317561>
- Vakkari, Pertti, and Sami Serola. "Perceived outcomes of public libraries". *Library & Information Science Research*, vol. 34, 2012, pp. 37-44.

- 
- van Peer, Willie, Sonia Zyngier, and Vander Viana (Eds.). *Literary Education and Digital Learning: Methods and Technologies for Humanities Studies*. Hershey, New York: IGI Global, 2010.
- Walsh, John A. "Multimedia and Multitasking: A Survey of Digital Resources for Nineteenth-Century Literary Studies". *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies*, edited by Ray Siemens and Susan Schriebman. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. Available on: [https://companions.digitalhumanities.org/DLS/content/9781405148641\\_chapter\\_6.html](https://companions.digitalhumanities.org/DLS/content/9781405148641_chapter_6.html)
- Wellek, René, and Austin Warren. *Theory of literature: A seminal study of the nature and function of literature in all its contexts*. New York, Hartcourt, Brace and Company. Available on: <https://ia902904.us.archive.org/12/items/theoryofliteratu00inwell/theoryofliteratu00inwell.pdf>
- Wicks, Jonathan. "Patterns of reading among teenage boys: the reading habits and book preferences of 13-15-year-old boys". *New Library World*, vol. 96, no. 5, 1995, pp. 10-16
- Wimsatt, W. K., and Monroe Beardsley. *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the meaning of poetry*. University of Kentucky Press, 1957.
- Wordsworth, William. "Preface to the second edition of the Lyrical Ballads". Available on: <https://faculty.csbsju.edu/dbeach/beautytruth/Wordsworth-PrefaceLB.pdf>
- Yilmaz, Cevdet. "Introducing Literature to an EFL Classroom: Teacher's Instructional Methods and Students' Attitudes toward the Study of Literature." *English Language Teaching*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2012, pp. 86-99.
- Zorba, Mehmet Galip (2013). "Prospective English Language Teachers' Views on Literature- Oriented Courses at Akdeniz University's ELT Department." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 70, 25 January 2013, pp. 1911-1918. Available on: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.01.269>
- Žilka, Tibor. *Vademecum poetiky*. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa, 2006.

---

Žilka, Tibor. *Od intertextuality k intermedialite*. Nitra: Fakulta stredoeurópskych štúdií Univerzity Konštantína Filozofa, 2015.

Žilková, Marta. *Intertextuálne a intermediálne interpretácie*. Nitra: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Konštantína Filozofa, 2012.

---

***Basics of Literary Studies***

Anton Pokrivčák, Silvia Pokrivčáková

Published in 2023 by University of Trnava  
as a free-access electronic textbook

ISBN 978-80-568-0577-0

DOI <https://doi.org/10.31262/978-80-568-0577-0/2023>

