

THE CONCEPTION OF THE AUTHOR IN A LITERATURE CLASSROOM

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The article deals with the problem of author studies in the process of teaching literature. Language is always associated with the person who used it in that context. Knowledge of the language of another mind rests on knowledge of the language of one's own. Author studies help students to build critical thinking and other skills of interpreting literature.

The notion of the author is a debatable question in literary studies. The conception of D. Bleich, the representative of the phenomenological approach to literature in American criticism, is based on psychoanalytical model. It is a combination of theory and classroom teaching. In his work "Subjective Criticism" the author tends to encourage further research in the field of reading and writing in the process of teaching literature.

It is common knowledge that when language is perceived, it is always associated with the person who originated it in that context. E.D. Hirsh uses this standard to claim that the most fundamental means of understanding literary language is to find out how its originators intended it. The critic argues that, "There is no magic land of meanings outside human consciousness" [3, p. 101]. The search for the author's intention is justified on the same principle on which we try to determine a speaker's intention in a conversation.

In pedagogical situations in American schools where biography is not discussed directly, it is often assumed that whatever meaning is attributed to a work of literature, it is the result of the author's action. Often, interpretive inquiry turns

against what is the most likely logic in the author's mind. "To make it more valid, the inquiry should be conceived in terms of two issues: the reader's conception of the author before and during reading, and after it" [1, p. 179].

By the time students become familiar with more of a writer's work and especially with his biography, their conception of a literary work may change considerably.

The change may refer to a reduced identification with a character and it results in a more decisive objectification of a writer, a greater understanding of him. The writer becomes more of a person and less of an image or hero, and students feel their own role more acutely in their formulation of the reading experience. Finally, they are able to distinguish their own sense of selves from their sense of identification with the author.

Students are offered to write their response statements to analyze their feelings and emotions before and after reading the text. Between writing the first and second response statements, students acquire a great deal of new information about the writer and his work. The effect of this new material on them is an important matter. They know some features of a writer's personality which they could not perceive during their first reading. They can understand some details of a literary work as the writer's portrayal of himself, and they can change the perception of a writer's personality and his works. These feelings are, as a rule, the result of a revised self-image. Knowing the personality of a writer actually means knowing themselves better. New conception of an author acquires meaning and consequence as a function of motives originating in subjective concerns while reading.

The otherness of a literary work is created by the subjective reader in the service of that reader's motives. The author is the locus of objectification: the greater the familiarity with his work, the easier it is to conceive him as a distinct individual, or objectify him. Such objectification represents the construction of the author out of the materials of one's experience with his work and other available information. "Knowing an author" means knowing one's own conception of the author.

The documents and other historical artifacts used by a biographer are the most authoritative basis to conceptualize the individual under study. The formulation can be more or less adapted to the biographer's community and to subsequent readers, and it can be used as an influence in that community if it serves subjective and intersubjective literary interests. Any biographical effort is necessarily interpretive being the biographer's motivated resymbolization of "the author".

Every reader's conception of an author is his own construction. The process of recursive reconstruction produces new knowledge. The search is most productive when it is the consequence of knowledge of oneself. Any biographical interest is deeply intimate and highly subjective. Knowledge of the language and literature of another mind rests on knowledge of the language of one's own.

Author studies help to build critical thinking skills of the students. While doing author studies they learn to compare and contrast themes, analyze the text and illustrations, make connections between an author's life and his work and between the reader's own life and work.

Once students have found an author whose works appeal to them, that appeal can be leveraged into a rich learning opportunity. Writing as a process is more clearly understood when students begin to study authorship. Literature serves as a model for the students' own language development. They study the author's techniques, learn how to create suspense, use figurative language.

The author study helps to engage students in the reading process and arouse their interest to literature.

When researching authors, it can be especially interesting to see how they have integrated their own life and experiences into their books. Students can look out for these connections and record them in their journals.

Sometimes teachers prefer to start with an autobiography, check what the author has written about him/herself. Getting an author's own insight into his life is a good start of studying his works.

The 21st technology has transformed the learning process, but the author study remains a fixture of the curriculum. New techniques help to redefine the powerful teaching tool to develop the interest of 21st-century learners.

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