

## **Incorporating Teaching of Literature in Humanities and Education**

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### **Abstract**

*The foremost function of literature is to impart pleasure to the reader or onlooker, but the varied influences of literature cannot be limited to one function. While deriving pleasure out of a literary work is quite natural, an associated utility of literature can be imparting moral education through inclusion of literature in teaching of humanities and education. The paper examines the impact that literature has on human mind and life across time and age. Hence, how can works of literature be used as educational tools constitutes the central subject matter of the current paper. The paper begins with defining literature, focuses on moral education and goes on to link the above ideas with children's literature. Also, the analysis sheds light on the current approaches useful in the present context. The paper is an investigation of the role that literature plays and can play in moral education. The analysis offers pertinent insights for policymakers and educationists.*

### **Keywords**

Humanities, Literature, Educational Tools, Moral Education

### **Introduction**

Aristotle associated literature (poetry) with the highest aesthetic and intellectual pleasure as it imbues us with the joy of learning through mimesis and allows us to understand the power of pity and fear. According to Aristotle's *Ethics*, the intellectual pleasure of contemplation that literature induces is the highest and most proper to human beings. The present paper wishes to understand whether this cognitive aspect of literature can produce a beneficial effect if incorporated in the teaching of humanities subjects such as language, history, philosophy, law etc. Whereas Sciences

and technological domains are progressive in nature, subjects in humanities are both progressive and regressive as they evolve only through a greater understanding of the past wisdom and understanding.

The paper intends to examine literature in terms of its impact and influence on human life. It is undeniable that literary creation has a broad scope and that they touch on almost every element of life. It should be noted that various people from diverse social, political, cultural, economic, or intellectual backgrounds may have varied perspectives on absorbing and infusing in the conscience of the same literary

work. Literary texts with their varied aspects can mould our personality for good but it is necessary to seize things in a timely manner. Fiction has its contribution in human life as it educates people. Direct or oblique morals are used in literature. Different genres of literature such as prose, poetry, drama and novel can be put to use as powerful educational tools.

### **Defining Literature**

Forms of literature are wide: oral, written, children, science fiction, biography, mystery, fantasy. At various levels, it performs various roles. Philosophical ideas are innate in literature. Literature and society's life are inextricably linked. Life shapes a culture's literature, and literature reveals the true nature of any community. Literature has an impact on us and helps us grasp various aspects of life.

Literature emerges from life, reacts to it, and is nourished by it. It may refer to a body of written works as well as oral stories. It ranges from creative writings to works of technical or scientific order but mostly it applies to plays, essays, fiction, and nonfiction of philosophical genres that put to work the faculty of imagination. Literature is any piece of art in which the affective element takes precedence. Literature is apart from all other forms of art. It doesn't have its own medium. It contains a wide range of mixed-genre books. It allows us to understand human interactions through its mimetic representations and nourish the sense of ethics or lack of it. Life is built on the foundation of literature. It focuses on a variety

of issues from tragic human ventures to stories about the ever-popular hunt for love. While the text is technically printed in words, it comes to life in the mental imagination and helps develop cognitive ability. Literature allows people to perceive the world through the eyes of others, and occasionally even through inanimate objects; as a result, it becomes a window to the world. It is a journey documented in words and propelled by the reader's imagination. Finally, literature is a means for the readers to experience and understand from it episodes ranging from the saddest to the happiest touching upon their hearts.

Even before there were human societies in this world, there were stories found among the stars, under the depths of the great seas, and inside the densest of woods. Fiction was there much before humans were able to read and write with the words that our forefathers invented and are found engraved on stone tablets and wall carvings. Hence, literature is the bedrock upon which human cultures, beliefs, and traditions are built.

### **Moral Education**

Teaching moral values through stories, poems, or literature has been a very old system of moral education, dating back to the time of Panchatantra, Ali Baba, and Aesop's fables. It was a time when story teaching was assumed to be simple so that we could go over the story again and again.

Religious books have always been claimed to be the true path shower, full of wisdom and moral instructions. For many centuries in the Western world, the Bible was *the* book. Both the old and new testaments were the sole criterion for judging one's life and finding relief from life's difficulties. However, the invention of printing press in the fourteenth century changed the trend and greatly increased the role and responsibility of literature. It was praised by the common man because literature was then very easy to approach, read, and store for a lifetime in the pages, possibly due to the invention of printing. This drastic change, however, did not occur overnight. It sparked a new debate about whether literature could help people find answers in the most moral way possible and live correctly. And the fictional lives and fantasies of literature have affected us since time immemorial and continue to influence our lives and moral sense.

From the most fundamental level of learning, today's educators and critics have expanded the range of creativity and dimensions of literary work. The question is, however, what kind of moral value should be taught. Whether it is religious, democratic, civic, individual, or universal in nature. Modern educators use literature in a multifaceted approach to improve society, behavioral development, problem solving skills, and the right attitude to deal with social situations. By narrowing the definition, literature merely promotes moral literacy and develops in stages by following various specific sequences. This approach focuses primarily on

instilling moral values in adolescents so that they can adapt fairness, justice, equity, and human dignity, as well as other values that contribute to social, personnel, and aesthetic growth. This assists students in developing their ability to think more logically and socially about moral issues. "Educators use the sequential stage to encourage students to develop more complex moral reasoning patterns and levels", (Khan, 2014).

This review study investigates the role of literature in moral education from various standpoints. The trajectory includes a wide spectrum ranging from broad considerations to more specific issues that are still debated today, such as the distinction between individual and social virtues. Others, such as cultural dependence of morality, dissimilarities between artistic and ethical dimensions of literary works, and distinctions between moral consciousness and behavior, cast doubt on any literature in the post-structuralist era. Considerations of the role of English literature in moral education from the era of Victorians to the present day are used to illustrate the discussion.

The discussion of dilemmas that policymakers and educators face today focuses on three aspects justifying literature's morally educative power: cultural relativism between literature and ideology, the distinction between literature's artistic and ethical power, and finally, reservations about the transference of

moral mindfulness acquired through literature to actual moral conduct (Pantic, 2006).

### **Children Literature**

Giving children access to a wide range of literature is crucial to their success. Parents, teachers, and society members must all work in sync to instill a liking and passion for reading in the next generation. Reading literature is beneficial not only for developing cognitive skills necessary for success in school or at work, but it is also beneficial for other reasons. Donna Norton, in her book *Through the Eyes of a Child*, point out towards the value of literature for young people. Children's literature is important and is deemed to be crucial as it gives students opportunities to respond to literature; to appreciate their own cultural heritage as well as the cultural heritages of others; it helps in instilling higher emotional intelligence and imagination among students; it fosters the growth and development of the personality of students and their social skills; and it transmits important literature and themes from one generation to the next. These values are critical for children to learn because "developing positive attitudes toward our own culture and the cultures of others is necessary for both social and personal development". (Donna Norton in *Through the eyes of a child*) When teaching young learners about multicultural heritage, however, utmost caution must be exercised in picking books and content to offer to them. Many stories, including some folktales, contain preconceptions and errors

about different ethnic groups. These include works like *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky: A message from Chief Seattle* by Chief Seattle and *The Rough-Face Girl* by Rafe Martin. These stories portray Native Americans incorrectly and contain misinterpretations of historical events. (Crippen, p. 2022)

Children's literature aids in the development of emotional intelligence in students. Stories can help people grow emotionally and morally. Children's literature contains various situations of predicament forcing the fictional characters to make moral decisions and help children to contemplate the rationale for such decisions. In many ways it is an important skill to see modelled for children (Norton, 2010, pp.34). *Guji Guji* by Chih-Yuan Chen is a story of a baby crocodile who is adopted by a duck family. In a chain of events, the crocodile is faced with a dilemma where must choose between deceiving the family that has adopted him and returning to his species. Finally, he chooses to remain true to his beliefs and not betray his adopted family.

*The Scar* by Jane Dotchin is about a boy who grows into a wonderful swimming coach and gives back the lost courage to his erstwhile trainer who had suffered from a horrid experience. It also teaches how to grieve as the young boy lost his mother but felt her presence close to him. As many young children cannot comprehend death, this requires an intricate and elevated level of emotional intelligence.

Children's literature is extremely beneficial in both the school and at home. Parents and teachers must be able to make a distinction between the literature which is favorable from the one which is unfavorable for students so that the pupils are given the best books for right value development through fostering these crucial literary values and considering developmental areas. Literary criticism is important because it enables students of all ages to respond to literature while simultaneously gaining cultural understanding, emotional intelligence and creativity, social and personality development, and literature history. Children can benefit from reading quality literature as they grow into sensible, successful, thoughtful and empathetic adults.

The purpose of this review is to look at different perspectives on the role of literature in moral teaching. Its goal is to move from general ideas to more concrete questions, such as the separation between individual and collective morality, which are being widely discussed today.

Others, such as morality's cultural relativity, the discrepancies between conceptual and moral components of literary works, and the distinctions between moral consciousness and attitude, put doubt on post-structuralist literature. The concept is illustrated with examples of the role of literature in English moral instruction from the Victorian era to the current day.

### **Current Approaches**

Only a few educational theorists believe that if the adult world would just get out of the way, children would mature into fully realized people. Most thinkers, educators, and parents agree that children are born helpless and require the care and guidance of adults well into their adolescence, if not beyond. Children, in particular, must learn how to coexist peacefully in society. Historically, the mission of schools has been to instill in children both intellectual and moral values. Moral education is concerned with moral virtues such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. Every long-lasting community has a moral code, and this is the responsibility and concern of its adults to instill this code in the hearts and minds of its children. Adults have expected schools to contribute positively to children's moral education since the beginning of time. Moral education was the primary concern when the first common schools were established in the New World. The moral code, according to New England Puritans, was found in the Bible. As a result, it was critical that children be taught to read in order to gain access to its foundational wisdom. The colony of Massachusetts passed a law requiring parents to educate their children as early as 1642. The famous Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647 strengthened the law. Children would be vulnerable to Satan's traps if they were unable to read the scriptures.

Character education is the banner under which the vast majority of efforts in public education

to address the moral domain are currently marching. Furthermore, these deliberate initiatives to address concerns of character formation are typically referred to as character education programmes because they are relatively new. The term "programme," on the other hand, refers to individual efforts that replace or supplement a school's curriculum (e.g., a new reading programme or mathematics program). While there are both commercial and noncommercial character education programmes available, the majority of them advocate for a character education infusion method in public schools.

In general, an infusion approach to character education seeks to reassert the importance of character formation in schooling. Rather than simply adding character development to the school's other responsibilities, such as numeracy, literacy, career education, health education, and other goals, a focus on good character pervades the entire school experience. In essence, character education joins intellectual development as the school's overarching goals. Furthermore, character education is viewed as an important contributor to knowledge- and skill-acquisition goals, rather than as a competitor to or a supplement to these goals. Students must develop the virtues of responsibility and respect for others to foster a healthy learning environment. They must replace habits of laziness and sloppiness with habits of self-control and diligence. The infusion approach is based on the belief that good habits that contribute to character

formation also contribute directly to character formation which in turn contribute to the academic goals of schooling. Service learning is the most popular approach to character education. This approach, also known as community service, is a deliberate effort to provide students with opportunities, guidance, and practise as moral actors. Many schools and school districts have comprehensive service-learning programmes based on the Greek philosopher Aristotle's concept of character formation (e.g. a man becomes virtuous by performing virtuous deeds; brave by performing brave deeds)

It is necessary to organize the partnership between teachers and students and help the teacher not to be the only organizer of the class. As Sylvain Connac opines

*“When I set up the board, it was to give the children back the power and motivation to be in the class and also to see that it was not me who carried all the projects, who had to be the vector of enthusiasm, the children are able to do that, I can just do my job to bring and enrich the environment in which they are, to bring knowledge, to help them to correct themselves, I feel more in my role of teaching, I am close to children and their needs, give them back the power over their lives too”*  
(Connac 2018).

Introducing counseling as a mutual protection filter seems to be also plausible. It underlines the aims of student councils which go far beyond the mere pacification of relations in the classroom (Pagoni 2010). It invites students to consider the words of students as a vector of humanist values, by and for a democratic organization of exchanges. By thinking of the child as "the measure of educational methods and procedures" (Claparède, 1912, p. 9), cooperative councils show themselves to be suitable mechanisms to support school learning and educate in commitment, responsibility, brotherhood and peace.

### Conclusion

So, can we entertain such displays of emotion, beliefs, thoughts, and ideas without relating them to the everyday practical reality that they are based on? Although it is plausible to argue that literature makes us more human because it can be understood as an engaging dialogue with itself, moral philosophy has rarely accorded this role to telling stories. It enables students to develop sensitivity and cognitive imagination. For example, in 18th century literary works, the attention on "sentiments" emphasizes sensitivity to the reality, emotions, and mood-stages of others around us, which impacts our own feelings and responses. A person's ability to construct sensitivity implies a high level of emotional imagination. Literature allows us to experience multiple lives. Our imagination takes us to moments, places, and realities we've never seen or experienced before. We can have

the same experience as they do by reading about other people's ideas and perspectives. Second, it reminds us of a number of instances when he is trying to teach us something and expects us to modify our beliefs. Third, the relationship between life and literature is not strictly instructive; rather, we use a variety of artistic means to promote consciousness about many complicated topics and to make use of literature's instructional ability.

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