ISSN:2617-8494

LITSIGNALS

The IATEFL Literature Special Interest Group Publication

January 2026 Issue #55

Price £4.50 Free for LitSIG members www.iatefl.org

From the editor's desk

Welcome to the 55th issue of *LITSIGNALS*. This issue brings together a wide range of international contributors, with a large number from Argentina – gracias! So many among us recognise now more than ever the power of literature: for language teaching and learning, and for our own emotional well-being. All too often, literature is undervalued and even dismissed, particularly as technology increasingly enters our lives. This issue's articles highlight the innovative and exciting ways in which literature is successfully being used globally in contemporary English teaching and learning.

2025 was a wonderful year of professional development and community with the IATEFL conference, a webinar, online conference and roundtable. Highlights of our 2025 events are at the end of this issue. We are looking forward to the 59th annual IATEFL conference in April 2026 in Brighton.

In "*The Raindrop Crossing* by Kristopher Hull: teaching vocabulary and story through a contemporary self-published novel" Susan Abrill discusses the challenges of choosing a class novel and shares her success in using a self-published novel to inspire and unify her multicultural class.

In "Building an extensive reading library with Canadian content and free digital access" Sepideh Alavi outlines the process involved in creating free digital country-specific graded readers for adult language learners.

In "Literature in an age of distraction: part 1" Alan Maley argues that literature is more than ever relevant and useful in our increasingly distracted world.

In "Integrating literature and STEAM through artifact creation" Andres Villalba showcases a successful inter-disciplinary approach and provides a variety of activities and assessment criteria.

In "Hath not a Jew justice?" Israel Veizaga examines the portrayal of Jewish characters in medieval plays and shows how these negative caricatures have reinforced discrimination.

In "Children's books and comprehensive sexuality education" Vanesa Polastri provides summaries of a variety of helpful picture books to teach young learners about their bodies, relationships, children's animals' and human rights, gender and diversity.

In “Recalibrating the GPS of our English reading classes: Is our final destination killing our students’ enjoyment of reading?” Nisela Cittadino provides three helpful remedies for the challenging contemporary issue of readicide.

In “Intertextuality in *Into the Forest”* Karina Durán explores how intertextuality functions in the story and shares practical teaching ideas.

In “What was left behind” Paola Dell’Acqua discusses migration and suggests three children’s books that help young learners learn about migration.

As always, it is the contributors and readers who make *LITSIGNALS* possible, so a heartfelt thank you! Please consider writing for us. You can write an article about classroom activities featuring literature (novels, short stories, theatre, poetry, media, film and the arts), review a book, conduct an interview, etc. There are many options! More information: https://www.iatefllitsig.org/publication

Laura Hadwin
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From the coordinator's desk

Welcome to the IATEFL Literature Special Interest Group's publication, *LITSIGNALS*. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed an article, a clear sign that our community is very much alive and thriving. This issue offers both a space and a platform for reflection, exchange, and inquiry into why literature and cultural issues matter, how we teach them, the challenges teachers face, and how we imagine the future of our field.

We look forward to continuing this exchange at the IATEFL annual conference in Brighton and hope to meet many of you there. As in previous years—most recently in Edinburgh—LitSIG will be running a Pre-Conference Event (PCE). This year, our focus is on assessing the impact of AI on the production, interpretation, and teaching of literary texts. However, we have chosen to approach this topic from a broader perspective under the title *From Text to Tech: Rethinking Literature in the Digital Age.* Some of you may feel hesitant about this theme, perhaps wondering whether we are simply jumping on the latest bandwagon. We believe, however, that this is a timely and valuable opportunity to reflect critically on recent developments and to evaluate their implications for our work. We believe it is time to confront these changes head-on—to examine not only the risks, but also the creative possibilities and pedagogical potential of the AI revolution. Our aim is for participants to leave the conference inspired and better equipped to engage responsibly and confidently with technology in literature teaching.

LitSIG is a vibrant and supportive community for anyone interested in using literature to teach English and the creative arts more broadly. Our events and publications are aimed at pre-service and in-service teachers, teacher trainers, and researchers working with prose fiction, poetry, extensive reading, film, drama, music, the visual arts, and creative writing to promote English language learning and teaching. If you are looking for inspiration, professional growth, and a strong sense of community, LitSIG is the place to be! As LitSIG Coordinator, I would like to thank you for your continued support and invite you to become an active part of our work. Whether you are a seasoned professional or at the start of your teaching career, we welcome your ideas and contributions. Publishing your work in *LITSIGNALS* is a wonderful way to share your voice, and I would like to thank the editor, Laura Hadwin.

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LitSIG

Pre Conference Event

From Text to Tech: Rethinking Literature in the Digital Culture

MEET THE SPEAKERS

PROF. DR. CHRISTIAN LUDWIG

REBECCA FLÄMIG

RUSSELL STANNARD

20th April, 2026

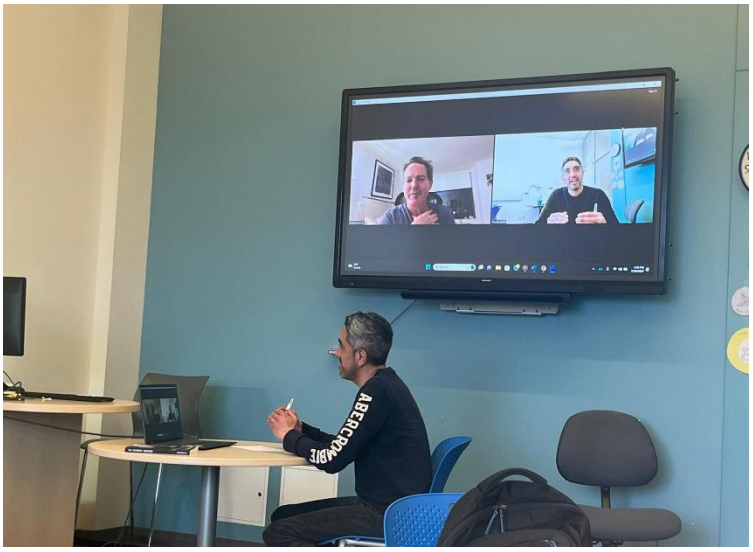
The Brighton Centre

MORE INFO

IATEFL BRIGHTON 2026

The Raindrop Crossing by Kristopher Hull: teaching vocabulary and story through a contemporary self-published novel

Susan Abrill



Students on a Zoom call with author Kristopher Hull

Two years ago, as the term was about to begin in January, I was making the syllabus for what I knew would be a small, culturally diverse, mixed-age CEFR C1/C2 General English class. With such a mixed bag of learners, I thought that the glue that would hold the class together would be the shared experience of a novel study. However, standing alone in the dim book closet amongst stacks of worn classics, I felt uninspired. I decided to leave the closet empty-handed and instead take a chance on a brand-new self-published novel I had heard about, *The Raindrop Crossing* by Kristopher Hull, an independent author who is a fixture in New York City, where he is a well-known roving street pianist.

Finding appropriate novels for EAL classroom study is a high-stakes decision. Once we put a book title on the syllabus, possibly even a reading schedule, and pass the books out, or have students purchase them, there is no turning back. Teacher and students alike are stuck with the book. The selection of the novel can feel like a highwire act. If the students don't like it, the whole semester will be a grind. After all, we want to give the students a relevant and challenging learning experience, not make their lives miserable. Many students think they want to read classic novels as a kind of laurel wreath crown of their English level. They like the cachet of reading a classic, but what they don't realize is the extent to which the antiquated lexis found in the classics will clash with their own communicative goals. As it is, many of them have register problems, speaking too formally with words they have acquired in textbooks in their home countries. Choosing contemporary novels is also tricky but in another way. Many contemporary novels, although interesting, rely on niche references to pop culture that alienate EAL students, making the reading experience too dense. Or the dialogue is written in dialect. Or there is explicit sex, violence, and the language that goes with that.

And the biggest downside these days, especially, to any widely popular novel is the dozens of summaries, essays, Cliffs Notes, and analyses available online, which ensure that today's students, who are not big readers to begin with, will use AI on every assignment.

The Raindrop Crossing is named for Chopin's Prelude in D-flat major, Op. 28, No. 15, widely known as "The Raindrop Prelude." It is a modern novel that seems to be taking place as we speak. The author, an avid reader himself, followed discussions about the tech race to build and harness AI and built this into his story. The tale can be seen as a kind of artificial intelligence guardrail that was written ahead of its time, the dangers of which have only recently come into focus for readers. In fact, the villain in the novel may resemble a tech mogul you know. The novel is a well-constructed 236 pages, populated by characters in their 20s and 30s of various cultures and backstories, most of whose plotlines weave around each other in New York City, among other places. Classical music forms a central thread, woven through cities such as New York, Budapest, Paris, and Tangier. The narrative also explores the challenges of young adults trying to establish themselves, and it offers glimpses into the elusive world of the ultra-rich. Many chapters unfold on a large yacht, introducing specialized nautical vocabulary. There are also a biotechnology storyline and an exploration of the power wielded by AI pioneers, and perhaps by AI itself. The language is precise and expressive, and the thematic range is refreshingly unconventional.


Kristopher Hull in New York City

Author Kristopher Hull, who wrote his first novel while raising his son in Manhattan and working part-time as a concert pianist, draws from his rich personal background as a child in Africa, Europe, and Asia, a sailor, a world traveller, and an alumnus of a prestigious New England boarding school where many of his classmates were the children of influential families. He brings to the page elaborate settings, insight into privileged subcultures, nuanced wordcraft, and subtle cultural cues. The locales the characters visit are real, such as Carnegie Hall, and their descriptions are vivid. In fact, part of the novel study I have designed encourages students to find key locations on a

map, even entering them virtually. The overall length and chapter structure of thirty chapters makes it easy to divide the reading across ten weeks with a manageable weekly load of about four chapters. Frequent shifts in setting, sometimes even mid-chapter, keep students engaged and attentive to narrative cues.

For many of my students, this is the first full-length novel they have read in English. The story captivates them. The homework assignments I have designed scaffold the text with straightforward comprehension questions about setting and character differentiation, as well as a few deeper inference and opinion questions. Students complete weekly homework assignments and participate in in-class group activities where they identify vocabulary from the week's reading that they believe is worth adding to their lexical repertoire. They are quizzed on vocabulary several times each term. Another advantage of using a self-published novel is that the author is far more accessible. Many self-published books are available as e-books, and formats like Kindle are especially convenient for students because they can look up word definitions instantly by tapping the unfamiliar word. They can also digitally highlight words and passages. One term, the author paid my class a visit on Zoom for a live Q & A. Students asked thoughtful questions about character construction, unresolved narrative elements, and his motivations as a novelist.

The Raindrop Crossing is available through Amazon and Barnes & Noble in both paperback and Kindle editions. Students can also follow Kristopher Hull's Instagram account @pianisterrant to stay up to date with his street-piano adventures throughout New York City. By building relationships with contemporary authors, teachers can lift the veil between author and reader and show students that a novel is an art form grounded in lived experience. In my classes, I have seen students invest in this text in ways I rarely observe with traditional classics. Finally, there is little temptation for students to outsource their work to AI, as the novel is too new to have been absorbed into common AI training data.

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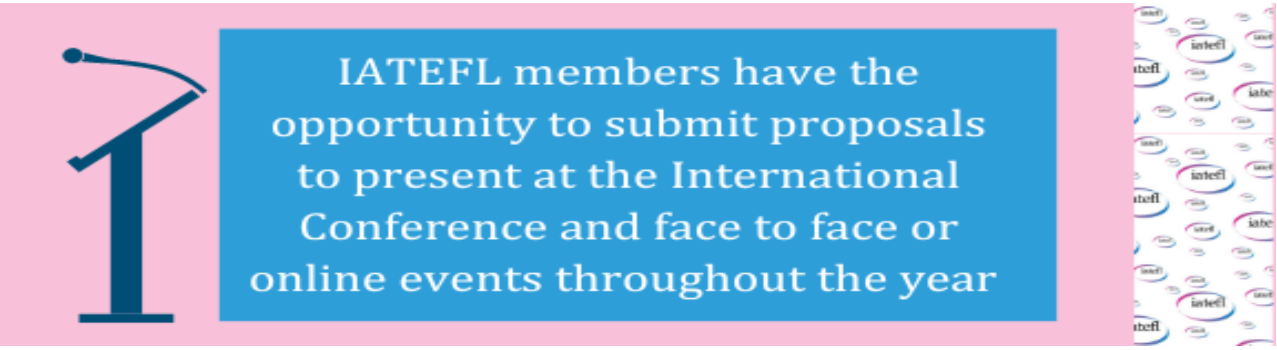

Building an extensive reading library with Canadian content and free digital access

Sepideh Alavi

CanAvenue is a Canadian online learning platform developed by New Language Solutions, created to support adult English learners, especially newcomers, through accessible, self-directed resources for language and settlement learning. CanAvenue content is built around Canadian themes and is primarily designed for independent study, though many instructors and learners in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs also draw on the resources to support out of class practice.

In addition to courses and classroom supports delivered through its Moodle environment, CanAvenue hosts a growing digital library of broad-level graded readers, which were created to make Extensive reading realistic in Canada's adult LINC and ESL conditions: mixed proficiency classes, uneven attendance, limited access to print libraries, and the need to support independent learning beyond class time.

Extensive reading (ER) remains one of the most consistently supported approaches for developing second-language reading ability because it maximizes what many adult learners need but rarely get: high-volume, meaning-focused, level-appropriate input sustained over time. When learners read large amounts of text that is easy enough to process fluently and engaging enough to choose willingly, gains tend to extend beyond reading itself to vocabulary growth, reading rate, general proficiency, and learner confidence (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2018).

In what follows, I describe how CanAvenue aligns with established ER principles, how its design features support teachers, and how to implement it without unintentionally converting ER into intensive reading.

Why we built our own library: an ER pilot

Before developing graded readers, the developer team at New Language Solutions ran an extensive reading pilot project to test if and how available ER programs and platforms could be implemented, and whether they were good fits for our target audiences. This pilot quickly exposed an access problem: many high-quality graded reader series are paper-based, which makes it difficult to provide consistent sets of books across multiple LINC/ESL centres. At the same time, online graded-reader packages can be costly, especially for non-profit organizations working to serve large numbers of learners equitably. That experience led CanAvenue to a clear conclusion: if ER was going to be scalable and sustainable for our users, we needed a digital library designed to be freely accessible to the users of the platform anytime, anywhere.

Building on what we learned in the pilot, our next question was practical: what would a scalable, free digital ER library look like and how could we level it in a way for learners to use immediately? To keep book selection simple while still respecting proficiency differences, we chose to organize the collection into two broad stages, a decision shaped by Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) ranges and by the need to keep the library simple without overwhelming users with too many sub-levels. Hence, we set on:

- Stage 1 readers: CLBs 1–4
- Stage 2 readers: CLBs 5–8

This two-stage structure also supports instructors who use the library with classes: it provides enough distinction to guide text selection in mixed-level groups while remaining intuitive and quick to apply during busy lessons.

The CLB vocabulary challenge

A major development challenge was lexical control. The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) provide performance descriptors, rather than a built-in vocabulary list equivalent to wordlists such as the GSL or AWL. In CanAvenue's initial research phase, the team looked for a CLB-specific vocabulary framework that could guide text development. When no suitable framework was found, the team shifted focus to alignment research and official resources that connect CLB to other established proficiency systems.

Two sources were particularly helpful:

1. **Government of Canada language test equivalency information**, which supports interpreting and locating CLB levels within official language requirements contexts (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], n.d.).
2. **Language Canada's CLB–CEFR alignment work**, including the published research report by North and Piccardo, which provides an evidence-informed bridge between CLB/NCLC and CEFR (North & Piccardo, 2019; Language Canada, 2019).

Once CLB-to-CEFR equivalencies were established, the next step was to translate those broad level expectations into actual texts with predictable vocabulary load and manageable structures. That is where AI became useful as a drafting tool that could generate source texts which we could then refine and adjust to meet our stage requirements.

Using AI to generate graded text

CanAvenue graded readers mostly begin as AI-assisted drafts, but each text is then shaped through multiple rounds of editing and vocabulary-level validation to ensure it fits the intended stage. Because the steps are repeatable, the process may also be

useful to teachers and materials writers—so long as editorial control remains firmly human-led.

Step 1: Generate structured drafts using level-sensitive prompts

After establishing broad level expectations, the team used ChatGPT paid accounts to generate initial drafts. Prompts included the book title**,** subsections, and targeted guidance for vocabulary and sentence structure consistent with the intended stage.

Step 2: Revise for quality and authenticity

Early drafts were reviewed multiple times to remove predictable AI patterns such as repetition, redundancy, unnatural phrasing, and overly uniform sentence rhythm. The content was also fact-checked to ensure the accuracy of the generated text.

Step 3: Validate vocabulary using the Online Graded Text Editor

Once the text read well, it was analysed using the Online Graded Text Editor (OGTE)**,** a free tool hosted by Extensive Reading Central. OGTE helps writers and teachers grade texts by vocabulary difficulty, highlighting words that fall outside a selected level band so writers can make systematic adjustments (Extensive Reading Central, n.d.-a).

Step 4: Replace or scaffold vocabulary that falls outside the target stage

When OGTE flagged vocabulary beyond the target level, the developers used two main strategies:

- Replace the word with a more level-appropriate synonym, or
- Scaffold it: briefly explain meaning after the first occurrence and/or add a supportive image.

Step 5: Publish in an accessible digital format via Moodle

Final texts were formatted and converted into an online flipbook and made available on the CanAvenue Moodle platform..

The CanAvenue Library

CanAvenue currently hosts several graded-reader series across Stage 1 and Stage 2**,** including:

- Canadian Life
- Canadian Celebrations
- First Nations
- Canadian City Snapshots

- National Wonders
- Our Environment
- Visit Canada

The topics reflect diverse aspects of life in Canada—culture, geography, community, and the environment—so learners build language alongside culturally relevant knowledge. Together, these series include over 120 titles, alongside a smaller literacy collection (8 titles)**.** All books were developed with newcomers to Canada in mind.

The library continues to grow.

Quizzes that support ER

At the end of each book, learners can access a short comprehension quiz. CanAvenue's quiz workflow is inspired by MoodleReader and MReader, two well-established ER quiz systems designed to support light-touch accountability and reading volume (Extensive Reading Foundation, n.d.; MoodleReader, n.d.). Even though this principle might not be directly relevant to independent language learners with personal motivators, it is important for teachers who implement ER in their classes as a staple classroom activity: ER thrives when accountability is consistent but low-stakes**.** Quizzes can work well when used as feedback and motivation rather than as graded assessment (Day & Bamford, 2002). Used this way, quizzes help sustain momentum while keeping the focus where it belongs, on reading for meaning.

CanAvenue's graded readers began as a response to a practical access challenge: ensuring adult LINC/ESL learners could reliably get level-appropriate reading materials without prohibitive cost or fragile logistics. The result is a CLB-informed, digitally delivered graded-reader library built through an iterative workflow, supported by an ER-friendly quiz system, and rooted in Canadian content that reflects newcomers' lives, interests and needs. These graded readers are now available worldwide. Educators and learners can access the library by creating a free CanAvenue account at CanAvenue.ca**.**

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Acknowledgements

I gratefully acknowledge Rob McBride, the Executive Director of New Language Solutions, for supporting the CanAvenue graded readers initiative; John Allan, for his close collaboration on the extensive reading project; and Professor Tom Robb, whose long-standing mentorship and encouragement have consistently supported my extensive reading work.

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Literature in an age of distraction: part 1
Alan Maley

We live in an age of distraction. The impact of the Internet with access to unlimited information and entertainment (Postman, 1985), the ubiquity of hand-held devices which induce a form of universal, communicative addiction, the availability of games, videos and music, the advertising and peer-pressure to acquire goods in ever-increasing quantities, and to discard them ever more quickly, the near-extinction of the notion of silence as we are assailed by a barrage of music, sound and noise (van Leeuwen, 1999) – all of these factors raise formidable problems for the concentration and reflective modes of thought which literature requires of its readers.
The survival of literature in the curriculum is also under threat from a control culture which increasingly requires that everything be prescribed in detail and tested for immediate results.

As Eisner succinctly puts it:

Such an image of education requires that schools be organised to prescribe, control, and predict the consequences of their actions, that those consequences be immediate and empirically manifest and that they be measurable (Eisner 1985, pp. 356-7).

When education is reduced to the level of 'delivery' (one of the current prevailing metaphors), what chance does literature stand? And why should anyone bother with it? What use is it anyway? There are also a number of important differences in the current situation which will affect the way we approach the use and teaching of literature. What are these new realities?

- As the demand for English as the language of opportunity continues to increase, there will be more students, many of whom will never have been exposed to literature before. This implies a democratic, inclusive, rather than an elitist, exclusive teaching approach. We can no longer expect students to come with a background in literary culture.

- As English itself spreads, both geographically and functionally, it will continue to change rapidly, and to become more varied. New varieties are coming into being, and old ones are constantly evolving. An exclusive focus on 'standard' English will no longer satisfy this reality. Non-canonical literature is one powerful way of acknowledging and celebrating this variety.

- As English becomes a necessary condition for personal or professional success, it will no longer be a sufficient condition to be able to use it averagely well. (Graddol, 2006). Increasingly, the premium will be on those who can use it to a high degree of proficiency (Maley, 2009) and fuse it with 'life skills' (Clandfield et al, 2011; Rogers, 2008). Literature surely has a role to play, both as a counter-

weight to an excessively pragmatic view of language, but also as a necessary enrichment of language learning at the highest levels.

- As the opportunities for international exchanges become more frequent, there will be a corresponding need for social and cultural sensitivity. One of the functions literature can usefully perform is to raise awareness of cross-cultural issues.

- As life in a consumerist world dominated by English becomes more demanding and more pressurized, the value of reflection and critical intelligence will be enhanced. (Fisher 2001; Honore 2004; Naish, 2008; Postman and Weingartner 1976 and Unrau 2008). Increasingly, language learning is seen to include more broadly educational functions to which literature can contribute.

- As the demand for instant solutions and quick fixes in education becomes more insistent, so the value of a more deliberate mode of thinking will become more urgent (Claxton, 1997). Literature is not usually about quick fixes, so once again it has a clear role to play.

- As English becomes more international, so will the movement to more local independence become more pronounced. The tensions between English as a medium for global communication and English as a badge of local cultural identity will be intensified. Local literatures in English have expanded in a spectacular fashion over the past fifty years or so. This provides a rich and varied resource for teaching, and an opportunity to develop new perspectives on other cultures.

Within the context of literature, I believe that such factors can to some extent be accommodated through the way we select the texts to which students will be exposed, and by the manner in which we utilize these texts. The following should therefore be read against the above list of realities to assess the value of a new orientation toward the value of including literature in our programmes.

Why literature?

The justification for the place of literature in the language teaching curriculum is commonly made with reference to three main models: the linguistic model, the cultural model and the personal-growth model (Carter and McRae, 1996; Maley 2001, pp. 182-185; Duff and Maley 2007, pp. 5-6).

Literary texts certainly offer a rich and varied **linguistic resource**, providing the kind of input for phonological, lexical, syntactical and discoursal acquisition, in contrast to the more restricted and narrow exposure offered by many pedagogically-driven texts. Literature offers texts at all levels of linguistic (and cognitive) difficulty. They are also an ideal resource for the development of language awareness: of language variation (historical, geographical, professional, sociological), of social appropriacy, and of

ideological bias. Using texts like this can clearly sharpen students' critical thinking, as well as their sensitivity to language.

In the international context of English use, where multi-cultural encounters are increasingly frequent and significant, the **cultural potential** offered by literature is also undeniable. Literature can illuminate the multi-facetted contexts, practices and beliefs our students may be expected to encounter in their professional and personal lives outside the classroom. In the words of Kramsch (1993, pp. 233-259), it can create 'third places', from which students can critically examine both their own and other cultures. And literary texts can promote **personal growth**, through better understanding of human motivation and action, both one's own and others'. Students exposed to such texts are opened to better critical understanding of themselves and of others in this rapidly changing and often confusing and paradoxical world. Those who learn to appreciate and savour literature have the quality of their lives permanently enhanced. And in times of pain and suffering, literature has the power to console. It also offers an escape into an alternative world – which may be no bad thing sometimes!

Literature also has a unique potential to motivate and enthuse learners. The awareness that they are accessing 'real', meaningful texts does wonders for their self-esteem. Literary texts are also highly salient, and therefore memorable. Once learners are hooked, they are hooked for good. But, in an age of distraction, with so many competing attractions, just how can we hook them? All approaches are less than perfect, and no one approach will ever satisfy everyone. But that should not prevent us from making some practical suggestions.

Approaches to teaching literature

Traditionally, there have been two major approaches to the use of literature in language teaching programmes.

Literature as study

It has been traditional to focus on canonical texts as objects of study: set books, line-by-line analysis and explication, dry as dust analysis. This approach centres upon *teaching about* literature. Typically, this involves a good deal of transmission of received opinions about writers, their lives and times, their influences, critical views of their work, and so on. The whole emphasis is on 'telling' rather than on 'discovery' and on memorizing content and facts rather than on critical reflection and inquiry.

The Literature as Study approach tends to focus on canonical texts drawn from Inner Circle countries (Kachru, 1992). These are often far removed from students' lived experience and are often culturally inaccessible and are certainly unlikely to hook many students in an age of distraction!

Literature as resource

An alternative approach is to treat literary texts as a resource to draw on for the teaching of language. The texts chosen tend to be drawn from a wider range and are used either as samples of language use or as springboards into other language learning

activities. In a sense, the literature is secondary to the language learning aims and objectives: it is a kind of vehicle for engaging with the language. This might be characterized as teaching *with* literature.

The Literature as Resource approach risks becoming just another way of introducing and practicing language as part of a pre-determined syllabus. The specifically literary value of texts may be overshadowed by the linguistic content and the methodological gymnastics played with it - a box of tricks which students rapidly tire of.
Neither the Literature as Study, nor the Literature as Resource models therefore seem to offer the kind of access to literature needed in an age of distraction. There is however a third possible approach, which may be called Literature as Appropriation.

Literature as appropriation
The aim here is to encourage and enable students to make literature their own, to appropriate it for their own learning purposes, in ways they find relevant to themselves and to the context in which they find themselves. Both the other approaches are to a greater or lesser degree external to the students, what I have termed elsewhere "literature from the outside in" (Maley 2010). In the approach advocated here, enabling students to engage with literature so as to get inside the skin of the texts – to apprehend them from the inside rather than simply to comprehend them from the outside – is what I have termed "literature from the inside out". We may characterize this approach as learning *through* literature. I will suggest how this might be done in Part 2 of this article.

This approach to using literature in language programmes is informed by a number of key questions:

- Why do we expect students to understand everything in a text? The compulsion to understand every single word is destructive of enjoyment, and not necessary for overall comprehension.

- Why do we need comprehension questions to prove they have understood a text? There are many ways to demonstrate that a text has been understood, as we shall see below. The very nature of comprehension questions ensures that what looks like comprehension is no more than a mechanical ability to retrieve details. What is more important is to apprehend the sense and significance of the text.

- Why do we need to tell rather than allow discovery? By explaining everything, we pre-empt the students' natural ability and interest in finding things out for themselves. In line with Carl Rogers' educational philosophy, 'true education involves a change in self-organization: learning is maximised when learners have the freedom to select their own direction, formulate their own problems, discover the solution for themselves, and are responsible for such choices.' (Bao 2014, p. 156)

- Why do we kill texts by solemnizing them? We need constantly to remind ourselves that writers of literary texts did not write them with a view to having

them studied in educational syllabuses and then examined with questions set by pedants. Nor did they write them in the expectation that they would become monuments of high culture. They wrote because they had something interesting, amusing or compelling to say, or because they needed the money! To treat literary texts as cultural icons, and by placing them high on a pedestal, we put them out of the reach of our learners (Maley, 1989).

- How can we engage students affectively and cognitively with literary texts? This is the nub of the issue. I shall suggest five main ways in which literature could be more effectively incorporated into language programmes. These are: Familiarisation, Extensive Reading (and Listening), Performance, Creative Writing and Speech. These are techniques for getting inside the skin of texts.

In the next article, Part 2, I shall examine each of these in turn.

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Integrating literature and STEAM through artifact creation
Andres Villalba

This article proposes an innovative approach to English language teaching by combining literature analysis with STEAM-based artifact creation. Students engage in reading classic books or watching related films and then construct objects central to the narrative, such as a hot air balloon inspired by *Around the World in Eighty Days*, a Trojan Horse from Troy, or a mansion from *The Great Gatsby*. This approach reinforces comprehension, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Practical lesson steps, learning outcomes, and assessment strategies are provided to guide classroom implementation, supporting both literary understanding and hands-on learning.

Traditional literature instruction often emphasizes reading comprehension and textual analysis, but some students may struggle to connect narratives to tangible experiences. Constructivist approaches, inspired by Dewey's philosophy, argue that learning is most meaningful when students actively engage with content and create knowledge through experience. By combining literature with STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) my students can bridge abstract ideas with concrete representations. This methodology not only reinforces English language skills but also encourages creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration.

STEAM-literature integration

Integrating STEAM projects into literature lessons aligns with current pedagogical research on constructivist learning. Students, according to Dewey (1938), learn best by doing, experimenting, and reflecting, which makes hands-on literary projects an ideal way to deepen comprehension. When students actively engage with a text by designing or creating an artifact inspired by the story, they transform abstract ideas into meaningful, tangible experiences that strengthen understanding.

This approach also enhances motivation and critical thinking. Hands-on projects increase student engagement and promote deeper comprehension of literary themes. The process of analysing a text to select key elements for an artifact requires synthesis, evaluation, and problem-solving skills (National Research Council, 2012), supporting the development of higher-order thinking.

Finally, authors such as Krajcik and Blumenfeld (2006) affirm that STEAM-literature projects foster interdisciplinary learning by integrating math, engineering, art, and design with reading and analysis. Students apply engineering and design principles when constructing models and prototypes, enhancing both literacy and technical skills. For example, building Gatsby's mansion requires spatial reasoning and close textual interpretation, while constructing a Trojan horse introduces students to engineering thinking and historical-literary analysis. Together, these projects demonstrate how STEAM integration can enrich literature lessons and promote holistic learning.


Model spaceship

Lesson framework

Grade level: (Here, I present an example for middle school or high school)
Duration: 2–3 weeks (depending on schedule and project complexity)

Objectives:

- Analyse literary works for key plot elements, characters, and settings.
- Design and construct a physical or digital artifact or model inspired by a literary text or film adaptation.
- Demonstrate understanding through presentation, reflection, and discussion.

Materials:

Copies of literary texts or film versions
Art supplies, building materials, or digital modeling software (for 3D printing)
Research resources (encyclopedias, internet, libraries)

Lesson steps:

- Pre-reading/film viewing: Introduce the book or film and discuss themes, characters, and significant objects. I personally prefer to combine texts with film trailers.

- Reading and analysis: Students read selected chapters or view scenes to identify artifacts that are central to the narrative.

- Artifact design: Students plan the creation of their artifact, sketching designs and listing required materials.

- Construction: Students build the artifact individually or in groups, applying problem-solving and engineering principles.

- Presentation: Students present their creations, explaining the connection to the text and demonstrating key elements.

- Reflection and assessment: Students reflect on what they learned, how the project helped them understand the literature, and the skills they applied. Teachers assess literary understanding, creativity, and collaboration using a rubric.

Sample project ideas

Literary work	**Artifact**	**Learning focus**
Around the World in 80 Days	Hot air balloon model	Engineering, geography, reading comprehension
Troy	Trojan Horse replica	Historical-literary analysis, design & construction
The Great Gatsby	Mansion model	Symbolism, spatial reasoning, critical interpretation
Harry Potter	Castles, wands	Creative writing, character analysis, chemistry principles
Alice in Wonderland	Maze or garden model	Sequencing, imaginative thinking, narrative understanding
Don Quixote	Windmill	Symbolism, character motivation, mechanical engineering principles, historical-literary analysis

Gatsby mansion model

Assessment strategies

Teachers can assess students using a rubric with criteria such as:

- Literary analysis: understanding of text, accurate identification of key themes, characters, and settings.
- Artifact creativity and accuracy: originality, alignment with literary description, problem-solving.
- Collaboration: communication, teamwork and contribution.
- Reflection: depth of insight, ability to articulate learning and challenges.
- I personally love to organise a group presentation for other classes or the whole school.


Teachers integrating literature and STEAM

STEAM-literature projects transform passive reading into an interactive, interdisciplinary experience. Students gain not only English language skills but also creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking abilities. This approach exemplifies Dewey's philosophy (1938) that education should prepare learners for the possibilities of the present while equipping them to cope with the future. As I see it, integrating hands-on production into literature lessons can revitalize classrooms and foster lasting students' engagement with texts.

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Appendix 1: STEAM projects

STEAM planning guide

Project stages

Problem Identification – Definition
Investigation
Planning – Design
Creation – Construction
Testing
Adjustments – Improvement
Presentation – Final Product

STEAM: What content or concepts can I integrate?

Science
Technology
Engineering
Design
Mathematics

Reflective questions for each stage

1. Problem identification – definition

What is the existing need?
What characteristics does this situation have?
How do I describe it?
How do I express it clearly?

2. Investigation
What information or data am I missing?
Where can I search for information?
Which sources are reliable?
Who can I ask for more information or help?

3. Planning – design
How do I classify the information I found?
Which data are useful?
What actions will I take?
Which tools will I use?
What materials will I need?
How do I organize the resources: tools and materials?
What strategies do I need?
What are the steps in my action plan?
What will the design of the creation or construction look like?
What style makes it more effective or visually appealing?
How do I organize the time required for completion?

4. Creation – construction
How do I start building?
Can I follow the design plans?
How do I use the information within the model?
What proportions should the draft, blueprint, and model have?
Can I say that the creation is a finished product?

5. Testing
Does the product address the initial problem?
Does the product meet all of its objectives?
Does it fulfil the general and specific goals?
Is the product sustainable?

6. Adjustments – improvement
If not, what needs to be corrected?
What can be improved?
In which previous stage might there be an error?
Do I need more data, different information, new materials, tools, or another strategy?
Will the reconstruction be partial or total?

7. Final presentation
If yes, is there any aspect that could make it even better?
How do I present it to the community or audience?

Appendix 2: Assessment rubric

I prefer to assess the two aspects of the lesson together: Literature and STEAM. Optionally, teachers can focus on them separately. The rubric can be adapted to lower

levels, but this is an example I use for middle/high school level and my college students in a teacher program in Argentina.

Integrated rubric

Criteria	Level 3 – Strong/ Advanced	Level 2 – Developing	Level 1 – Emerging
Literary comprehension	Demonstrates clear and accurate understanding of plot, characters, setting, and key events using specific evidence from the text or film.	Demonstrates partial understanding with some inaccuracies or missing details.	Shows limited understanding of the literary work.
Literary analysis and interpretation	Identifies and explains themes, symbols, or central objects and their importance within the literary work.	Identifies themes or symbols, but explanations are basic or incomplete.	Has difficulty identifying or explaining literary elements.
Critical thinking and reflection	Makes thoughtful interpretations and reflects clearly on how the project deepened understanding of the text.	Shows some interpretation and reflection, but ideas remain surface-level.	Reflection is minimal or unclear.
Connection between text and artifact	Artifact clearly represents a key element of the literary work and demonstrates deep textual understanding.	Artifact represents the text, but the connection is general or incomplete.	Artifact shows weak connection to the literary work.

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Hath not a Jew justice?
Israel Veizaga

William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* remains one of his most controversial plays, admired for its wit, complex structure, and dramatic intensity, yet persistently criticized for its troubling portrayal of Jewish identity. This article seeks to analyse whether the play has contributed to the justification of prejudice against Jewish communities in Western Europe. Although the play was composed within the cultural and moral frameworks of the Elizabethan era, its representation of Shylock has often been appropriated to reinforce negative stereotypes and antisemitic ideologies. The antagonism between Christians and Jews is presented as a rigid dichotomy that exposes long-standing ethnoreligious tensions and deeply ingrained cultural resentments. In this sense, *The Merchant of Venice* transcends its literary dimension to function as a cultural relic that reflects the persistence of discrimination in European history.

Shylock's characterization reveals the social and religious marginalization imposed upon Jewish individuals in early-modern Europe. His actions, frequently interpreted as signs of malice or villainy, can alternatively be understood as responses to systemic exclusion and humiliation. The fact that he is repeatedly referred to merely as "the Jew," with his name often omitted, underscores the process of dehumanization and erasure to which he is subjected. Moreover, the Jewish community's depiction as confined to a segregated ghetto further illustrates the spatial and ideological boundaries imposed by Christian society, reinforcing the dynamics of prejudice and otherness that permeate the play. Shylock's famous plea "Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?" (Shakespeare, 1596/2014,3.1.45-50) serves as a powerful assertion of shared humanity. His following question, "If you pick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?" (Shakespeare 1596/2014,3.1.50-55), challenges the moral hypocrisy of his Christian persecutors. Through these lines, Shakespeare exposes the irrationality of antisemitic prejudice, despite being human in every sense, Jews were continually treated as immoral and physical outsiders. The speech becomes an implicit critique of the religious and social doctrines that denied Jewish people compassion and equality, portraying their suffering as divinely sanctioned.

A relevant comparison can be drawn between Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, a play that clearly influenced Shakespeare's depiction of Shylock. Marlowe's work, written at the end of the sixteenth century, presents Barabas as a stereotypical embodiment of greed, deceit, and vengeance, traits that had long been associated with antisemitic representations in medieval literature. It is important to note that both plays were written in a period when Jews had been officially expelled from England by King Edward I in 1290 through the Edict of Expulsion, and Jews were not openly readmitted until the 1650s. Thus, for more than three centuries, English society lacked genuine contact with Jewish communities. Although some Jews continued to live and conduct business covertly in London, they remained socially invisible and culturally misunderstood. As a result, Elizabethan

dramatists such as Marlowe and Shakespeare constructed their Jewish characters not from lived experience but from inherited stereotypes and religious conflicts. These representations drew heavily on continental sources and popular narratives that portrayed Jews as moral outsiders, moneylenders, and enemies of Christian virtue. Consequently, *The Jew of Malta* and *The Merchant of Venice* both reflect the ideological climate of their time, reproducing antisemitic tropes that resonated with audiences largely unfamiliar with real Jewish individuals. While Marlowe's Barabas embodies unrestrained villainy and caricature, Shakespeare's Shylock introduces a more complex portrayal that exposes, perhaps unintentionally, the moral contradictions and prejudices of Christian society itself.

This inherited suspicion toward Jews was rooted in long-standing medieval myths. They were falsely accused of committing heinous crimes, such as human sacrifices, poisoning wells, and engaging in demonic worship, allegations born of fear and ignorance. Shakespeare alludes to such prejudices when Bassanio implores the Duke to "curb this cruel devil of his will" and to "do a great right, do a little wrong" (Shakespeare, 1596/2014,4.1.205-210). Here, the Christian characters invoke the imagery of demonic evil to justify injustice against Shylock, echoing the medieval notion that Jews were in league with the Devil or engaged in barbaric rituals such as circumcision, which Christians viewed with disgust. Such language illustrates how religion was weaponized to rationalize exclusion and violence. Centuries later, *The Merchant of Venice* was appropriated by Nazi propaganda as a tool to legitimize antisemitic ideology. During the Third Reich, Shakespeare's play experienced a significant surge in popularity, becoming one of the most frequently performed works in Germany at a time when many literary and dramatic productions were heavily censored or banned. The Nazi regime promoted the play as evidence of Jewish inferiority, presenting Shylock's avarice and thirst for revenge as traits representative of an allegedly corrupt and immoral race. Under the supervision of the *Reichsdramaturgie* the theatrical branch of the Ministry of Propaganda, newly edited versions of the *Merchant of Venice* were staged to eliminate the play's moral ambiguity and suppress its complex treatment of Jewish identity. Through these distorted adaptations, Shakespeare's nuanced portrayal of prejudice was reduced to a crude political instrument that reinforced the regime's racial hatred and dehumanizing agenda.

In light of this historical and literary trajectory, it becomes evident that the antagonism between Christians and Jews represented in *The Merchant of Venice* reflects a much broader pattern of Christian hostility toward Jewish identity that has persisted throughout European history. From medieval theological polemics to Elizabethan drama and even twentieth century propaganda, the demonization of the Jew has served as a recurring narrative device to justify exclusion, persecution, and moral superiority. By portraying Jewish characters through the lens of avarice, deceit and vengeance, Christian societies reinforced a distorted image that perpetuated antisemitic sentiment for generations. Shakespeare's play, though a product of its time, ultimately mirrors the enduring cultural mechanisms through which prejudice is sustained, reminding readers that the stage has often been a reflection of the collective conscience and, at times, of its deepest intolerance.

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Children's books and comprehensive sexuality education
Vanesa Polastri

We know that literature is not instrumental in its essence. However, as teachers of English, we generally resort to it with a pedagogical purpose in mind. I believe that this is inescapable in our profession as literary books explore different situations that unlock necessary discussions. They let us tackle complex issues naturally. Thus, they are extremely valuable when dealing with Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). In Argentina, CSE must be addressed in all levels of education and picture books are our main allies in this endeavour. There are five core dimensions in our national CSE law (26,150). In this article, I am going to provide three suitable book titles per dimension so that teachers can have these potential resources at hand to open avenues of

conversation with their students. The books below are only a few out of the vast literary landscape available. I have not listed Tod Parr's *The family book* and *It's OK to be different* simply because I think they are well known and need no introduction to you, but they are wonderful materials for any CSE-based lesson.

Taking care of the body (and mind)

This dimension encompasses factual knowledge of the body as an interrelated system, body image, nutrition, eating disorders, physical activity, cleanliness, growth and body changes, media beauty standards, self-esteem, diseases, medical attention, body boundaries and consent, among other subtopics, depending on the learners' age. In *The pigeon needs a bath* (Walker Books, 2014), by Mo Willems, we can talk about adequate hygiene as we have a blast reading this picturebook. Its cheeky and stubborn character gives thousands of excuses so as not to have a bath only to realise that he enjoys it more than he ever thought he would. In *Iqbal and his ingenious idea* (Kids Can Press, 2022), written by Elizabeth Suneby and illustrated by Rebecca Green, we can see the importance of scientific innovation to contribute to the preservation of both health and the environment. Here a Bangladeshi boy invents a solar cookstove for his mother and baby sister not to inhale all the smoke caused by cooking over an open flame indoors during the Monsoon season. In *Some secrets should never be kept* (Educate2Empower, 2017), written by Jayneen Sanders and illustrated by Craig Smith, we can learn to speak up when faced with unsafe touch. In this story a little boy accompanies his mother to work. While she cleans Lord Henry's house, her employer plays with her little son and tickles him in a way that makes him feel uncomfortable and sick. Alfred is afraid of breaking the silence as he feels guilty of causing her job instability. These three books delve into taking care of one's own body and taking responsibility over the care of other people's body, so as to prevent harm or to protect their integrity.

Valuing affectivity

Affectivity is understood as personal feeling, the interpersonal bond and the interactions established within a relationship, for example between schoolmates, friends, family members, romantic partners, etc. Some subtopics could be jealousy, bullying, sharing, turn-taking, solving conflicts through dialogue and treating other people respectfully. In *Move mountain* (Oxford, 2022), written by Corrinne Averiss and illustrated by Greg McLeod, we can enjoy true friendship as Bear, Bird and Squirrel do the impossible to make Mountain's dream come true. He wants to see the sunrise, but it happens at his back, so his three friends try out several ideas to help him enjoy it for the first time. In *Yo! Yes?* (Scholastic, 1998), by Chris Raschka, we can witness how an interracial friendship begins when two lonely children exchange some brief words in the street. This story, developing in a ping-pong interactive fashion, is both cheerful and tender. In *100th Day Worries* (Scholastic, 2000), written by Margery Cuyler and illustrated by Arthur Howard, we will go on a rollercoaster of feelings that Jessica experiences because of a special assignment that is due on the 100th school day. Anxiety, collaboration and family love are some of the themes present in this book. These picturebooks let children discover how the book characters feel about themselves and

for each other through their actions, and develop empathy, as readers will surely connect with them and reflect upon their own feelings and relationships.

Exercising our rights

This dimension involves children's rights, human rights and animal rights. In order for students to be able to exercise their rights and defend those of others, first of all, they need to know them, and then, they need to realise their voices matter. In *Every child a song* (Wren & Rook, 2020), written by Nicola Davis and illustrated by Marc Martin) we can get informed on children's rights through the metaphor the title anticipates. It is the symphony each child contributes to that allows for diversity and uniqueness of melody. In *Click, clack, moo* (Scholastic, 2001), written by Doreen Cronin and illustrated by Betsy Lewin, we can deal with demanding fair work conditions. In this amusing picturebook, cows go on strike because the barn is too cold, and they use a typewriter to ask Farmer Brown for electric blankets. In *The day the crayons quit* (HarperCollins, 2013), written by Drew Daywalt and illustrated by Oliver Jeffers, we can understand each colour crayon's complaints as they claim overuse or underuse at the hands of Duncan, the crayon box owner. After reading all their handwritten letters, he truly listens to their needs and takes their suggestions into account the next time he uses them at school. As can be noted, manifesting what we want clearly and listening to others attentively are an enactment of respect that helps prevent or solve conflict, founded on a rights framework.

Acknowledging a gender perspective

Gender perspective has the recognition of gender stereotypes, gender inequality and gender violence, as well as historical invisibilisation, at its core, and again, these issues have different levels of depth according to the students' ages. In *Rosie's hat* (Macmillan, 2015), written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Anna Currey, we can observe the passing of time by following a hat's journey. The book enables a discussion around gender stereotypes as Rosie grows into a wife, a mother and… a fire fighter. In *Goodnight stories for rebel girls* (Penguin Books, 2017), written by Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo and illustrated by several female artists around the world, we can read about the real lives of one hundred women who have dared trespass the social limits imposed on them. From ancient queens, through scientists, to activists, this book inspires mainly, but not solely, girls to follow their dreams and participate actively in every facet of society. In *When Rosa Parks met Martin Luther King, Junior* (Collins, 2012), written by Zoë Clarke, we can revisit history through a non-fiction recount. Via photographs and captions, the book shows how Rosa stood against an unfair law that evidenced unequal treatment of black and white people. Reading and mobilising thoughts around this issue works towards the full development of all citizens alike, meaning girls/women, boys/men and gender non-conforming children/people, and their joint participation in the construction of a fairer world free from discrimination.

Embracing diversity

This dimension contemplates diversity not as a stain to be erased but as a humanity treasure to be cherished. However, people with certain identity markers—such as a specific gender, age, skin colour, height, size, body functioning, geographical origin, social class, language spoken, level of education attained, religious orientation, for instance—have historically gone through more challenges in life. In *Babushka Baba Yaga* (PaperStar, 1999), by Patricia Polacco, we can dismantle prejudices as we hear what village people think of forest witches while we get to know about the real feelings and intentions of a *Baba Yaga* firsthand. This creature wants a family, longs for a grandchild and wishes to be accepted in the human community. In *My family is forever* (Scholastic, 2004), by Nancy Carlson, we can feel the love two parents give to an adoptive Asian daughter as perceived by this little girl and expressed in her own words. Her slanted eyes may differ from their rounded eyes, but they share the same affection, care and support for one another. In *Freddie and the fairy* (Macmillan, 2010), written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Karen George, we can bridge communication breakdowns together with these two lovable protagonists. Freddie helps the Fairy and, in gratitude, she grants him wishes. The only inconvenience is that she cannot hear well due to a hearing impairment, and he does not get quite what he asks for. The Fairy Godmother has to mediate to ensure communication succeeds and we are all provided with some very useful pieces of advice that can be applied in real life. Stigmatisation, abandonment and disability are contrasted with inclusion in these three moving books. Intersectionality makes it possible for us to recognise these extra difficulties some people are often faced with and collaborate towards removing such disadvantages so that everyone has the same opportunities.

As you may well have noticed, the five dimensions are not circumscribed to sexuality but go beyond it as they consider each human being as an indivisible whole with much more than a corporeal reality, that is to say, with feelings, thoughts, relations, interactions and aspirations. Despite having arranged the above children's books under a specific subtitle, which shows the most salient dimension that these multimodal texts can be related to, most of them simultaneously overlap dimensions, and it is in the co-construction between teacher and students that a specific focus or shift of focus is to be taken. This allows for an integral CSE approach to their reflective reading so as to promote the use of the target language in class discussions and critical thinking as an ability to be put to practice within and outside the classroom.

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Recalibrating the GPS of our English reading classes: Is our final destination killing our students' enjoyment of reading?

Nisela Cittadino

"The verb 'to read' does not tolerate the imperative."
— Daniel Pennac, Comme un roman (1992)

When setting your GPS, it becomes essential to set a destination. There is no way for the GPS to work properly if no destination is set. However, it may be strikingly different to have a destination such as a lawyer's interview for a legal issue than a destination like a waterpark in the middle of a heatwave. Our motivation and attitude will be entirely different depending on the destination we are heading toward.

The usual destination of many English reading classes is getting a passing mark in a specific exam, which is similar to the interview with the lawyer. So, we set the GPS, and we drive (on autopilot?) and drive until we get to our destination —regardless of whether our students enjoy the journey. The main problem with this approach is that one would rarely choose to set the GPS to go to the lawyer's office, but if one enjoyed the waterpark, one would choose to go as many times as desired. In other words, if students' reading skills are not adequately nurtured, they will never want to read again once their academic life is over.

Gallaher (2009) introduces the concept of readicide, the systematic killing of the enjoyment of reading through certain classroom practices. Although this definition sounds highly critical, it may help us address the issue, focusing not on blaming someone, but on doing something to solve it effectively. Gallaher (2009) prompts us to reflect on a crucial issue that we all need to tackle. When kindergarten students are told that it is storytime, they all respond with enthusiasm. Now, try saying that in a classroom full of teenagers. The answer may be entirely different. So, the nagging question that Gallagher brings to the spotlight is: what happens between kindergarten and secondary school that kills our students' enthusiasm for reading?

Motivation is crucial for learning any topic in life. Exams are part of our educational system, and this article does not advocate their removal. But it is extremely important to provide learners with reading opportunities that may help them feel like they are going to the waterpark, and not to the lawyer's office so that after they finish their educational journey, they will want to go to the waterpark on multiple occasions—because we have taught them to enjoy the reading experience.

So, readicide has been committed. What can we do about it? That is the central question that this article intends to answer. Bringing something back to life can be challenging; you need to carefully follow certain steps and repeat them, like CPR. But, how do we perform CPR on the pleasure of reading? How can we resuscitate reading enjoyment? How can we even make our students enjoy reading when we compete with

such dynamic, short, and flashy products like social media videos and content from streaming platforms?

In the following paragraphs, three pedagogical CPR procedures are introduced in the form of questions. The answers to them should enable us, as teachers of English, to self-assess ourselves, reflect upon our daily practices and adjust our GPS accordingly so that we can rekindle our students' enjoyment of reading.

1. **Cognitive engagement** is present: Are the texts and activities cognitively engaging for the students?
2. The **priority** is the experience: Are students experiencing the reading process?
3. The **role** of the students is active: Do students have an active role in the reading class?

Cognitive engagement is present: Are the text and the activities cognitively engaging for the students?

Cognitively engaging students in reading classes is essential. Without engagement, every step of a lesson has the potential to become a serious pedagogical challenge, both for the student and the teacher. But how can we engage students cognitively when we compete with content that is made for short attention spans? Bland (2018) asserts that reading skills have to be gradually taught in equal measure through three stepping-stones: Engaged reading, participatory reading, and reading against the text. These three steps may guide us in hooking our students' cognitive engagement.

Engaged reading

This first stepping stone is connected with allowing students to commit themselves to the text and the activities without focusing on correctness. Even though there are contexts where correction is necessary for learning, reading for enjoyment is not one of them. Naturally, when we read, we strive for meaning, not for accuracy. What is more, learners should be encouraged to connect emotionally with the text. Therefore, the emphasis is on the learner's relationship with the text, not on the accuracy of the content, thus effectively fostering reflection and critical thinking.

The pedagogical implication of this is to include classroom practices that foster the learners' relationship with the text, the context, the characters, and so forth, resisting the temptation to use correction that may inhibit our students' reading flow. Bridging the text with our students means providing opportunities for them to see themselves reflected in the text or in the context of the text.

Participatory reading

The second stepping stone described by Bland (2018) emphasises student agency in discovering tones, narrators, patterns, and symbols. In this way, learners create meaning and become protagonists of their reading process. Bland (2018) further argues

that the challenge that this stage presents not only becomes an instance of true learning engagement but also fuels the students' motivation for future reading opportunities.

This could be reflected in the classroom by providing students with activities connected with identifying language patterns that certain characters produce, dichotomies that may flicker on and off throughout the text, instances of iterability, and so on. These activities go beyond basic reading comprehension tasks, aiding students in discovering deeper layers of meaning in the text.

Reading against the text

The last stepping stone provided by Bland (2018) allows the reader to question the text, the narrator, the presences and the absences, the centres and the margins, creating alternative interpretations by reading critically. Reading against the text means challenging the ethics of the text, making intercultural connections, and exercising empathy. This becomes an extension of the enjoyment that is created through these stepping stones.

The pedagogical implication of this is allowing students to take part in tasks that involve reading critically, by guiding them to challenge the meaning of the text through questions, and to produce myriad interpretations and connections with their present reality. A tendency to ask questions to students is very frequently found in adapted versions of classics, specifically designed to check reading comprehension, but what if we would give our students the credit (and the power) to ask questions for themselves about the text? What if the exercise of questioning results in sharpening their critical reading skills?

Bland's ideas are aligned with Ausubel's Schema Theory (2000). It explains how meaningful learning occurs. The backbone of this theory states that individuals learn best when they are able to connect existing information with new information and only then, the content is meaningfully learnt. This means that content must be contextualized. Bland's three stepping stones present opportunities for the learner to connect new knowledge with prior knowledge, allowing them to anchor new learning instances effectively because they are cognitively engaged with the content.

The *priority* is the experience: Are students experiencing the reading process?

If we could have a special scale to measure the weight of our priorities in the classroom, and we would put on one side the experience of reading, and on the other side the evaluative concerns and correctness, which would be heavier? The answer to that represents our number one priority in the classroom. In fact, most classrooms' scales tilt toward evaluative concerns.

Allowing students to experience reading is crucial for resuscitating the pleasure of approaching a text, and it should be our priority. Experiential learning theory rests on the basis that experience is the protagonist of the learning process; this theory draws on concepts of how human beings learn naturally, and this form of learning is then framed

on the context of formal education. Kolb (2015) provides a very interesting definition of learning: “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). In other words, learning is a dynamic and transactional process in which knowledge is built and rebuilt through experience. Furthermore, he states that successful learning occurs when there is tension and conflict among experiences, reflections, and old and new concepts and actions. This definition also implies that learning is not a fixed event, and it is not the mere incorporation of contents in isolation.

Within the classroom this involves giving students the protagonist role in activities, allowing them to manipulate the text through engaged reading, participatory reading, and reading against the text. The reading experience permits them to approach the text in different ways, deeply engaging with the context and the content, grasping and transforming both prior and newly acquired knowledge.

It is important to bear in mind that not all experiences can be educational. John Dewey (1997), one of the founders of Experiential Learning, explains that experiences are indeed part of education, but they are educationally unproductive if they are not connected with relevant, meaningful and future experiences.

To sum up this section, it appears that working on the relationship between the text and the reader is crucial in order to perform *CPR* on the enjoyment of reading, sparking back to life enthusiasm, motivation, and eagerness to read even beyond academic obligations. In other words, we would be fostering better learning opportunities that have the potential to become positive experiences that students will want to repeat in the future, even beyond formal education.

The *role* of the students is active: Do students have an active role in the reading class?

Many times, learners assume a passive role when reading a text. The term passivity in educational contexts has been conceptualized in different ways; however, for the purposes of this article, it is defined as the different instructional practices that limit the students’ agency and cognitive involvement. Furthermore, passivity can be understood as a pedagogically constructed position that fixes the learner in a container-like position that needs to be filled with knowledge, limiting their true capacity to engage meaningfully with the text and the activities. Freire’s work (1970) resonates strongly with this perception of passivity by critiquing “the banking model of education” in which learners are positioned as vessels that need to be filled with information, thereby restricting their agency, engagement, and control over their learning process.

Learners should be actively involved in their reading process. They should be the protagonists of the experience of reading. Kluwe (in Hacker et al., 2009) develops the topic of the individual as a thinking agent. For learners to succeed, they must gain control of their own learning processes (p. 1).

Learners should shift from passively reading to being actively involved in a learning process that fosters creativity and deeper layers of understanding that may enhance their desire for reading in the future. Bland (2018) argues that the aesthetic sense of reading is not acknowledged by most curricula, which results in asking students to read classical, rich, and challenging texts, without fueling their motivation to engage deeply with the core of the texts.

The most dangerous enemy of passivity is pleasure. Krashen (1994) discusses the pleasure hypothesis by analysing which kind of activities favour foreign language learning. In fact, he states that “activities that are not good for language acquisition are (...) often perceived to be painful.” (p. 299) Furthermore, Bleu (cited in Bland, 2004, p. 177) claims “I want to emphasize the danger and opportunity that English classes offer for convincing students not of their capacity and potential as readers, but of their intellectual insufficiency.”

The student’s role in the reading class should be active. They must be involved cognitively to participate eagerly in the different tasks. Csikzentmihalyi (as cited in Krashen, 1994, p. 309) states that “flow is the state one reaches when one is deeply but effortlessly involved in an activity.” Krashen (1994) further develops this notion by stating that reading is one of the most often mentioned flow activities in the world. This means that when reading is linked to pleasure, it is easier to enter the above-mentioned flow state.

To sum up, passivity is a constructed pedagogical position that confines learners to a container-like state to be filled with information. It is in our power to present students with opportunities to be agents and protagonists of their own learning process by scaffolding them with pleasant, cognitively engaging texts and activities that may allow them to flow effortlessly into reading.

Performing CPR on our learners’ pleasure of reading means then that we should work in engaging them cognitively with relevant, meaningful tasks and texts by prioritizing the experience of reading as a process of grasping, transforming, and reflecting upon prior and new knowledge. This can only be achieved if students have an agentive and protagonist role in the classroom triggered by pedagogical practices that do not assume students as containers, but rather as flames that need to be kindled.

Recalibrating the pedagogical GPS of our reading classes becomes an imperative need. Methodological changes will be pointless unless we, as teachers, understand the true essence of reading and its connection to pleasure. Limiting reading classes to objectives solely connected with evaluative needs will ensure the perpetuation of readicide. Our final destination needs to be adjusted if we want to teach skills for life and not just for the classroom.

This article has proposed that reading enjoyment can be brought back to life by using the CPR framework metaphor. The latter provides solid theoretical background by establishing the importance of three questions, guided by Bland’s three stepping stones, that encourage teachers to self-assess their pedagogical practices in the classroom.

The CPR model is not meant to be a plain checklist, but rather a point of reflection that may guide teachers through the map of reading classes, enabling them to properly set their pedagogical GPS toward a destination that favours meaningful learning over rote learning, reflection over assessment, lifelong skills over classroom-limited skills.

Ultimately, rethinking and self-assessing our pedagogical decisions is part of our journey as evolving educators who strive for excellence and meaningful reading experiences that leave a lasting impact beyond the classroom walls.

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Intertextuality in *Into the Forest*

Karina Durán

Into the Forest (2004) was written and illustrated by Anthony Browne, an artist widely recognised for his innovative contributions to children's literature, particularly within the world of picture books. The story revolves around a young boy who is worried about his father's absence. His mother asks him to visit his grandmother and take the longer route, but the boy decides instead to enter the forest through the short path. On his journey, he meets characters from familiar fairy tales such as Jack, Goldilocks, and Hansel and Gretel. Eventually, he finds a red coat that symbolically empowers him to continue until he reaches his grandmother's house, where the story takes an unexpected turn that plays with readers' expectations. This article defines intertextuality and explores how Browne applies it in Into the Forest. A didactic sequence is also proposed to demonstrate how this picture book can be effectively used in the primary classroom.

Intertextuality

The concept of intertextuality, coined by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, highlights the interdependence of literary texts and how meanings emerge through their dialogue with one another. According to Kristeva, "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (1986, p. 37). This view illustrates that meaning is always relational, constructed through dialogue with other texts, cultural references, and ideas.

Anthony Browne's works resonate strongly with this idea. His narratives frequently intertwine references to classic literature, visual art, and cultural symbols. His picture books invite readers to notice details, decode images, and construct meaning from both text and illustration. Readers therefore become active cultural participants, engaging in a complex reading experience where visual and verbal clues work together (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001). Although some references may be more evident to adults than to children, Browne's stories encourage all readers to draw on previous reading experiences and cultural knowledge when interpreting his picture books (Rodrigues & Pinto, 2024).

Intertextuality in *Into the Forest*

The title *Into the Forest* becomes a critical part of Browne's creative process, providing the first hint at the story's connection to *Little Red Riding Hood*. As David Lodge (1992) explains, a book's title holds great power as it is the first element that readers encounter and one that shapes their initial engagement with the story. Here, *Into the Forest* implies a journey, both literal and metaphorical, and evokes classic fairy tales where forests serve as sites of adventure, danger, and transformation.

As can be seen, the intertextual references begin right from the front cover. In the background, Snow White's glass coffin is featured, evoking a sense of stillness. The poisoned apple, a symbol of temptation and danger from *Snow White*, is also woven into the scene. Alongside these, the figure of the Frog Prince appears, hinting at transformation, and the possibility of change.

The red front and back endpapers offer a visual thematic frame, with the colour red carrying significant symbolic weight. Traditionally associated with negative, danger-bearing emotions, this choice complements the story's exploration of fear and anxiety, while subtly referencing *Little Red Riding Hood* and deepening the intertextual connections. This colour motif can also be seen in the boy's red shoes, his mother's sweater and the red coat he discovers deep within the forest. The connection to *Little Red Riding Hood* becomes explicit when the boy, feeling cold, stumbles upon a coat. In a passage that directly links him to the classic story, Browne writes:

I was getting very cold and wished that I'd brought a coat. Suddenly I saw one. It was nice and warm, but as soon as I put it on I began to feel scared. I felt something was following me. I remembered a story that Grandma used to tell me about a bad wolf. (Browne, 2004, n.p.)

Here, the red coat becomes a tangible link to the classic tale, while also symbolising the boy's fear of being pursued by something unknown and menacing. Through this subtle but powerful reference, Browne invites readers to consider the boy's journey as not only a physical path through the forest, but also as an exploration of his inner fears and the courage required to confront them. This outer journey through the forest involves an inner, psychological journey towards bravery and self-discovery.

Additionally, as mentioned before, the boy is asked to deliver a cake to his grandmother. His mother warns him against taking the shortcut through the forest. However, the boy, eager to return home quickly in case his father comes back, chooses to ignore his mother's advice and ventures into the forest, taking the shorter but riskier route. This narrative of a child journeying through the woods to visit a grandparent closely mirrors the classic tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*, where a young girl faces similar dangers on her way to her grandmother's house. However, unlike the passive journey of Little Red Riding Hood, Browne's protagonist actively chooses the forest path.

The instances of intertextuality go in crescendo as the boy makes his way to his grandmother's house, encountering characters from familiar fairy tales along the way. First, he meets a boy who offers to swap his cow for the cake. This interaction cleverly alludes to *Jack and the Beanstalk*. In Jack's tale, the cow represents both innocence and a crucial turning point as his choice to trade it for magic beans launches him into an extraordinary adventure. Similarly, both Jack and the boy are young characters given a task to accomplish by their mothers, but they both choose to disobey these instructions: Jack by trading the cow for magic beans and the boy by taking the shortcut through the forest. Beyond these narrative echoes, Browne embeds visual clues that further deepen the intertextual layers. In the illustration, a beanstalk subtly appears in the bottom right

corner, while a giant's club can be seen on the left. These details, quietly tucked into the scene, invite the attentive reader to connect the protagonist's journey with Jack's adventure.

As he continues on his path, he encounters a girl with golden hair who also desires his cake. This is an allusion to *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. In the original fairy tale, Goldilocks wanders into the same place, the woods, enters the bears' house without permission, and disrupts their space. This act hints at the concept of boundaries, distinguishing between what is safe and what is forbidden. Also, Browne further enriches this intertextual encounter with visual clues: the image of the three bears walking in the woods, a house shaped like a bear, and even some tree trunks that resemble a bear's profile.

Further along, he sees two children huddling by a fire who are looking for their parents. They represent the characters from *Hansel and Grete*l and this intertextual connection reinforces the theme of the absence of a parental figure. This story revolves around two siblings, Hansel and Gretel, who are abandoned in the woods by their parents due to famine and poverty. To find their way back home, Hansel leaves a trail of breadcrumbs as they venture deeper into the forest. Unfortunately, birds eat the breadcrumbs, leaving them lost and unable to return. Similarly, in *Into the Forest*, the young boy yearns for his father's return. The illustrations accompanying this scene also depict birds, looking for food on the ground, and danger.

Later, after finding and putting on the red coat, a page presents illustrative clues that serve as rich instances of intertextuality. For instance, the inclusion of a pumpkin and a glass slipper directly references *Cinderella*, evoking themes of transformation and magical assistance. A key, which suggests the unlocking of hidden worlds, *evokes Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In the background, a tower with a rope alludes to Rapunzel, hinting at themes of entrapment, paralleling the boy's own journey through the forest and his desire to find Grandma's house. Additionally, a cat that resembles *Puss in Boots* serves as a reminder of cleverness and resourcefulness, attributes that may come into play as the boy navigates his challenges. Notably, a spinning wheel, symbolising *Sleeping Beauty*, is also present in the illustrations. Lastly, a branch that ends in the shape of a wolf's tail cleverly connects again to *Little Red Riding Hood*.

Interestingly enough, the fairytale characters woven into Browne's intertextual narrative do not share the same presence. *Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Rapunzel,* and *Cinderella* appear only as visual references, with no direct interaction with the protagonist. This is perhaps unsurprising: two are depicted as asleep, one remains locked in a tower, and Cinderella, we might assume, is back home, busy with her chores. Their passive roles are emphasised by the image of Prince Charming on his steed, a visual reminder of the dependency these princesses have on external rescue, unable to alter their circumstances independently. On the contrary, characters like Jack, Goldilocks, and Hansel and Gretel actively engage in decisions that determine their own fates, for better or worse (Bullen & Parsons, 2005). These characters exhibit a degree of agency and resilience that sets them apart from their more passive counterparts.

Browne's intertextual choices subtly underscore the contrast between characters whose survival hinges on self-determination and those who await rescue.

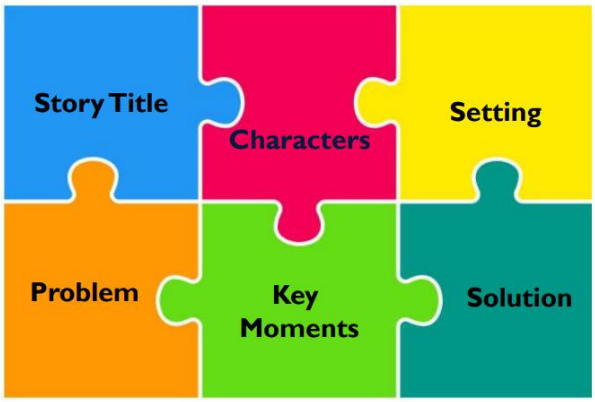
Finally, the young boy arrives at his grandmother's house, but something feels amiss. The house is depicted with subtle, wolf-like features, adding an unsettling layer to the scene. This visual cue, combined with the narration, builds suspense:
I knocked on the door and a voice called out, 'Who's there?' But it didn't really sound like Grandma's voice (…) 'Come in, dear,' the strange voice called. I was terrified. I slowly crept in. There in Grandma's bed was… (Browne, 2004, n.p.).

This passage and its accompanying illustration clearly evoke *Little Red Riding Hood*, setting up the expectation that the wolf is waiting inside, disguised and ready to deceive. Readers, familiar with the classic tale, anticipate danger as the boy enters. However, Anthony Browne deftly subverts this expectation, catching both the boy and the readers by surprise with a twist on the classic narrative.

Classroom work

Working in the classroom is no easy task; it requires teachers to possess the skills, abilities, and expertise necessary to deliver high-quality education. All the previous analysis aims to offer a deeper understanding of intertextuality in *Into the Forest*. Based on this, a didactic sequence has been designed to help students recognise intertextual references and understand how stories connect with one another. It consists of three stages and is intended for students with an A2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Stage 1: Pre-reading
The teacher will begin by activating students' prior knowledge of fairy tales. The teacher will engage students with a "magic hat" containing objects from familiar fairy tales. In turns, students will draw an object, name it, and identify the story it belongs to. Then, the title *Into the Forest* will be introduced, encouraging students to think of fairy tales set in forests and discuss why this setting is so common. Students then will work in small groups, each focusing on one fairy tale (*Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, Goldilocks and the Three Bears,* or *Hansel and Gretel*). They will read it and complete a big story puzzle with information about the characters, setting, problem, key moments, and solution, and briefly present their findings. This will prepare them to recognise intertextual links later in Browne's book.



Beacon, G. (2024). Retelling stories: Story puzzle

Stage 2: While-reading
The teacher will show students the front and back covers of the picturebook, inviting them to describe what they see. The teacher will tell students to watch for elements from previously discussed fairy tales as she reads the story. Since the illustrations include visual cues referencing additional fairy tales that were not explored earlier, the teacher will highlight these connections. If students are unfamiliar with a particular story, the teacher will provide a brief explanation to clarify the reference. The teacher will read the story using expressive techniques, pausing at key moments to allow students to observe, make comments, ask questions, check predictions and experience the magic of Anthony Browne's illustrations.

Stage 3: Post-reading
After reading the story, students will be invited to expand the story by imagining a new encounter between the boy and a character from a different fairy tale. In groups, students will brainstorm possible encounters between the boy and a fairy tale character. They will imagine the dialogue, and the type of interaction (e.g., friendly, humorous, or challenging). Then, students will create illustrations depicting the encounter, including both the boy and the fairy tale character, and will write the dialogue. Following this, students will rehearse their scene, assigning roles, practising lines, and integrating props and gestures. Finally, the groups will present their scenes to the class, dramatising their new encounter.

At its core, *Into the Forest* is a story about courage, familial relationships, and self-discovery. Browne incorporates visual and textual references to fairy tales such as *Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, Goldilocks and the Three Bears,* and *Hansel and Gretel*. These links blur the line between reality and imagination and challenge readers to question the nature of the protagonist's journey.

Into the Forest is a picture book that demands preparation and analysis from teachers to effectively guide students in exploring the layers of meaning embedded in his works. Understanding Browne's intertextual references allows teachers to better scaffold students' learning processes. The more teachers know about literary texts, their

authors, and their main characteristics, the more prepared they will feel when working in the classroom.

Ultimately, *Into the Forest* demonstrates that children's literature is capable of offering complex, layered, and transformative experiences, inviting readers of all ages to navigate stories with curiosity, sensitivity, and imagination.

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What was left behind
Paola Dell'Acqua

Migration is not only about moving houses; it is a far more complex issue and a key feature of globalization. More and more people are constantly moving from one place to another for many different reasons: political, economic, religious or to find a better place to live. Whatever the reason, immigrants have to face emotional, physical and mentally challenging experiences that change their lives.

Migration and education are among the main concerns for UNESCO with a clear call to action. The Sustainable Developmental Goal # target 4 seeks to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. Building bridges, not walls is the central theme of UNESCO's 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report, intended to provide migrants with curricula adaptation and teacher training to ensure they get the skills to engage with different cultures.

Schools may play a decisive role in smoothing the inclusion of immigrant children into a new context. Picture books can be the key to open doors to the new world. My migration story started out of a desire to find a better future. However, I never thought it would be such a painful journey! It meant leaving our comfort zone behind and starting with a few belongings. And even when it was planned and organised, it was full of obstacles and difficulties: our new house was not our home. We felt lonely because we were alone indeed, and we were strangers in a strange place too. So, being an immigrant myself, made me inevitably attracted to stories that could help children deal with the pain of leaving their lives behind.

Picture books about migration can show some of the problems immigrants face: missing family, food and home, making friends, finding a job, learning a new language or keeping traditions, among other things. When read in class, they can make learners:

- Open their minds to other realities, cultures and beliefs
- Value bravery and resilience
- Understand immigrants' hopes and fears
- Develop empathy and understanding
- Give children a different perspective of everyday life
- Let children be in others' shoes
- Bring intercultural awareness

As an immigrant, another thing I left behind was my job in a friendly place. I could no longer teach in schools in my new place, but my love for books had travelled with me. So, I decided to use my experience and my passion for children's books to review stories and write book-based activities and, when possible, offer reading for pleasure sessions. I am still trying to get my place though.

Finding the right story to deal with a topic may not be easy: it is time-consuming, and it means a great deal of searching and reading. I found three books about migration in

different situations and decided they were worth sharing. I include a synopsis and some ideas to work in class, mainly oriented towards reflecting and talking about all the problems immigrants face and how children in their hometown and the community can help newcomers feel at home again.

'My Home is in my Backpack' (Floris Books, March 2025), written by Eugenia Perrella and illustrated by Angela Salerna

I immediately identified with the story of Clara, who is forced to leave her life behind together with her parents, brother and pet. During the journey, she discovers the pleasure of simple things, makes friends with other people in the group and sees others' realities. She understands she is not alone, and above all, she learns that the important things in life are the ones she takes into her heart. The story can be used to discuss how meaningless material things can be and how we can do without most of them and still carry the most precious things with us.

The book is also an invitation to reflect on the challenges of immigration, bravery and resilience, the reasons that make people leave their homes, and the difficulties they must overcome. It can be turned into a project to search for the number of immigrants in a city, their origins, what made them leave their home, how they got to the new place or what they brought with them, just to mention a few of the ideas children may be curious about. Another nice activity could be to write about the problems immigrants face on the left side of a paper and suggest possible solutions and ways of helping on the right side.

'The Map of Good Memories' (Cuento de Luz, 2016), written by Fran Muño, illustrated by Zuzanna Celej and translated by Jon Brokenbrow

The story of Zoe also touched my heart. Zoe loves every corner of her city; she describes all the places she keeps close to her heart. One day, Zoe and her family have to flee their war-torn city, so she decides to draw every place on a map to remember where she has been happy.

The book can be used to talk about places where children have had happy memories. I had some students that were moving to another country, so drawing a map with their favourite places helped them feel they would be closer. The map also became a means of sharing culture. *The Map of Good Memories* can help children try to understand what being a war refugee means. It also presents a good opportunity to talk, with simple language, about wars, and the causes and effects. Immigrant students will feel comforted while the rest of the students can feel what being in somebody else's shoes means.

'Jack-the-cat' (Laser Graphics, 2018), written by Sezgi Yalin and illustrated by Louiza Kasmaki

The last book selected tells the story of Jack, a cat that lives in a very big city in the USA but dreams of changing his life so he moves to a small village in Cyprus. In his new place, he misses things from his hometown, but he meets many different animals

and learns wonderful things from each of them. Although Jack moves out of his free will, he still faces at first challenges that will change him. He learns about others' lives and new places. The story seeks to inspire children to pursuit their dreams, take risks and be brave. Jack-the-cat introduces children to nature and wildlife in different parts of Cyprus; it can encourage immigrants to talk about their homes and feel welcome.

The three stories can be mirrors where children can look at themselves and find it does not matter where they come from; they can still share their childhood with others. The books can also be windows that bring to light other realities and sliding doors that can make readers transform the world.
I hope the books proposed help children see migration with different eyes. Migration is, most of the times, non-voluntary, full of hopes and fears, and immigrants are ordinary people who deserve another opportunity.

Paola Dell'Acqua is an EFL teacher passionate about children's books and literature. She has worked promoting reading for pleasure in class for many years. She devotes her time to discovering books and creating resources. She founded Un viaje en libro, where she shares book-based activities that connect stories to art, creative thinking and writing. She offers her services to schools, academies and teachers to help them include reading in class. Email: paoladell.es@yahoo.com

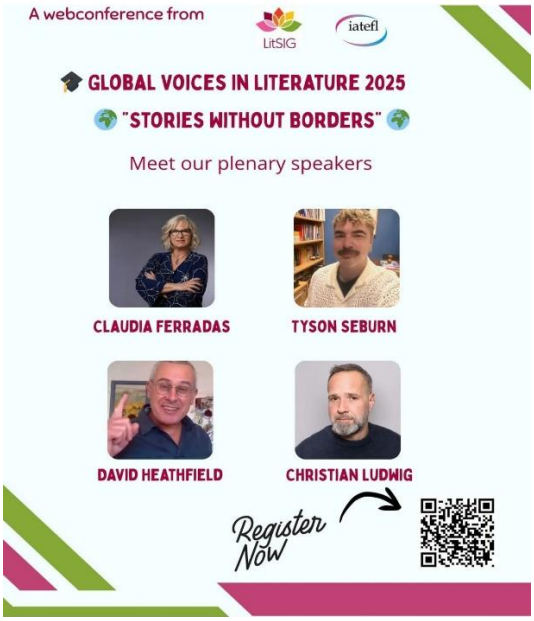
2025 LitSIG events

A BIG thank you to the IATEFL Committee, and in particular, Eugenia Carrión Cantón, Events Coordinator. Stay tuned for more exciting events in 2026!

2025 IATEFL Conference LitSIG PCE: April

Webinar: June

Global Voices in Literature online conference: September



Teacher Education Round Table: December