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As you sow, so will you reap

How to instill the love of analyzing literature in our students: Expectations and obstacles

It is a recognized fact that literature is far different from any other disciplines, namely, history, mathematics or even geography. While those are based on facts and fixed rules, literature is open to different interpretations. It is based on appreciation and analysis. No two readers see the literary work in the same light. There are various shades and layers of meanings. Every reader adds something to the work based on his beliefs, religion, level of education, and predilections. One can come up with his own analysis as long as he supports his argument logically. In light of the given information, teachers have great responsibilities towards their students. They have a mighty and noble task ahead of them. Students should not only be taught how to appreciate and approach literary texts, but also to analyze them. In this article, I would like to address this problem and touch upon it trying to provide useful remedy.

Most students tend to regard critical analysis as one of the most problematic and challenging, if not fearful, areas in literature. They rank it as the least thing they want to do. When they encounter similar cases, they panic and get confused. They are under the delusion that they need to analyze the whole literary work. However, it does not have to be that way. Once the student has decided on a topic (theme, symbol, etc) to analyze, he/she can approach any text without any difficulties. He is on the right track. So what is required of the students? Before approaching any text, students need

to be familiar with elements of fiction such as characterization, plot, setting, theme and so forth. The teacher's duty is to facilitate the student's task by simplifying the process of analyzing and making it more enjoyable. He can offer illustrations and examples from real life to make the situation more realistic

In fact, what aggravates the problem is teachers providing ready made critical analysis which deprives students of thinking for themselves. I am not against providing such aids; however, students might be addicted to them instead of thinking for themselves. A good approach to overcome this problem is to make the whole process student – centered instead of teacher – centered. The teacher can explain in detail the entire work in his first lecture so as to avoid obscurity and pave the way for his students. Then, he can divide the whole class into groups according to the size of the class. Each student in this group is assigned some passages to present orally in front of the class (presentation), while other groups prepare questions to ask in the presence of the teacher monitoring and guiding. This way, we can build our students confidence and break the barrier of fear. Moreover, the students are given the chance to take part in lively discussions by offering their views