

A STUDY ON THE NOVEL, 'DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE': OVERCOMING TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS THAT FORM THREE STUDENTS FACE BY USING TWO STRATEGIES

\mathbf{BY}

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Abstract

The learning of literature among secondary school students in Malaysia especially in the rural areas has not shown much improvement and progress. This is due to the difficulties that these students face in comprehending and understanding literary works such as poems, short stories and novels. This particular study looked into two-main problems that hindered students from having a deep interest in the novel, 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' which is recommended by the Education Ministry as part of a package for the English Literature Component. It also proposed two strategies which would bring the needed improvement and progress in the learning of this novel among the form three students.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The teaching of the English Literature Component in the English Language syllabus has been implemented in secondary schools throughout Malaysia since March 2000. This component focuses on three aspects of literary text namely; poems, short stories and novels. In its first year of implementation, the focus was on form one and form four students. For each respective form, the emphasize was on the learning of poems and short stories. English teachers throughout the country were required to teach these two literary aspects within that one-year period. In 2001, the students who were in form two and form five respectively were required to learn a novel which teachers were allowed to choose from a selection of novels given. These three aspects were later assessed in the English Language Paper of the 2001 SPM examination for the form five students. In 2002, the form three students were exposed to another novel and the first assessment for the students involving all three literary aspects was done in the English Language Paper of the 2002 PMR examination.

The main interest here is the implementation of the Literature Component especially teaching of novels among the lower secondary students with special focus on the PMR examination. Currently, all form two and form three students in secondary schools throughout Malaysia are learning the following novels as recommended by the Education Ministry. It is optional for them to choose two novels out of the five novels recommended. Schools have the final say in the selection of these two novels. The first novel, which is taught to the form two students, is selected from the following titles.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Novels in English Language Classrooms

'One of the pleasures of teaching English Language is that of introducing students to the joys of reading fiction, of allowing them to recognize their own difficulties, ambitions, and challenges in the lives of characters from short stories and novels. This can easily become a truly dynamic experience of great meaning and relevance.'

[Stephanie Vandrick, 1997:6]

Novels are meant to be enjoyed by students who can read them during the actual classroom lessons and also at home for pleasure. Stories in novels depict good moral values and challenges that the characters have to face in the series of events that are depicted in each story. In a way, novels present real-life situations, which reflect the human condition (universal, timeless themes). When students can relate to the ideas, they begin to think more deeply about the themes by questioning, connecting and developing more complex ideas about the series of happening in the stories read. This in turn helps foster critical thinking in students after they have read the stories several times.

Reading novels can be meaningful if students understand what they read. This is considered effective since novels provide bulk reading, which increases speed and forces students to put down their dictionaries and deduce the meaning of vocabulary from context. However, this is not so if we are to look at the real situation that is happening in most secondary schools in Malaysia. Ever since the introduction of the literature component as part of the English language learning, complaints are heard nationwide about the students' inability to comprehend all the three aspects of the component namely; poems, short stories and novels. Only a minority or to be exact thirty percent of the secondary students are able to understand, comprehend and relate to the three aspects