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# Enjoy Literature!

## An Introduction to Literature in English

### **Why propose a collection of literary texts for young readers?**

Because we think that our students are not too young to enjoy the beauty of literature. We have seen in class that "heart speaks unto heart", in the words of Blessed John Henry Newman; literature is a timeless expression of the human heart, and its beauty can touch people of all ages. As teachers of English as a foreign language, we know it is easy to underestimate the communicative power of literature in English, and consider authentic texts as too difficult for our students. But experience has taught us that if we carefully choose and prepare what we propose, literature has a power to stimulate the interest and creativity of young students that is hard to overestimate.

### **Working in cooperation with a group of teachers of English from private and public schools,**

we have become aware of the educational value of literature in the cognitive and learning process. Reading a literary text means discovering a deeper meaning of reality through the narration of events, the description of characters, words themselves and their sounds. As Flannery O'Connor said, "Fiction is supposed to represent life, and the fiction writer is supposed to use as many aspects of life as are necessary to make his total picture convincing. The fiction writer doesn't state, he shows, renders. (...) Fiction is the concrete expression of mystery-mystery that is lived". We can say that this may be why, working with our young learners, we have discovered that what they enjoy most of all is original, authentic texts; what is genuine is able to spark their curiosity and arouse interest. As some students said, after reading some excerpts from *Chocolates*, by Roald Dahl: "The description was so detailed that it seemed to me I had the same piece of chocolate in my mouth", or "What is important is that the author wrote this book about a real story that he lived by himself". In addition, they have discovered that they are able to 'work' with words, writing their own poems or short stories in which, even within the simplicity of the form, you can see real, personal and original artistic creativity. They've taken part in writing poetry competitions and experienced the joy of what it means to be part of a creative process.

**A further point of novelty has been that in our work with colleagues from other disciplines,** such as Italian, Art, Music, Geography, History and Science, we have learnt that cross-curricular activities and CLIL-oriented projects broaden our programme and give students a further opportunity to improve their speaking skills. Most of all, these activities help our students discover the relations between the different subjects they study at school, and see knowledge as a 'unity' or a joint process.

*Teaching and Education* is a group of non-native and native teachers of English as a foreign language. Since 2002, they have been meeting regularly in Milan to reflect on new methodologies and effective teaching experiences. The group belongs to the Association 'The Risk of Education'.