

TEEN LITERATURE AND TEACHER: INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING JUDY BLUME'S YOUNG ADULT NOVEL TIGER EYES TO INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS

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Abstract

Many teachers continue to assign only classic literature with novels that have been traditionally used in English language classrooms because of their timelessness. There is evidence that the use of Young Adult Literature in the intermediate classroom can increase the chances that students will participate in satisfying literary experiences, read more, and become lifelong readers.

This paper discusses the benefits and innovative strategies of teaching Young Adult Literature to Intermediate learners, focusing on developing literacy and introducing culture. Teachers can use Young Adult novels to enrich the student's vocabulary, introduce authentic expressions, and support students' writing. Teaching strategies include cloze tests, and through class discussion teacher can also encourage students for reading in groups and reflective writings, prompt sentences, and imitated writing. Young adult books help ESL students to develop deep, yet personal insight into some socio-cultural issues present in the United State and prepare students for the appreciation and understanding of classic literature. Thus, the aim of this paper is not only to throw light on the theoretical innovative strategies but also to highlight them by implementing on the American contemporary writer Judy Blume's young adult novel *Tiger Eyes* (1981) for better understanding.

Keywords: Young Adult Literature, Literacy, ESL, Teaching strategies

INTRODUCTION

Middle and high school students have outstanding opportunities to explore the ever-growing body of young adult literature. Teens from the middle school often have one foot still back in childhood and other stepping into adulthood. They are diverse in their needs and interests. That is why almost every prospective English teacher has taken a course in "teenage literature." In such courses, teachers deal with great names such as Judy Blume, Paul Zindel, Frank Bonham, and S.E. Hinton. This paper aims to focus on tasks that a teacher can deliver to the students for class discussion. Such classroom activities pose questions dealing with stereotypes, characterizations, and realism. Moreover, Literature may hold one of the keys to helping children to build their language and communication skills. The paper also emphasizes the uses and values of literature for youngsters in their middle school years. The emphasis cannot be on the finite body of literature, for a separate body of YA's literature with the special reference of Judy Blume's YA novel *Tiger Eyes* for intermediate learners.

The advantage of using literature in the intermediate classroom has long been proven and recognized by ESL teachers and researchers in three core areas. Firstly, reading literature is beneficial to language development. As Wu Yogan indicates,

Literary texts are also rich resources of accurate diction, diverse sentence patterns, and passionate narratives. Second, reading literature enhances ESL students' knowledge of culture and society, which is too complicated to be captured by any single piece of expository writing. Third, reading literature fosters critical thinking by offering readers multiple perspectives, especially in books dealing with issues such as immigration, cultural differences, social upheavals, etc. (Yogan 5)

It is a stimulating medium to discover and yet safe enough to draw back and consider the alternatives.

Many English language teachers are determined to make their students read "real" literature. They want to introduce them to authors such as Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, and Willa Cather. They yearn for them to appreciate Austen's satirical diction, Dicken's poignant themes, Twain's marvelous wit, and Cather's remarkable imagery. They expect to turn their students to love and admire the novels such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Great Expectations*, *Adventure of Huckleberry Finn*, and *O Pioneers!* They consider that all the students need is an enthusiastic teacher and exposure to "fine" literary work of art. However, when they are faced with such authors,

many students complain, balk and become impassive, and or fall asleep. Teachers can be disillusioned and begin to question their own skills and abilities to inspire students.

YAL can be a vehicle that allows the teacher to present the same literary elements found in the classics while engaging adolescent students in stimulating classroom discussions and assignments. Young adult literature is that key. Unlike classic literature, it can foster a desire to read. Because

- It employs the literary elements of classics
- Engages adolescent students in analyzing literature along with themselves and their principles
- Promotes and encourages lifelong reading habits.

IMPORTANCE OF YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE IN CLASSROOM PEDAGOGY

Young adult literature is a promising contender to be used in the ESL classroom. Young Adult books are commonly utilised and often favoured by both teachers and students in secondary schools. In Paulo Freire's work, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, he says, "I have always insisted that words used in organizing a literacy program come from what I call the 'word universe' of people who are learning, expressing their actual language, their anxieties, fears, demands, and dreams. Words should be laden with the meaning of people's existential experience, and not of the teacher's experiences." (Freire 35) They express to young adults at a very subjective level by putting real-life situations into a simpler context. It is often written in simple, contemporary English, covers a wide variety of topics that are relevant to ESL students' lives, and contains short enough chapters to accommodate ESL students' reading habits and ability levels. YAL deals with situations and circumstances that are relevant to young adults, such as growth, coming of age, relationships, self-discovery, and development. Every year multiple Young Adult books are written by writers from all walks of life. They are characteristically written in the first person, using contemporary language, and following linear storylines.

The criteria, which mirror the world of adolescents are following:

- The main character is a teenager who is the center of the plot;
- The protagonist's actions and decisions are major factors in the plot's outcome;
- The events and problems in the plot are related to teenagers, and the dialogue reflects their speech;

The point of view is that of an adolescent and reflects an adolescent's interpretation of events and people (White 52-4)

It is noted that Every four or five years The National Council of Teaching English (NCTE) publishes an annotated book called *Book for You*, which offers teachers and librarians "a comprehensive annotated list" of YA books. Typically, more than a thousand YA books are comprised and marked in thematically arranged chapters to produce an overview of the field while remaining organized so teachers and ESL readers can easily browse books they may be interested in, from art to astronomy.

LITERACY AND LITERATURE

Young adult literature is a key to unlocking the words and worlds of literature because it empowers students. Struggling students may not understand literary terms well enough to feel comfortable talking about them in class. Just making sense of the text may be so overwhelming that it is impossible for them to attend to such things as characterization, theme, or symbolism. However, while students struggling with reading literacy may avoid discussing literary terms and techniques, they can readily engage in a discussion about teenagers. They can tell whether they think an adolescent character is realistic or not. Not only that, they can state explicitly why they feel the way they do about a character.

The use of language is critical in developing literacy. The more students are able to discuss issues, to talk about what they are reading and thinking, the more they will develop critical literacy, the ability to interpret, analyse, and explain. As students gain fluency in expressing themselves orally, they will begin to see the need for reading the text to support a position. They will need to be able to read in order to participate in discussions with their peers-to become part of that literate community.

Introducing Young adult literature in the syllabus for intermediate learners make them to realise that their issues, viewpoints, problems and fears are important. As Morris & Tchudi mentions, "Let's read about your world. Let's write about your world. Let's discuss your world."(11-12) so when teacher read with them, teacher indicates that their world is important. Where they are able to communicate with a member of the culture, which they see as dominant. As they become more adept and comfortable in the student/teacher relationship in which both parties are learners, they will possibly develop the dynamic literacy necessary to take more control of their world-to learn to use words to communicate their feelings and needs.

Finally, the genre of young adult literature is "user friendly," to borrow a term from technology. The vocabulary used in these books is not prohibitive. A student who certainly doesn't see the need for vocabulary lessons can refuse to look up words and definitions and still understand the plot and become engaged in the reading. The texts are straightforward and easy to follow. Therefore, students who have not become strong abstract thinkers will not be lost in the maze of images and literary forms. Dialogue is an important part of young adult literature,

and the characters speak the way teenagers speak. Even if the dialect is used, it is presented in a way that is not intimidating. Students who struggle with reading will have a better chance of negotiating the text. Students who struggle with the irrelevancy of school will have a better chance of gaining something valuable from the reading of the text. There is no other genre that is so welcoming and accessible to teenage readers.

TEACHING JUDY BLUME'S *TIGER'S EYE* IN INTERMEDIATE CLASS

Well-written and targeted at young readers, Young Adult books are rich resources of accurate diction, diverse sentence patterns, and passionate narratives. Furthermore, these elements are organically connected to each other so improvement in one area triggers growth overall. Judy Blume is an American contemporary writer who has written popular children's and young adult books. Born in New Jersey in 1938, began her writing career in the 1960s. The famed author has sold more than 85 million books, her words translated into nearly three dozen languages. She was honoured by American Library Association with the Margaret A. Edward Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1996, and the Library of Congress with its Living Legends Award in 2000. Blume's *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* (1970), *Deenie* (1973), *Forever* (1975), *Blubber* (1974) firmly established her as a leading voice for younger readers.

Blume teamed up with son Lawrence, a filmmaker, to write and produce the screen version of *Tiger Eyes* (1981). Released in 2012, it was the first major adaptation of one of her books. *Tiger Eyes* (1981) depicts the 15-years-old Davey Wexler's story begins with an unspeakable tragedy: her father is shot and killed during a hold-up. When relatives invite Mrs. Wexler, Janson and Davey to come to New Mexico for an extended visit, Davey is ambivalent about leaving Atlantic City. Certainly, she is glad to get away from the family's Seven Eleven Store, with the horrible memories it now holds, but she just cannot feel comfortable in Los Alamos- known as a centre for the development of military weapons. She misses her best friend, Lenaya, and she has mixed feelings about her separation from Hugh; she feels vaguely guilty that they were embracing outside the night of the murder-within earshot of the gunfire. Whatever their good intentions, Bitsy (Davey's father's sister) and Walter drive Davey crazy.

Bisty, housekeeper and cook, is constantly warning and advising Davey (from everything about bike helmets to proper attire and friends.) And practically everything about Walter bothers Davey- from the fact that he seems to have no ethical doubts about his work at the weapons centre, to the fact that he carries a loaded gun in his truck and feels he has the right to tell Davey what courses she should take.

Things begin to took up when Davey meets a mysterious, handsome stranger (Wolf) while walking in the canyon. She makes a new friends, Jane, who seems to have it all (including a drinking problem). She agrees to talk with Miriam, her mother's therapist. When Davey volunteers at a local hospital, she discovers that the patient who has become her best friend- Mr. Ortiz, Wolf's father. Sadly, Mr. Ortiz dies and Davey must face loss for the second time in a year. Wolf leaves, reminding Davey in a note to remember Mr. Ortiz as he was- "full of life."

While Davey begins to realize she may never see Wolf again, his philosophy helps her finally come to terms with losing her own father so that she can get on with her life. Gratefully, Davey realizes that her mother, too, has begun to heal. Although she is disgusted at first when her mother dates a "nerd," she is happy to see that her mother seems to be coming out of the daze she's been in since her husband's death. Finally, despite Walter and Bitsy's objections- but to Davey's great joy- the family moves home to Atlantic City.

To achieve various skills and strategies such as LSRW, literary elements, thinking ability and vocabulary, teacher can undertake various fun activities in class.

Teacher can start with the prereading questions and activities or small talk, which is followed by reading the text with vocabulary words and activities, discussion questions, predictions and supplementary activities. After that post-reading discussion questions and actives enhances their skills and at the end, assessment will be taken a place.

PREREADING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES/ SMALL TALK

Teacher may wish to choose one or more prereading questions/ activities. Each is designed to help students draw from their store of background knowledge about the events and themes they will meet in the story they are about to read.

- **Prereading Discussion Questions**
 1. Has anyone close to you ever died?
 2. What was the impact on the people around you?
 3. What was hardest about losing that person?
 4. Was anyone able to comfort you?
 5. How did you cope with your loss?
 6. How did your feelings change as the days, weeks, and months went by?
- **Prereading Activities**

Complete each of the following sentence and compare your reactions with Davey's as you read the story.

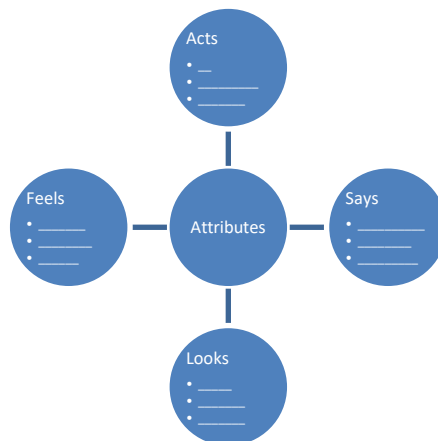
- A. If I had climbed down into a deserted canyon and a stranger began to climb down after me, I would _____
- B. If my little brother took up baking cookies as a hobby, I would _____
- C. If I found out that my new friend seemed to have a drinking problem, I would _____
- D. If my uncle hit me in the face I would _____
- E. If my mother suggested it might help for to discuss my problems with her therapist, I would _____
- F. If I had to live with some relatives, but didn't like their rules, I would _____
- G. If I were new in school, I would join _____
- H. If I thought my mother's rules were unfair and that she was being overprotective, I would _____

• **Based on the title and cover illustration, what do you predict the story will be about? Where will it take place? Read *Tiger Eyes* to find out about how the girl on the cover learns to cope with grief.**

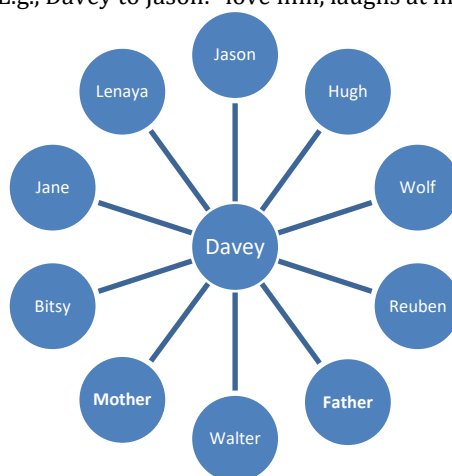
What characters have we met so far?	What is the conflict in the story?	What are your predictions?	Why did you make those predictions?

▪ **Character Attribute Web**

Directions: The attribute web below will help you gather clues the author provides about a characters in the novel. Fill in the blanks with words and phrase which tell how the character acts and looks, as well as what the

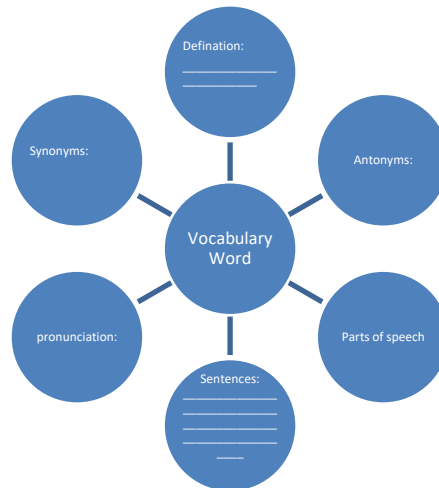


▪ **Sociogram:** A sociogram shows the relationship between characters in a story. Think about how Davey gets along with each of the other characters and how they relate her. Then label each arrow with a short description of the relationship. E.g., Davey to Jason: "love him, laughs at his jokes."



▪ **Vocabulary Word Map**

Direction: Use the spaces below to map vocabulary words from *Tiger Eyes*



- **Vocabulary:** Fill in the squares below with the words from the list which best complete the comparison. (genetics, assailant, gallery, perimeter)

1. Painting is to _____ as car is to showroom.
2. _____ is to outside as area is to inside.
3. Attackers is to _____ as helper is to assistant.
4. Heredity is to _____ as environment is to ecology.

- Use the model vocabulary word map to strengthen vocabulary

Bird's eye view	Aerial
Severe headaches	Migraines
Constructed	Fabricated
Exploded	Detonated
Maliciously destructive people	Vandals

Match each of the definitions in the box with a word in the list, above:

- Fill in each blank with the word from the list that best completes the sentences. Then write your own sentences using the word. (lyrical, bran, rustic)

1. The bird made its loud, ____ announcement that dawn had just arrived. _____
2. Eating ____ is supposed to be good for your heart. _____
3. She enjoyed the ____ cabin, but her friend would have preferred a hotel. _____

- Which of the following is NOT be jowly? An overweight man, a bloodhound, chubby baby, a thick tree

- If you have gone without food for three days, which of the following is NOT an understatement:

1. My stomach's a little empty
2. I could use a snack
3. I am starved
4. I've been dieting

- Which of the following is NOT a "casual" job

1. A temporary job
2. An easy job in a factory
3. A job replacing people on their days off
4. A job requiring you to go to whatever department needs you on a particular day.

- Discussion Questions

- Who is telling the story? What kind of person does she seem to be? (use attribute map and add to it as you learn more about her)
- Who comes to the funeral? Compare the different ways they show their grief.
- What is Lenaya like? Does she show herself to be a "true friend" of Davey's during this hard time? if so, how?
- How might Davey seem to feel about Hugh? Why does she run away from him when he kisses her?
- Prediction: Do you think Davey and Hugh will continue to see each other?

- Do you think Judy Blume’s “opener” is a good one? What question does the story’s first sentences raise in your mind?
- Contrast the way Davey feels about going back to school with the way Jason feels. How do you explain the difference?

What Walter like? How he is different from Davey’s father? Are they alike in any ways?

Walter	Davey’s Father

Prediction: What do you think is in the brown paper bag Davey keeps hidden? How do you think Davey will get along with Bitsy and Walter?

1. How does Davey react to Jason’s nosebleed? Why? Is this the way she would usually react?
2. How can you tell that Davey is getting annoyed with both of her relatives? Find specific statements she makes.
3. What names do Davey and Wolf exchange? Why do you suppose they don’t give their real names?
4. You are a Davey. You keep a private diary. Write an entry for the day you meet Wolf.
5. What is Mr. Ortiz like? Describe his attitude about dying. Begin in attribute web.
6. Do you think Mr. Ortiz is more like Davey’s father or like Walter? What qualities do the three men share? How are they different?

Prediction: How do you think wolf and Davey will react to Mr. Ortiz’s death?

Post-reading Discussion Questions

- 1) How has Davey changed since the beginning of the book?
- 2) Did you find the characters in the book “real”?
- 3) Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why or why not?

Post-reading Discussion Activities

1. Imagine what the family was like before Davey’s father was killed. Write a short story about one day of family life.
2. You are Davey’s mother and you have been back in Atlantic City for six months. Write a letter to Bitsy.

CONCLUSION

By using YA novels, language teachers can achieve the goal of fostering within their students the enjoyment of reading. Because YA novels allow for choice, contain significant literary devices and elements, and develop critical thinking skills. At the same time, a teacher must have extensive knowledge of the Young Adult books, or at least be familiar with different topics and genres. Also, the teacher should be supportive, encouraging, sensitive, and dedicated, because their students face a tremendous challenge when reading through a book written in a foreign language. To effectively meet the needs of students as individual readers and the requirements of curricula and standards, teachers must take into account their own personal and pedagogical response, the aesthetic possibilities of a book, text complexity and visual elements of a text, all within the context of their own classrooms.

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