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## UNIT-7 LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

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### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, we will examine the role played by literature in language learning. In most schools, literature is not treated as a separate subject in the elementary classes. It is included in the language (be it Hindi, English, Sanskrit or any other) syllabus. Although stories, poetry, essays can be found in nearly all textbooks, there has been little dialogue around why they are necessary and how they may play an important role in the acquisition of language. Some of the questions we



would discuss in this unit include: What is literature, what is children's literature, how to use it in the classroom and what objectives it would fulfill?

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## 7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit:

- You will be introduced to various forms and kinds of literature
- You will be able to analyse the role of literature in the acquisition of language.
- You will be able to present your point of view on the conditions for the selection of literature in primary and upper primary classes.
- You will be able to recognise the problems which are encountered in literature teaching.
- You will be able to clarify the role of teacher in literature teaching.

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## 7.2 LITERARY DEVICES

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The language of literature is different from normal spoken language because it includes various kinds of literary and aesthetic / artistic devices such as simile, metaphor, analogy, alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, rhythm, parallelism, synonymy etc. We will discuss some of these literary devices below:

- 1) **Simile:** Simile means to compare the characteristics of two things on the basis of some unique quality. Simile has four elements: X and Y which are compared with each other; a quality on the basis of which the comparison is made say Z and finally an element that will establish the relationship among X, Y and Z. For example, in "her face is as pretty as moon", 'her face' is X and 'moon' is Y; the quality Z is 'pretty' and the connecting element is 'as'.
- 2) **Metaphor:** The essential feature of a metaphor is that unlike objects are identified with each other; in the process, some unique similarity between them is underscored. For example, consider 'a' and 'b' below:
  - a. Camels are found in the deserts.
  - b. The camel is the ship of the desert.

No metaphor is seen in 'a' but in 'b' we have a metaphor. When you look at or think of a camel, normally there is nothing that would bring a 'ship' to your mind. But here 'the camel' **is called** 'the ship'; a bit odd but it does make you think that a camel plays the same role in a desert as does a ship in the sea.



Some metaphors become ‘dead’ with the passage of time. They become a part of our day today language and lose their metaphorical impact. For example, ‘to take steps, to take stock’, or ‘it’s raining cats and dogs’ etc

There are also mixed metaphors having confusing images such as ‘I smell a rat’.

- 3) **Alliteration:** Alliteration refers to the repetition of the same consonant or vowel sound in a line of a poem or a prose piece. An easily understood example is ‘She sells seashells by the seashore.’

If it is the repetition of the same consonantal sound, it is called **Consonance** as in ‘whose woods these are I think I know’ Or say in Hindi: जोगी जंगल जाते-जाते जग से जाता रहा।

**Assonance** refers to the repetition of vocalic sounds. For example, the sound ‘ai’ in ‘**try** to light the **fire**’. In the following sentence by Frost: ‘His house is in the village though’, the words **his**, **is**, **in** and **village** are examples of assonance.

- 4) **Irony:** Irony suggests the implication of Y when X is being said; very often it is used to indirectly hurt another person or to make fun of him/ her. For example, you may address your driver (whom you normally address as ‘you’) as ‘Sir or Mr.’ when he has made a grave error. Irony occurs when the speaker means something very different from what she/ he actually says.
- 5) **Allusion:** Sometimes while speaking or writing you refer to someone/ something obliquely to suggest or emphasise a specific quality. You might say for example, ‘Amit is as strong as Sardar Patel’; this is an allusion to Sardar Patel being a strong leader.
- 6) **Hyperbole:** Sometimes poets and writers wish to exaggerate a specific feature or an event. Hyperbole refers to that exaggeration. You might say, ‘That saint is as old as the hills.’
- 7) **Rhyme:** When similar or identical sounds are repeated in different lines, they are said to rhyme with each other. Consider the following lines from Shakespeare:

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May.  
And summer’s lease hath all too short a date.

(Excerpt from Shakespeare’s “Sonnet XVIII”)



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Notice that 'day' rhymes with 'May' and 'temperate' with 'date'; so the rhyme scheme is 'ab...ab' i.e. the third line rhymes with the first and the second with the fourth.

- 8) **Personification:** Poets and writers often represent nature and animals as human beings to give some special effects. A poet might say 'The wind stood up and asked me...' etc. The wind here is personified as a strong human being.
- 9) **Symbols:** We talk of a symbol when X stands for Y. For example, a 'dove' may stand for 'peace'; an 'apple' in the case of the Adam and Eve for 'evil'.

We hope as you now read poems and stories you will be able to identify some of these literary devices and examine their impact on the reader.

**Check Your Progress-1**

1. *What is the difference between symbol, simile and metaphor?*

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2. *Decide which one of the following are similes, which are metaphors and which are allusions:*

- a. *My love is like a red, red rose.*
- b. *Her smile is as beautiful as Mona Lisa's.*
- c. *Life is a struggle.*
- d. *He won the first two games but the third proved to be his Waterloo.*
- e. *Their mother is a pillar of strength.*
- f. *She is as immovable as a pillar.*
- g. *She was good in mathematics but language was her Achilles heel.*

3. *Find out some examples of personification from the poems you have read.*

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4. *Work out the rhyming scheme of an English/ Hindi poem you have read.*

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5. *Strong and String demonstrate consonance. Blank and think also do so. Write down three more examples.*

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6. *'Lake' and 'fate' demonstrate assonance. Think of more such pairs of words.*

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7. *Pick the correct option: 'Do you like blue' is an example of assonance, dissonance or alliteration.*

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## 7.3 ROLE OF LITERATURE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

### 7.3.1 WHAT IS LITERATURE?

The generally known meaning of literature includes the expression of meaning using words but the combination of words and meanings is also found in the content of subjects like history, geography, science etc. This means that every subject has its own literature which describes in detail as to what the subject is all about. For example, cooking has its own literature which describes in detail the steps involved in cooking a particular dish. In other words we can say that literature includes in it complete and detailed information about a particular subject.



We need to pay attention to the fact that the language of literature is different and distinct in comparison to other writings. In this the relation between word and meaning is not straight and simple; it is artistic. Literature of any language is a mirror of that time as well as society. It presents both a realistic and a symbolic picture. It encodes in aesthetic terms the feelings and compassion of the people living in a particular time and space. It is also often an expression of universal human values. Thus any piece of literature, poetry, novel, drama etc., should have social, aesthetic and universal dimensions. The social aspects are reflected in capturing the nuances of local life in terms of its rituals and festivals etc; the aesthetic dimension rests in the emotions it evokes among the readers and in the selection of sounds, words and structures used in the composition. The universal dimension is reflected in capturing those values of truth and beauty that stay with human beings all the time.

In this way all the types of literature can be classified in three parts on the basis of their objectives:

- (i) **Informative literature:** This category includes reference books like encyclopedia, dictionary, thesaurus, pronunciation dictionaries, other reference text etc. which provide us information about things we may not know. They are extremely useful but these do not constitute literature in the true sense of the word since both the aesthetic and universal dimensions are missing from such texts.
- (ii) **Critical literature:** In this category, a particular subject is clarified in a logical manner and it often uses the cause and effect nature of things. These compositions try to encourage the reader to find out more. For example, books of philosophy, science and mathematics.

These two types of literature can also be called non-aesthetic literature. In these the emphasis is on gathering information, remembering facts and finding solutions for a problem. It is the third category which we may call true literature.

- (iii) **Creative or imaginative literature:** Under this category, one would include poetry, drama, novels, epics, short stories etc i.e. works that instill in us a desire to read them with a sense of joy and engagement. They give their readers a chance to experience the same feelings as the characters depicted in them. It encourages the development of humanity and creative ability in the readers.

In this unit, we will discuss the use and contribution of the different kinds of literature in learning language. As a language teacher, whether teaching a first



language or second, textbooks are often the major sources of literature. Due to lack of time and resources, schools can provide only limited exposure beyond the textbook. Therefore a teacher requires some basis for selecting suitable literature, apart from the textbooks, for her students. Some broad guidelines while choosing literature are:

- There should be written text of suitable length where language is used carefully. It may also be rich in metaphors, idioms, innovative use of language etc.
- The text may take any one of the following forms of literature: prose, poetry, drama, novel etc.
- It should provide both enjoyment and an aesthetic experience to the students.

These criteria need not be followed rigidly. They are only meant to help a teacher in determining whether a text qualifies as literature. But even if while we know all the qualities of good literature, we also need to decide what will be suitable in our classrooms. The age of the children in our class is a major consideration. We will use the term children’s literature to refer to any text suitable for children.

In many examples of children’s literature, the focal character (or the hero) tends to be a child. In fairy tales such as Little Red Riding Hood or novels such as Kidnapped and Treasure Island by R.L. Stevenson, a young child is the centre. But we cannot choose a story simply because the main protagonist is a child. In fact there are examples of stories where the idea is quite complex even though the ‘hero’ of the story is a child The thoughts that are present in ‘Idgah’ by Prem Chand, ‘Chota jadugar’ by Jaishankar Prasad, ‘khel by Jainendra etc.- can be quite difficult for the children to understand. The language and ideas too need to be of a level that is easily accessible to a child.

In this unit we are focusing on the role of literature in language teaching. However, other print material, such as advertisements, cartoons etc. can also prove useful although it is not literature.

**Check Your Progress-2**

1) *Differentiate between aesthetic literature and non-aesthetic literature.*

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2) *According to the discussion till now, how would you define children's literature? Would you describe it as any written material available for children in the age group of 6-14?*

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3) *Are all stories about children, children's literature? Give examples to support your answer.*

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4) *Think and decide whether the following are examples of literature:*

- a. *Newspaper advertisement*
- b. *Dictionary*
- c. *Recipe for a cake*
- d. *Poem*

### 7.3.2 FORMS OF LITERATURE

In classrooms, various forms of literature such as poetry, stories, plays, autobiography, biography, novel, essays, are used as text material to sensitise children to social, cultural and aesthetic aspects of life. There is no doubt that exposure to different varieties of literature enhances the proficiency levels of children also.

**Play:** A play is an enacting of various events, sometimes relating to great men. The task of the playwright is particularly difficult. She/ he has to step into the shoes of many characters and make them look authentic so that the readers or viewers can identify themselves with all the different characters. All plays have a beginning, a middle and an end. They could either be tragedies or comedies or tragic-comedies and could be written either in poetry or prose or both. The greatest plays of Shakespeare, such as Hamlet and King Lear, for example are largely poetic. The ultimate test of a great play is its performance on the stage, a test which does not apply to a novel, a short story or a poem. The artists who enact different roles in a play before us are called actors. The real success of play lies on its stage performance. Plays unfold their stories through dialogues among



different characters; sometimes, a character may talk to himself/ herself in a soliloquy.

**One Act Play:** In this form, the entire action of the play takes place at one place and time. They are short and build towards an intense climax. These are especially useful for a teacher as they can be easily staged, are shorter than full length plays and do not require many sets. Children can be asked to write and enact them as an exercise.

**Novel:** A novel is generally a long story with many characters in it. It may often be a realistic picture of the place and time in which it is written. Some of the greatest English novelists include Fielding, Dickens, Hardy, Meredith and Joyce. These writers present the picture of human life in a manner that engages the attention of the readers so intensely that the length of the novel is no longer a deterrent to reading.

**Story:** Short story is perhaps one of most popular forms of literature and most frequently used in school textbooks. It consists of a single narration which can be read in a single sitting and can influence the reader on one aspect. All those things which do not directly contribute to the central event or character of the story are left out. We will soon note that the short story can be used for very constructive pedagogical inputs. Some of the great names in short story writing include: Somerset Maugham, Anton Chekov, Saki, Edgar Allen Poe, R K Narayan, K B Vaid among others. The stories of Ruskin Bond are very popular among younger children. 'The last leaf' and 'The gift of the Magi' by O. Henry are also quite well known.

**Essay:** Essay is that form of prose where thoughts are presented in a logical and coherent order. For essay writing reading and knowledge of subject matter is necessary. It is said that an essay must be characterised by brevity, neatness and suitable examples. You will perhaps read essays of Charles Lamb, Addison, R K Narayan, Nehru, Gandhi, Ruskin Bond among others in various books. You will certainly enjoy reading them and get new ideas from them.

**Autobiography:** When any person writes down events from his/ her life it is called an autobiography. The protagonist of the autobiography is the writer himself. He gives an account of his own past life and highlights his/ her struggles and moments of joy and pain. One of the most famous autobiographies is Gandhi's *My Experiments with Truth*.

**Biography:** The writer of a biography writes about some other person. Boswell's biography of the first ever dictionary maker Dr Johnson is considered to be a landmark in this form of literature.



**Travelogue:** When a writer writes about the incidents seen during his travels, it is called travel account or travel literature. He describes the places, scenes, incidents and his experiences during the travels and narrative is coherently tied together. The travel books written by the great Hindi writer Agya are very famous and are known for their sensitivity to people and nature.

**Outline/Sketch:** When an author writes about a person, thing, place, incident, scene, etc. in such a way that the reader gets a graphic picture of the person or object, we refer to the piece as a sketch. Such sketches are generally expected to be objective.

**Memoir:** When a writer describes an incident or a scene which had occurred in his life or any other person's life, it is called a memoir. Memoir is written in the basis of memory. In order to write a memoir it is necessary for the writer to have been personally associated with the person or the incident that has been described in it. Memoir has to be of the past, it cannot be of present or future. The writer is not supposed to add anything in it from his own creativity and thinking.

**Poem:** Poetry in many ways is considered to be the essence of all literature; it is also perhaps the earliest form of literature. Greatest epics of all societies are poetic. Be it the Greek *Odyssey* or *Iliad* or the ancient Indian *Mahabharata* or *Ramayana*, they are all essentially stories in poetry. Then there are of course great names like Kalidasa, Bhatt, Shakespeare, Donne, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Wordsworth, Eliot, Yeats among so many others who you may be familiar with. A poem is always lyrical and intangible and it uses similes, metaphors and personifications a lot. As opposed to a novel or even a story or a essay, a poem tries to pack a lot of thought and emotion in a few words. It leaves many things open for discussion and is open to a multiplicity of interpretations. Poems may be written to well-established metrical schemes or in free verse. Of all the forms of literature, poetry is the most difficult to translate.

The objective of introducing these types of literature is that it would help in choosing the teaching material which could be used by us to teach students language in the classroom. It is noteworthy here that we should not expect the children to learn the goals of these various forms of literature rather it should be tried that they should be exposed to the different forms of literature and acquire the ability to appreciate them critically. They should also become sensitive not only to the content and ideas contained in them but also to the specific kinds of vocabulary, idiom, phrases and sentence patterns used in each one of them.



Notes

**Check Your Progress-3**

1. *Prose does not include-*

- (a) *Play*
- (b) *novel*
- (c) *poem*
- (d) *story*

2. *What is the difference between autobiography and biography?*

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3. *What are the attributes of a poem?*

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4. *Write down the names of some famous short story writers.*

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5. *Write a few lines of your favourite poem. Who is the author? What do these lines mean?*

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6. *Name some of the most famous short story writer. Is there a film you like? Who wrote its story?*

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### 7.3.3 USE OF LITERATURE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Till before the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature was used as the main mode of teaching language. And it was understood that to learn a foreign language it is important to have in depth study of its literature. But during the decades 1940 to 1960 the use of literature in foreign language teaching was not given due importance because it was replaced by the lessons based on need based model. During that period literature was mainly looked down upon and associated with the interests of the lower castes and that is why literature was considered as an unimportant mode of language teaching. Traditionally, the basis of language teaching has been grammar teaching; later translation was added to it. The text material (study material) does not always follow the rules of grammar and it is difficult to select a text which has both the cognitive level and language ability. The grammar translation method which was based on rote-learning noun and verb paradigms and translating texts from the target language to L 1 and vice versa was very popular for a long time and is actually still widely used. It was the decade of 1970-80 that gave birth to the method of cognitive language teaching which assumed that children come to school with innate language and cognitive abilities and the task of the teacher was largely to help them grow through exposure to interesting and challenging texts. It was because of this that the use of literature was again given some place in language teaching.

According to Widdowson the knowledge of language-science is at two levels, level of use and level of usage. According to this 'use' includes the rules of knowledge while 'usage' gives the information of how to use these rule in further communication. Today's maximum literature text material gives us a base for the use of language. Pove's (1972; 18) argument is "literature would increase all the skills of language because literature increases language-science related knowledge."

In this way till the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature again got established as an important source of various language skills development. A proof of this is that in the recent times children are taught not through rote learning of various letters of the alphabet rather they are taught through related material like stories, poems etc.

#### Check Your Progress-4

- 1) *Traditionally the base of language teaching was:*
  - (a) *Meaning teaching*



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(b) *Sentence teaching*

(c) *Grammar teaching*

(d) *Sound teaching*

2) *Throw some light on the usage of literature in language teaching in the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century?*

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3) *What are the basic principles of Grammar-Translation method of language teaching?*

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### 7.4 OBJECTIVES OF LITERATURE TEACHING

A number of different forms are being adopted in a literature class. The objective of literature teaching and first language and second language teaching depends on the attitude or performance in the classroom.

- 1) **Language format:** In this kind of format, literature is primarily used for language development in which word storage and sentence formation are the focus. The main limitation of this is that the interest in literature is lost. In fact, most of the time, children end up learning neither grammar and/ or vocabulary nor do they develop any interest in literature.
- 2) **Literary format:** The focus in the literature dominant class is on the content and abstract ideas. The main objective becomes the familiarity with specific cultures and universal human values. It is obvious that in such a class except for automatic language enrichment which may, in fact, be considerable, there may be very little focus on grammatical form, usage, meter and sentence structure. In the case of L 1, this may not matter so much but in the case of L 2 it may prove to be serious handicap.
- 3) **Personality development format:** The primary focus in this kind of format is on individual and collective sensitivity and the growth of children’s minds through the study of literature. This is done with the hope that children



studying literature in this kind of format would turn out to be better human beings and would become role models in all walks of life.

### 7.4.1 TYPES OF CLASSROOM

We have discussed the objectives and model of literature teaching. But what should be the method of including it in classroom? Have you ever thought. What are the various methods of teaching language in a classroom? And what type of language children use in their homes? Can you tell how these two differ? This part tries to answer such questions. Krashen, as already pointed out in earlier units, makes a distinction between acquisition and learning; acquisition refers to learning languages in natural settings of home and street; learning refers to learning in more formal settings of school.

In natural settings, children automatically acquire the rules of his/her language because there is considerable exposure and because (s)he receives all the care and affection that makes language learning possible. Yet, without an innate faculty for language, it would be impossible to acquire structures as complex as those of language. We need to activate this language faculty optimally in school. Fortunately, literature is a very powerful means of just achieving that. As in the case of natural settings, literature helps children to focus their attention on meaning rather than form. Once meaning is internalised the formal aspects of grammar and vocabulary also tend to get internalised on their own. Yet teaching of explicit rules of grammar and practice in using new words is an important part of an L 2 class.

As a teacher you know in elementary or primary classes a child has full command over first language in comparison to second language. The aim of second language teacher should be to put pressure on the usage of second language instead of explaining rules. The classroom should be organised in such a way that natural learning is preferred to forced learning. The students should be able to connect themselves with the language used in the real world.

What does a typical L 2 classroom look like? It is very different from the natural settings of home and street. Many second and foreign language teachers believe in grammar translation method. These teachers make a list of words and by giving some examples explain the rules of grammar. After that a specimen is given for example which explains the rules in which glossary of words is given and in the end there are certain questions for practice. This is a tutored classroom setting, very unlike natural settings where such things are never done.

In contrast to it, in classrooms close to natural settings, children are provided tension free atmosphere and proper intelligent input. Children are not checked



for their mistakes. Children are made capable of using the material outside the classroom which is related with the real day to day world so that they may be able to learn to speak and communicate successfully with the target language speakers.

**Check Your Progress-5**

1) A child learns her first languages before coming to school in: (tick one)

- (a) Tutored setting
- (b) Natural setting
- (c) Teaching by parents
- (d) None of these

2) What should be the objective of second language teachers?

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3) What is the difference between natural and tutored settings in terms of language learning?

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4) What is grammar translation method?

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**7.4.2 FIRST LANGUAGE AND SECOND LANGUAGE (OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE) CLASSROOM**

You must have understood the difference between language used in a classroom and a home. These differences can be seen through limits of the exposure and in the form of input. What sort of material should be provided in classroom so that the children could easily develop understanding of second language like their mother tongue?



Literature could be used to teach any language, it may be first language, second language or any other language. The selected literature should be in easy words simple sentences and word formation should be such which could be easily understood. Selected study material should be interesting. Grammar should be taught only to a limited extent where it is really needed. Learner needs a lot of material to improve. Literature is its good source. The teachers need to understand the capabilities of students and provide good and above average material so that the learner may accept the challenge. It is thus very important for the teacher to estimate the cognitive level of children and procure material that would interest them and would prove challenging for their mental abilities. The more they struggle with language, more they will learn.

In most states English is taught from class 1. The teacher should pay attention in selecting and communicating study material as it is difficult for first language speaker to use literature of other languages. Analysis of study material should be minimum and children should be motivated to find and search things independently.

Attention must be paid to following points while using literature:

- 1) Not complete but partial understanding of study material is required.
- 2) Reaction- the children should give their reaction on study material. It could be in the form of comment. It may not be exact repetition but their individual comment.
- 3) Opportunities may be provided for creativity.
- 4) In analysis, the focus should not be on repetition or on errors but on encouraging children to react to what they have read. They must be encouraged to seek logical relationship among events and appreciate the ideas and emotions expressed in a piece of literature.

### **7.4.3 DEVELOPMENT OF VARIOUS SKILLS THROUGH LITERATURE**

We have so far discussed how literature is used in classrooms. The learner learns the appropriate use of language through references which occur in stories and poems but we can see other merits of exposure to literature. Interesting and engrossing stories help in developing the art of concentration in the reader. After reading the literary material a student can enrich his/her imagination and develop individuality and independence. (S)he can also develop the art of comprehending the meaning of unknown words. (S)he learns to control his/her thought process through the use of literature and develops the power to make positive contribution



to society. According to Scott, literature is the mirror of beauty, morality and spiritual values and also manifests the rules of social order and culture. While learning language through literature, opportunities of personality development are provided by cultural references. Therefore student may be introduced to cultural life and given opportunities to participate in it.

According to Widdowson literature should not be used only for language dealing or activity or to understand cultural subjects but for communication skills. Literary material is not only helpful in increasing studying skills but also in developing listening reading and writing skills.

In fact through analysis and use of literature it is possible to understand the events related to actual world happenings and experiences. It helps us in feeling our personal and social problems. According to their emotional capacity it helps the readers to progress culturally and literally.

**Check Your Progress-6**

1) *Interesting stories help in developing:*

(a) *Concentration*

(b) *Guessing skills*

(c) *Imagination*

(d) *All of the above*

2) *What are the benefits of providing children literature exposure?*

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**7.5 TEACHING OF DIFFERENT FORMS**

As a language teacher, you have to deal with various literary texts such as stories, poems, essays etc. Which form do you enjoy teaching the most? While most children will be interested in reading a story, how do you generate enthusiasm for reading poetry? How do you explain the relevance of an essay? What strategies and teaching aids can you use to increase interaction with the text? Most of these aspects are introduced here and will be covered in more detail in the unit on lesson planning.



### 7.5.1 BASIS FOR INCLUDING FORMS IN PRIMARY AND UPPER PRIMARY CLASSES

Stories, folk stories, mythology, fables and legends, along with rhymes included in primary class textbooks. In upper primary classes, these are used along with novels, plays, sketches, memoirs, biography, autobiography etc.

There are several advantages of using short stories with children. They are simple and usually the text that needs to be read is short - its brevity motivates children to read. They are also challenging because the entire plot is summarised in a few pages. These factors help in retaining the interest of the reader.

In the early grades, it is easy to arouse interest in students through simple rhymes. In the higher grades, they can be used to develop sensitivity for words and rhythm. Poetry often uses metaphors, alliterations, similes etc. more naturally than prose and children can be introduced to these topics through poetry. It can be used to develop creative language skills.

Use of drama helps heighten listening skills in students. Plays can employ difficult grammatical structures and they help students understand the relevance of context in understanding literature. While reading, students have to be helped in visualising the scenery and how a character says a certain line which builds a sense of participation; this stimulates and heightens their imagination. Through plays, students can discover what is meant by being human. They stir the imagination, and spurs insight, reflection, and self-knowledge.

In recent years, research on socialisation with literature has pointed out that reading literature increases reading efficiency and competences. This is because it provides a motivation for reading and we know that we can become better readers only by reading more and more. Children should be given literature which they enjoy reading, that challenges their imagination, and makes them sensitive and perceptive to nuances of different cultures.

Since in the elementary classes, literature refers mainly to novels, stories, poetry, rhymes, folk tales, the focus should be on books that can be easily understood by the students. Teachers should help students acquire skills for creative reading and also reading in their subjects and disciplines. The objective of the curriculum and syllabus should be to introduce children to various forms of literature and examples of them to develop a positive attitude towards studies and increase the practice of reading.

Literature can contribute to the development of both basic language skills (reading writing listening and speaking) as well as language areas (vocabulary and grammar). To understand how the level of text progresses according to expected



skills and the level of students, we can look at Hindi and English textbooks of NCERT. The class 1 Hindi textbook starts with simple rhymes and stories are introduced at the very end when it is assumed that the child has developed enough concentration to follow a story over a couple of days. The class 5 book on the other hand, has examples of different types of prose (stories, essays, interview), poetry and drama. Stories such as Idgaaah by Premchand serve to develop sensitivity in the child. Analysing textbooks would help you in selecting literature for your classrooms.

In upper primary classes, children are between childhood and adulthood. In this stage, both stories and poems that evoke nostalgia about childhood as well as those that encourage them to explore their possible future are relevant. Plays provide them an outlet for expression and also make the students capable of understanding those issues and feelings which they were not able to comprehend some years earlier. We should select such literature for teaching language that reflects the difference between childhood and adolescence.

### 7.5.2 HOW TO USE LITERARY FORMS IN CLASSROOM?

In this topic we would discuss in detail how to use the various types of literature forms - stories, poems, novel, one act plays - given in textbooks and syllabus for teaching language in the classrooms.

**Using extracts from stories or short stories:** Almost all textbooks have short stories. You can also choose an extract from a suitable story and carry out the following activities:

If the text is an extract from a longer story, you can tell children to write what will happen after that or would have happened before.

You can tell students to describe the personality of any particular character.

Students can be asked to improvise a role play between two characters in the book.

Teachers can tell stories in the class and stop the narration at any particular point, to ask the students questions. The nature of the question can be different for different grades. Students can be asked to react to questions such as: what do they think is happening? What images are forming in their minds, what are their feelings about different characters? What are the questions in their mind about the story? In primary classes, children can answer verbally whereas the children of higher classes can record their response in book journals. Folk tales such as Akbar-Birbal, Allah-Udal, Gonu Jha, Tenali Ram, etc can be selected for such activities because the children can predict their plots more easily.

*Use of Poetry:*

You can recite a poem or ask the students to recite it with proper intonation and expression. You can also do the following:-

Students can be asked to write the story hidden in the poem. For whom is this poem? Why this poem was written?

Students can discuss topics described in the poem and how these topics are associated with their lives? They can contribute their thoughts on it.

Students can be asked to re-write the poem without changing its structure by changing the meaning only.

More advanced students can also be asked to describe the various features of the poem and what makes them pleasant to hear. They discuss the rhyme patterns in the poem.

*Use of plays:*

You can decide on what type of plays should be used in your class - Some people give importance to contemporary plays of Arthur Miller, Saki, etc as the context and language can be more easily understood. Others favor classics like the plays of Shakespeare or Bhartendu's 'Andher Nagari', Ram Kumar Varma's 'Ashoka Shastra Tyag' which are the famous Hindi plays. However, it is indisputable that those plays that heighten the senses and expect emotional involvement from the students can prove more useful.

Students can be asked to stage their own plays and bring material for it. They can use materials like newspaper cuttings, written matter, pictures, or any other material which they feel can be useful for the play. This exercise will help them communicate in a better way and develop in them capability of exchanging their views about the world in which they live.

### **7.5.3 PROBLEMS FACED IN THE LITERATURE CLASSROOM**

If literary materials are not chosen in a proper way and do not match the linguistic and cognitive levels of children, serious problems may arise. If children do not understand the basic meaning of the text they are studying because of vocabulary or grammar, they are likely to lose interest soon and the whole exercise may prove fruitless. If the students are to study in such a language which they understand with great difficulty, it will be meaningless to expect from them that they can discuss content and form of language.



Different language teachers have to face different problems. Teachers have to handle children from a vast diversity of backgrounds and with a varying level of proficiency and attention spans. They also need to understand that the use of literature in teaching a first language would be significantly different from the use of literature in an L2 situation. The level of literary texts will have to be significantly lower, particularly in the primary classes, as compared to the literature used in the first language classes. The proficiency level of teachers in the second language and their familiarity with the literature of the target language are also important parameters. It should be obvious that for language teaching to be a successful enterprise, we need intensive teacher training programmes.

**Check Your Progress-7**

1) Which skill increase by studying literature:

- (a) Reading
- (b) Writing
- (c) Speaking
- (d) Listening

2) What values are inculcated in children by teaching them language through play in the classroom?

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3) Classify the literary forms used in primary and upper primary textbooks and also list which forms of literature are not used in them?

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4) What is the base of selecting literary forms in primary classes?

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## 7.6 LET US SUM UP

- Literature subsumes all kinds of writing but its essential component is creative and imaginative writing; informative literature and advertisements are not real forms of literature.
- Literature is of two types- creative literature and non-creative literature. The objective of creative literature is to give pleasure, develop sympathy and sensitivity. In it we study story, poems, essays, pictures composition etc whereas in non-creative literature our main objective is to acquire information, remember the facts and solve the problems like newspaper, dictionary, world dictionary, science related literature, etc.
- For language teaching in place of literature other printed materials like advertisements, cartoons etc can also be used.
- On the basis of its form, literature has mainly three categories- prose (story, novel, autobiography, and travel account), poetry (poem, couplet, and quatrain) and play.
- In a language class there are three formats of using literature- language format, literary format and personality development format.
- There are two ways of learning a language- language acquisition and language learning. Languages are acquired in natural setting without any formal teaching; they are learnt in formal classroom settings. Literature helps us to bring a learning situation close to an acquisition situation.
- The literature which is to be used in the language classroom should be appropriate and of interest of the children.
- By using literature children develop the skill of creativity, comment on any text material, self realisation, power of analysis and concentration. They also become imaginative and socially and culturally sensitive.
- Through children's literature children develop imagination, interest towards studies and power of self expression.
- Along with basic language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) literature makes an important contribution in other areas of language including expression, creative writing, word-meanings and grammar.

### Assignment

Establish a corner in your class for library and give a detailed description of the

text-material selected for it on the basis of- number of books, knowledge, appropriateness etc.



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## 7.7 SUGESSTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 7.8 UNIT-END EXERCISES

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1. On the basis of objectives what are the different types of literature?
2. While using literature what have been your experiences as a teacher?
3. Would you expose your students to original texts or just give them summaries? Give reasons.
4. What type of complementary material would you use to motivate students?
5. How would you make students practice all the four skills while using literature in the class?
6. What do you mean by an epic poem? Explain with example.
7. How would you use different forms of literature while teaching language? Explain by giving example of a poem.
8. While selecting stories or poems for primary class students what kind of things would you would consider?
9. Discuss in short the historical perspective of the use of literature in language teaching?