

The Literature Cup as an example of how to organize help for struggling readers (Romania)

The “Literature Cup” project implemented at a Vocational High School was initiated by school librarian¹. The programme foresees students assuming the responsibility of a reading system, in the sense of discovering and researching certain types of literature, the consumption and good quality of literature, between SF and horror, literary and non-literary texts. The students must usually read a compulsory bibliography, but in this case they have the freedom to make their own choices. The librarian, together with the Romanian teacher, chooses literature (novels, short stories), which reflect the adolescent’s interests (love stories, parent-teenager relationships, community-teenager relationships etc). The types of literature used have been mainly universal and Romanian literature, and less often literary texts imposed by the curriculum.

This “Literature Cup” project is interested in creating an awareness of the narrative plot, the relationship among characters and the moral implications in the text rather than emphasizing its literary value. Video materials are often used. The students coming to this “literature club” are completely familiarized with the book-movie relationship.

The *reading materials* follow these two paths:

1. motivational books (regarding their content), fresh new titles have appeared on the literary market (e.g. *The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon)
2. classical books (e.g. *Anna Karenina* by Lev Tolstoi or *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare).

The *techniques* implemented within this project are: the *Two-part Diary*, *Tree puzzle*², *Flower puzzle*, *Puzzle-reading* (applied to volumes from “1,001 Nights”), the *Literary sandwich* (applied to a novel), the *Reading therapy*, *Dance as a book*, *Would you like to dance with me?*, *Literary chess*, the strategy “*The little house*”, adaptation of texts for the stage, *10 for 10*, *Choose the book in 5 minutes*.

60 students from years 9, 10 and 11 have taken part in the project. There were no restrictions as to the number of students allowed to attend these activities. The activities laid emphasis on intercultural acceptance, as there were many students from the Republic of Moldavia whose mother-tongue does not completely overlap the contemporary Romanian language among the enthusiastic participants.

¹ The library is one of the places with the most intense activity in the whole school reading-field . It comprises 18,000 volumes, literary and non-literary books. The library receives 2,000 € every other year for book acquisition.

² For example: The method “tree puzzle” works with poems containing visual images of different trees. A student draws a tree on paper, others write verses on small pieces of paper and hang them in the “tree”.

The “The Literature Cup” meetings have been bimonthly, extracurricular activities, lasting for 1–2 hours. The plan of activities has been revised every year.

All the activities and reading methods proposed by the librarian and the Romanian teacher, are taken from a teacher-training course developed and implemented by ANPRO (*The Association of the Teachers of Romanian Language and Literature*) entitled “Reading Techniques”.

“The Literature Cup” project promotes an atmosphere of mutual respect, where each individual is welcome indiscriminately of their social background or average performance in school. The club organizers’ aim is to attract as many readers as possible.