

*“The impact of Cycle Teaching
Model in literacy development”*

EVELIN ARAVANI
UNIVERSITY OF CRETE

earavani@gmail.com

*For me, books were always my birds and my nests,
my pets, my stable and my countryside. The
library was the world closed in a mirror. It had
the infinite density, the variety and the
unexpectedness of the world.*

Jean-Paul Sartre

According to research:

The Cycle Teaching Model of Literature:

- provides a meaningful basis from which to learn skills and strategies (Tunnell & Jacobs, 1989)
- develops significantly better acquisition of the language conceptions than traditional instruction (Ceylan & Geban, 2009)
- supports effective teaching and learning (Everett & Moyer, 2009)
- recognises the need for students to engage with feedback in the classroom, to reflect on it and to feed forward to the next assessment, thus completing the learning cycle (Quinton & Smallbone, 2010)
 - develops vocabulary (Spencer, Guillaume, 2006)

- Is the best «medium» and «message» for literacy learning
as:

it offers a rich background from which to accumulate knowledge about written language, to develop literacy skills, to strengthen comprehension skills, to develop intellectual and reading skills (Alden,2003, Zweig, 2003, Jacobucci, 2002, Hurst, 2000, Castel, 2000, Klinger, 1999, Ezell, 1997, Morrow, 1990)

The Theory of the Research

Based on

- **Literature-based reading instruction** (Morrow & Gambrell, 2000, Freeman, 1995, Sloan, 1995, Galda, 1990)
- **The Cycle Teaching Model** (Sorensen, 1995)

Literature-based reading instruction

- No required prereading vocabulary work
 - No comprehension worksheets
- Student book choice and variety discussion group sizes
- Encouragement for variety responses and interpretations of books
- Consideration of literary elements included in book discussions
 - Student-led discussions
 - Emphasis on deeper meaning in books
- Connections made between life and reading

The Cycle Teaching Model

- It is a five- step plan-- a middle ground between “*hands-off*” and “*structured*” lessons
- What is “hands- off” lessons...
 1. Meaning only comes from the reader, who constructs it
 2. Interpretation need never be replaced with the “*intent of the author*”
 3. Ideas of students are only source of information and insight
 4. No framework such as Knowledge or contrasts is needed to “understand” literature

A. "Exploration": The study of literary understanding: text and structure

- Using form and structures, the reader discovers: the story has distinguishable elements—literature has types & shapes
- **Students:**
- recognize: plot, mood, theme, setting (time & place), characters, style, point of view, language elements, different genres
- find similarities between stories or themes
- make predictions about characters
- discuss the figurative language used
- retell the story

B. “Enrichment” : Reader response to: text & structure

- Reading- Writing- Speaking- Listening
- Students:
 - participate in activities that are holistic in nature
 - write, read & think ahead to verify from the text
 - sustain attention to literary pieces
 - dictate stories before trying to “invent” personal narrative
 - respond to elements and features of story in light of personal experiences
 - report of reading reflect creativity
 - accept, question or reject stories and can give reasons for these choices

- Discuss two stories of the same genre—develop a chart of comparison for the two
- Debate one of the conflicts found in the theme
- Develop a readers theatre from the monologue and dialogue
- Develop new titles for the story
- Write a prequel or a sequel to the story

C. “Extension” : Using Literature Across The Curriculum

- The story is used in thematic units that combine all parts of the cycle: **Social Studies, Science, Music, Drama, Dance, Moths, Art**
- We examine the text in the light of other fields of knowledge:
- **Writing and reading:** The children are encouraged to “write” segments of the story, to enrich their oral speech through narrations and re-narrations, to read the names of the characters and the title.
- **Mathematics:** The students locate the mathematical concepts of the text (counting the characters, sequence of events).
- **Computers:** The children use the means of technology in order to register the story, to illustrate it and search relevant information on the Internet.
- **Drama:** The children make dramatizations of the text and transpose it into a theatrical happening.
- **Music:** The children select musical texts to accompany the literary text.

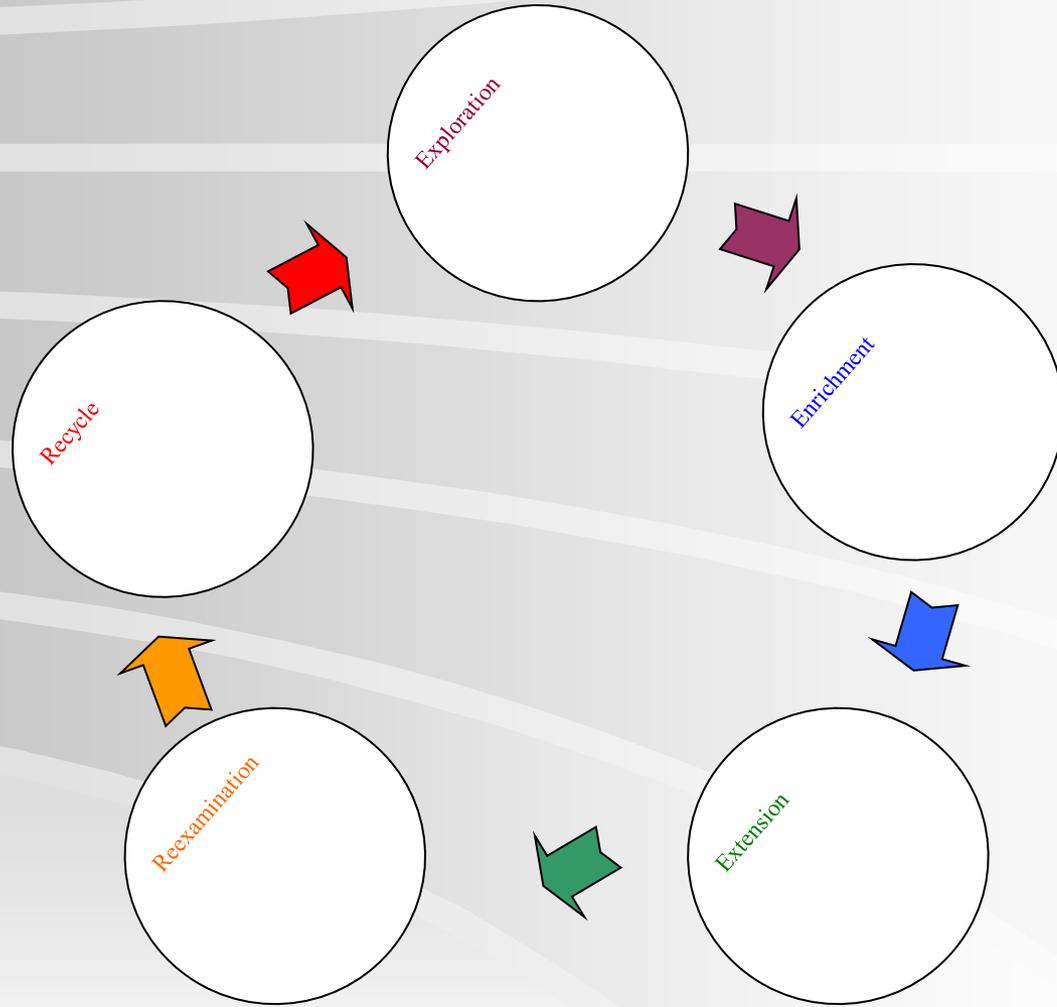
D. “Reexamination” : Returning to the story to Unify the Learning

- It is a **return to the story** for clarification, bridging information, summarizing what was felt, learned and acted upon, unifying, applying, valuing
- A **re-study** of the story: The return to the text is not a simple reproduction but an essential second view that grounds knowledge and increases the enjoyment of the experience.
- *What do you know that you did not know before?*
- *What conclusions can be drawn from the story?*
- *Tell me more about how the conflict was resolved*
- *In what way do you have the same feelings as when we first read the book? What feelings are different?*

E. “Recycle” : Leading to a New Beginning

Taking part of the story to **lead to a new beginning**:

- The story is utilized as an opportunity for a new teaching. This can be achieved through the quest for other texts with a similar or opposite thematic content.
- *What do we still wonder about the story?*
- *How can we find out more?*
- *We observe that the one stage follows naturally the other, thus forming a real cycle with this succession.*



The Methodology of Research

Aim

To encourage students to appreciate literature and explore new paths that lead to the enjoyment of a literary work.

Objectives

1. To cultivate student's aesthetic and reading experience, encouraging a response- based approach
2. Students get train to a high & deep level of comprehension of the story through the teaching cycles
3. Students get train to understand that there are many ways and reasons to read a story: for information, for enjoyment, as a model for writing and viewing the writing act, making connections to the story, to other stories and to their own story

3. Multi-dimensional improvement of language:

- To enrich and improve their oral speech (oral communication) through the formulation of hypotheses, predictions and questions during the analysis of the text
- To understand the importance of writing as a means of communication and transfer of information.
- To develop their language skills (phonetic awareness, vocabulary enrichment) in a meaningful and natural way and their creative thinking and imagination

Sample

The sample consisted of 20 students (11 boys and 9 girls) aged 4-6 year at a public primary school in Athens

Data Collection

- a) An observation key with axes that are adjusted to the research questions.
- b) Observation diary, where the discussions between the researcher and the teacher after the end of each teaching session are registered.
- c) Recording of the teaching sessions.
- d) Interviews with the teacher and the students

*The Teaching Cycle Model in
Practice...*

“Why the little pink elephant fell into depression and how it regained its happiness”.. (Weitze, M, 2008)

Plot Summary

In this particular fairy-tale, Beno loses his best friend and cannot overcome this, no matter how much he tries. In despair, he turns to Eureka, the wise owl, for help. She gives him three valuable pieces of advice and eventually the little elephant rediscovers his happiness.

CRITERIA FOR TEXT SELECTION

- It is written in an intelligible and austere manner, without being fragmentary.
- It is an open text that offers children the opportunity to articulate different assumptions and predictions.
- It deals with issues that are of interest to children, such as sadness, happiness, friendship, love, and are particularly important in the context of the emotional literacy of children of pre-school age.
- The plot is very well-organized. The scenes follow one another in a logical sequence, leading to an optimistic ending, where the children-readers have the opportunity to take part in the final decision of the hero.
- It has attractive illustrations

A. Stimulating interest - Critical thinking

What is Beno doing in a suitcase?

- We showed a note to the children, encouraging them to go out of the classroom and check what is at the back side. There, they found a suitcase, which they brought to the class and started asking several questions:
- *What does the suitcase contain?*
- *Who brought it here and why?*
- *Are we allowed to open it?*
- *How shall we unlock it?*

- Inside the suitcase, there was a fairy-tale.
- Before reading the fairy-tale, we discussed with the children its title and encouraged them to make assumptions about its content.
- *Why is the little pink elephant sad?*
- *Because its mother died*
- *Because the other little elephants did not keep company with it*
- *Because it loved a female elephant but she did not love it*

- *How did the little elephant manage to become happy again?*
- *It moved to another house and made new friends*
- *Its dad bought a toy for him*

- *Why does the little elephant have a pink color?*
- *Because it was born with it*
- *Because it might also be a girl*

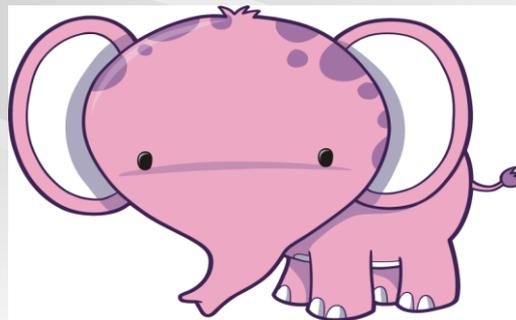
A. Cycle: EXPLORATION

Reading the fairy-tale

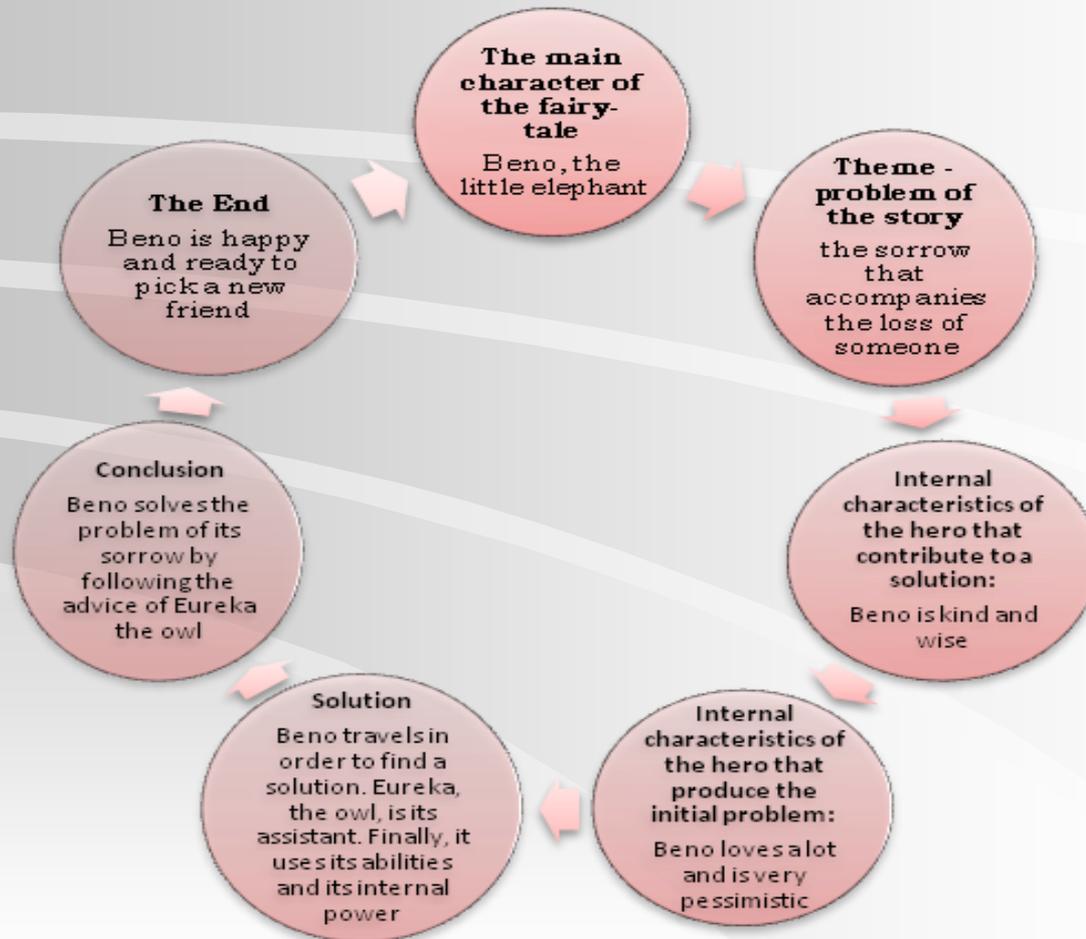
- After reading the fairy-tale, we discussed with the children the plot, its structure and its content. Indicative questions:
- *What is the theme of the story?*
- *Who is the main character?*
- *Where does the story of Beno take place?*
- *When is it taking place?*
- *For how long does it last?*
- *What basic problem is confronted by Beno?*
- *How did Beno try to resolve his problem?*

Literary Activities

- *Beno's identity card:* We distributed to the children an ID card and they made one such card for Beno, drawing the necessary information from the content of the story (Name, Age, Address, Best friend, Hobbies)



- *The structure of the story:* The teacher together with the students created a cyclical diagram with the basic points of Beno's story. Thus, the children visualized the elements of the story's plot.



- *Something changes in the story:* The students re-narrated Beno's story, altering its plot. More specifically:
 - *They changed Beno's place of residence. For example, it does not live in Africa but in a zoo or a circus.*
 - *They removed Eureka the owl from the scene.*
 - *They re-narrated the story with Freddy, Beno's best friend, as the main character rather than Beno.*
 - The new story of the children was recorded. Next, the children listened to it and compared it to the initial version. They tried to discover similarities and differences, which they registered in a relevant table.

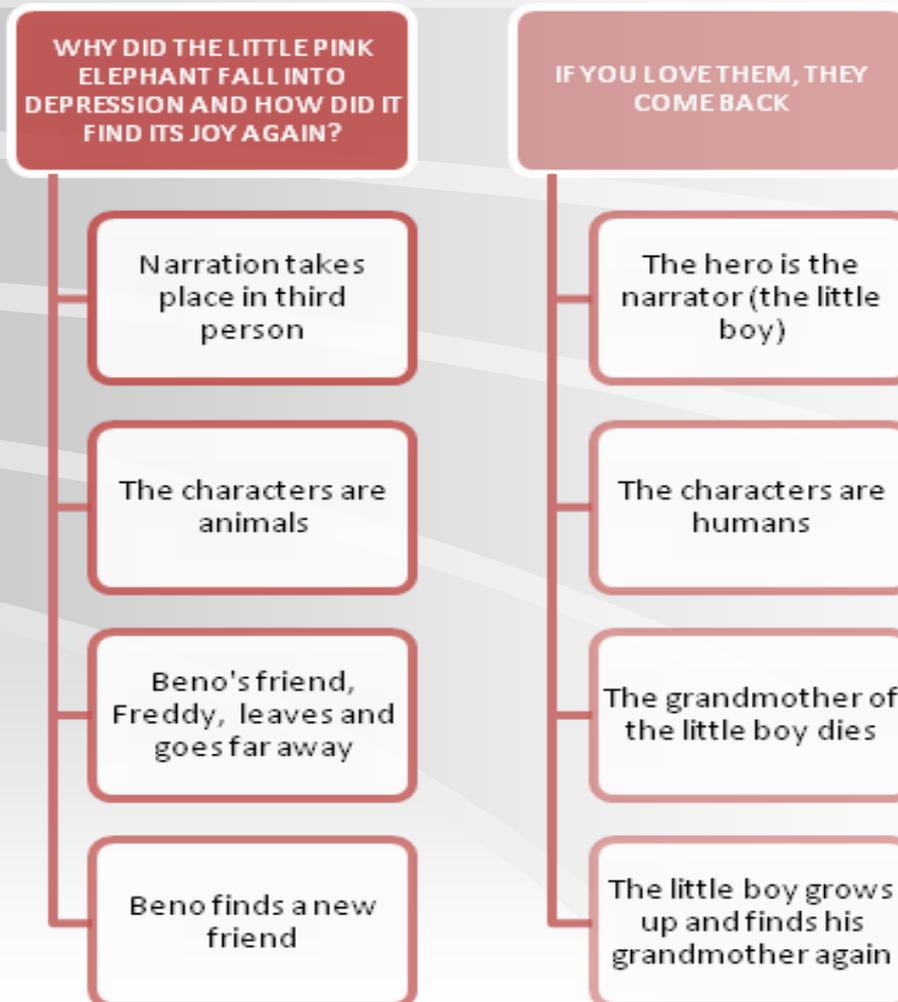
B. cycle: ENRICHMENT

- *If you love them, do they come back?:* We read out loud to the children the fairy-tale “*If you love them, they come back*”.
- In this particular fairy-tale, a little boy together with his beloved grandmother asks himself why all things depart and whether they return somehow. Through the advice of his grandmother, the boy understands departure and loss and prepares to experience the death of the grandmother.
- We discussed the content of the fairy-tale and suggested to the children to register the similarities and differences of this specific story and Beno’s story. In more detail:

Similarities

- *Both characters (Benjo and the little boy):*
 - lose at some point someone beloved
 - are young in age
 - feel sad
 - accept advice on how to understand departure and loss
 - realize that our beloved people can be maintained in our heart even if they are not anymore together with us
 - have someone who loves them a lot

Differences



- *We play with the monologues and dialogues of the fairy-tale:* The children remembered the monologues and dialogues of the fairy-tale and dramatized them.
- *Dialogical scene:*
- *The advice of the herd of elephants to Beno*
- *Monological scene:*
- *The advice of Eureka the owl*

- *An advice for Beno:* The students were split in groups of four persons and then wrote a letter to Beno, providing advice to him on how it should confront the departure of its friend Freddy. The letter was accompanied by a relevant painting.

- ***Alternative titles for the fairy-tale:*** The students put forward alternative titles for the fairy-tale and then registered them in the computer. The titles that were given were the following:
 - *Beno and Freddy, two beloved friends*
 - *Beno, the sad little elephant*
 - *Beno, the little elephant that sought happiness*
- ***Being in Beno's place:*** We suggested to the children to think what they would do if they were in Beno's place, and how they would treat Freddy's departure. The largest proportion of students responded that they would join their friend.

- *Before and after in Beno's story:* The students thought what had happened in the beginning of Beno's story (how it was born, how it met Freddy, etc.) and what followed after he found happiness once again (e.g. which little elephant it picked as its best friend, Freddy returned and they played together again, etc.).
- They made flat dolls - little elephants and played the new version of the story before and after, in puppet show.

C. Cycle: EXTENSION

- *The sounds of the story*

Connection of literature to music: We read the fairy-tale to the children once more, noting all the sounds that may be heard (e.g. wades in the water by the two little elephants, Beno's cry, Beno's jump, etc.). We found objects or parts of our body that could produce these sounds and narrated the fairy-tale with the sound accompaniment that we had chosen.

- *Dramatization of the fairy-tale*

Connection of literature to theatre: We split the fairy-tale into scenes and the children in groups dramatized them, such as:

- *The jump of Beno and Freddy*
- *The farewell of Beno and Freddy*
- *The conversation of Beno with Eureka the owl*
- *The rainbow presents the little elephants of the forest with colors.*

- *I turn the sorrow away*

Connection of literature to poetry: Based on the content of the fairy-tale, we wrote the following poem together with the children:

*I blow, blow hard,
to keep sadness away.
It is like a heavy quilt
that falls down upon my soul.
It looks like a thousand grey clouds
that filled the sky.
It is as if I do not see anymore,
toys, gifts or sweets.
I blow, blow hard
to keep sadness away.
Stop blowing in and out,
send the sadness away immediately.
Let the tears drop,
they will heal the sorrow.
Talk, talk about what lies heavy on you,
you will see your heart softening.
Let the days pass,
they will lighten up your soul.
Even if something hard occurs in our life,
a storm or a heavy rain,
let us all hold hands,
and the rainbow will show up.*

- *The purses with happy and sad words*

Connection of literature to technology: The students remembered the sad words that were heard at the fairy-tale. Each word that they mentioned was typed on the computer. All of the sad words were registered, printed, and then given to the children to be cut and placed in a purse or little jar, within reach of the children to search for them and use them whenever they wish. We repeat the same process for the purse with the happy words.

D. Cycle. REEXAMINATION

- *Little journalists:* The children, in pairs, assumed the roles of the journalist and of the characters. The child-journalist asked each character to say what had happened to him/her, thereby registering the story once again in the form of interview.
- *Evaluating feelings:* We discussed with the children the feelings that we experienced once we processed the story, compared to the first time that we read it.
 - We folded a sheet and drew our initial feelings on the one side and our later feelings on the other side of the paper.
 - The feelings that prevailed, after a first reading, were sadness for the loss of Beno's friend and relief for the acquisition of new friends, after the systematic processing of the story.

- *Evaluating knowledge:* By discussing the story, we discovered what new knowledge was offered by the story, and what we knew before reading it. We drew the table and each student added his / her new or previous knowledge. Indicatively:
 - **BEFORE READING THE STORY:** I knew that..
 - **NOW THAT I READ THE STORY:** I found out that...

E. Cycle: RECYCLING

- *An apple-tree with themes:* We discussed with the children the issues that arose out of the processing of the text, and registered these issues in labels: friendship, sadness, love, happiness and loss. We constructed a tree with apples, and on each apple we stuck a label. Each ripe tree that fell off the tree was a sign to go and search for a particular book.
- *Each apple is a theme:* We picked up an apple from the previous activity and the children were invited to bring three relevant books from the library. We thus set up a thematic corner in the classroom that included the books and objects that the children brought from home. This was the start of a new “literary adventure”.

In the context of the qualitative study of the findings that were collected from the observation of teaching sessions and student interviews, we can now draw the following preliminary conclusions:



Conclusions

1. Teaching of literature through the Cycle Model

- contributes to developing the students' motivation for reading and to improving their reading skills (Alden, 2003)
- helps make students aware of reading literature for enjoyment; it also develops literacy and enriches their vocabulary (Oppelt,1991, Brosnahan, 1988)

2. Students' involvement as readers creates greater motivation to read and contributes to their better understanding and interpretation of texts and organization of their thoughts. (Towell,2001)

3. The Cycle Model helps make students understand that literature learning is a developmental process, a foundation leading to analytical understanding of the text (Sorensen, 1995, Flender, 1985)
4. The Cycle planning scheme allows kidwatching for observing and assessing students' actual experiences with literature pieces: how children respond to a story by retelling it, how they apply what they understand in various registers (group discussions, story maps) and related writing or reading (Goodman, 1985)

5. The Cycle Model provides us with guidelines for an in-depth and multi-dimensional examination of a literary text (study of text, emphasis on the reader and his/her expectation horizon, interdisciplinary approach, return through focusing on the filling in of gaps left by the first reading, an opportunity for a new literary trip), thereby increasing enjoyment at all levels.

Thank you a lot

