



Gender and Literature: Deconstructing Stereotypes in the Classroom

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the intersection between Gender Studies and the teaching of literature in primary and secondary education, highlighting how narratives can be used as powerful tools to promote gender awareness, inclusion, and equality in the classroom. My aim is a) to demonstrate how gender is represented in children's and adolescent literature and b) to explore the ways these gender representations shape pupils' and students' perceptions of social roles, power and identity. At the primary level, literature constitutes a safe and simple way to challenge and question traditional gender stereotypes — through activities such as character analysis, role reversal, or creative adaptations of familiar tales. These methods foster the development of empathy, self-expression, and appreciation for diversity among young learners. At the secondary level, students are asked to create more informed critiques of literary voices by examining how ideas and preconceptions about femininity and masculinity are constructed across time periods and genres. By using multimodal texts, projects, and through interesting discussions, learners enhance their ability to question these dominant narratives concerning gender and identity and form their own ideas and opinions. I also aim to suggest how the integration of gender perspectives into literature classes helps pupils and students think critically, be inclusive, and act responsively as future citizens. The presentation will conclude with real-world examples and classroom strategies for educators interested in incorporating gender-sensitive approaches into their literature classrooms.

Keywords: literature; gender; stereotyping; identity