

"I only wish Real Reads had existed when I was at school so that I knew what happened in the last two-thirds of *Jane Eyre*!"
Lauren Nightingale, Scholastic Education



REAWAKENING LITERATURE

WORKING WITH CLASSIC
LITERATURE RETELLINGS
A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

Accessing and sharing important works of literature is often a daunting experience. Jane Champion's practical guide is designed to support teachers and parents in maximising children's reading experience. It identifies a range of opportunities for developing reading skills, and for talking about books. It also suggests ways of developing readers' appreciation and understanding of the cultural and social contexts of the classics of world literature.

The guide is divided into five sections

- themes and ideas
- plot and structure
- character
- language
- context

Activities are designed to encourage engagement, strengthen comprehension, and to support the development of more complex skills such as inferential reading. For each activity there is an explanation of the activity with a worked example using one of the **Real Reads** texts, together with suggestions about how the activity can be extended for the more able.

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INTRODUCTION

Real Reads allow readers of all ages to engage with great stories and begin to explore the wealth of our world's literary heritage. In addition, these accessible texts can be used to support the language and literacy development of primary and secondary students, and people of all ages who are learning English.

Reawakening Literature is intended to support educators in a number of ways to help maximise their students' reading experience. It helps to identify opportunities to develop reading skills, to support talking about books, and to aid the development of the wider cultural and social context of the classical texts.

Reawakening Literature is divided into five essential elements of studying narrative texts:

- plot and structure
- character
- themes and ideas
- looking at language
- the social and historical context in which the text was produced

Each section offers a range of activities suitable for one-to-one tuition, working with small groups, or with whole classes. The activities are designed to encourage the reader's engagement with the text, strengthen comprehension, and support the development of more complex skills such as inferential reading. For each, there is an explanation of the activity with a worked example using one of the **Real Reads** texts. There are also suggestions of other texts for which the activity might work well, and ideas for how the activity might be extended.



ACTIVITY CATEGORIES

Most of the activities in *Reawakening Literature* can be adapted to any learning setting. These recommendations are intended only to give a quick indication of suitability.



Can be done before starting to read the book



Suitable for one-to-one tuition



Can be done after reading only part of the book



Suitable for a small group of students



Can be done when the whole book has been read



Suitable for a whole class

PLOT AND STRUCTURE

Engaging with a brilliant plot is the hook that catches the reader. Whether it is full of twists and turns, a murder mystery or a romance, literature is characterised by compelling and timeless plots. Students need to

- get to grips with the plot of the novel
- learn to analyse its structure
- identify the significant events that shape the story
- recognise how characters' interactions affect the course of the story
- understand how writers vary the pace to keep us engaged

PREDICTING THE PLOT

Students can make predictions based on illustrations from the book or a reading of the first page before reading the whole book. This encourages students to continue reading to verify their predictions.

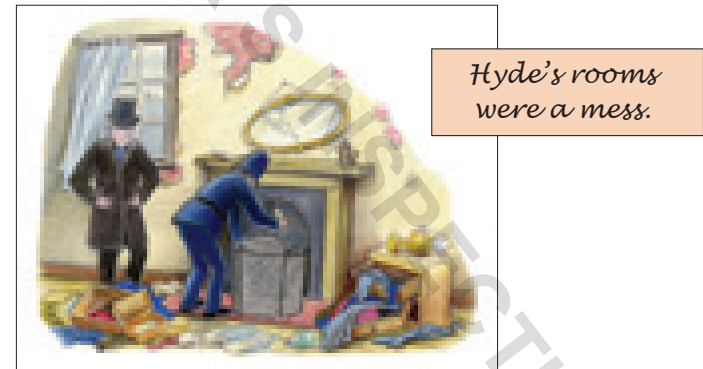
Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (Stevenson)



Try giving students a selection of pictures in sequence and asking them to predict what the story will be.



Extend by muddling up the pictures and asking students to sequence them as they make their predictions. Words or phrases from the text can be added to the pictures.



Other suitable **Real Reads** texts include:

***The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (Poe)** Use the *Gazette des Tribunaux* article on pages 18 and 19 of the **Real Reads** version as a starting point.

***Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare)** Provide details about the feud between the Montagues and Capulets to get students started.



PICTURING THE SETTING

In some stories, the setting is crucial to the power of the tale. Helping students to visualise it can bring the story alive for them.

***Far from the Madding Crowd* (Hardy)**



Try finding pictures on the internet of Dorchester (Casterbridge in the novel) and other places in Dorset, England, where the story might have taken place.

Other suitable **Real Reads** texts include:

***Pride and Prejudice* (Austen)** Find pictures of grand houses such as the one Mr Darcy lives in.

***Wuthering Heights* (Brontë)** Find pictures of places in Yorkshire that Emily Brontë would have known, such as Haworth and the Pennine Hills.

***The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Hard Times* (Dickens)** Find pictures of mid-Victorian industrial cities like London and Manchester.

TRACKING THE ACTION

Activities that help students to visualise the storyline can help them to understand the action, particularly where the plot is complex. Where the action of the story moves geographically, it can help to track the journey on a map.

***The Three Kingdoms* (Guanzhong)**



Try enlarging the map in the book and identifying the locations of some of the events of the story.



Extend by linking the locations to illustrations, descriptions and other details from the book.

Other suitable **Real Reads** texts include:

***War of the Worlds* (Wells)** Use a map of South London and Surrey (southern England) to track the narrator's journey.

***The Odyssey* (Homer)** Create a map of the places Odysseus visits, including Troy, the cave of Cyclops, the island of the Sirens, the Scylla's lair, and Ithaca. Some are real places; others can only be guessed at.

Paul of Tarsus Use the map in the 'Taking things further' section to trace Paul's journeys.

GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

DIALECT WORDS AND IDIOMS

Huckleberry Finn (Twain)



Try decoding the dialect words in the characters' speech. Encourage students to use their knowledge of the English language and context to work out the meanings.

Word	Word in context
ornery	him being so ignorant, ornery and low-down
ole	'Yo' ole father'
cowhide	He told Huck he'd cowhide him black-and-blue
doan'	'Doan' hurt me!'
lit	I lit out
low-down	Huck felt low-down

Extend by looking at the way that Jim speaks. Students could translate Jim's speech into Standard English. Or they might research the linguistic roots of Jim's African American Vernacular English by looking at some pidgins and creoles.

Other suitable **Real Reads** texts include:

Tess of the d'Urbervilles (Hardy) Look at the language of Tess's mother.

RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

VALUES AND BELIEFS

Exploring the values that underpin the world's great religions can help students see that they share much common ground.

Mary Magdalene (New Testament)



Try identifying the characteristics of Mary Magdalene and Jesus. What characteristics do students admire that they might try to emulate in their own lives?

Extend by identifying the lessons being taught about how Christians should behave and treat other people. Students could identify situations from their own lives where they might exhibit these qualities.

Other suitable **Real Reads** texts include:

Mahabharata: Rolling the Dice (Part 2 of the trilogy)

Siddhartha Gautama: The Life of The Buddha

Muhammad: The Life of The Prophet

