

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES**

**TEACHING A LITERARY ANALYSIS COURSE
ON THE SHORT STORIES OF EDGAR ALLAN POE:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE LESSON PLANS AND ASSESSMENT
MA thesis**

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ABSTRACT

The current Master's thesis illustrates how a literary analysis course in English based on the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe was created and taught in one of the upper secondary schools in Estonia to develop critical thinking skills in students.

The thesis consists of a literature review and an empirical part. The literature review concentrates on the aims and methods of teaching literature and the works of Edgar Allan Poe. The empirical part focuses on the process of creating, teaching and analyzing the course taught. Firstly, it explains the reasons for choosing the works of Edgar Allan Poe. Secondly, the main aims of the course are provided. Thirdly, the introspective analysis of the teaching experience is presented.

The conclusion summarizes the main findings of the thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	2
INTRODUCTION	5
1. LITERATURE REVIEW: TEACHING LITERATURE AND EDGAR ALLAN POE'S WORKS.....	7
1.1. The Concept of Literature	7
1.2. The Aim of Using Literature in the EFL Classroom	7
1.3. Choosing Literary Texts for the EFL Classroom	9
1.4. The Problems with Using Literature in the EFL Classroom.....	11
1.5. The Methods of Teaching Literature	12
1.6. Gothic Fiction and the Reasons for Employing It	14
1.7. Teaching the Works by Edgar Allan Poe	15
2. EMPIRICAL PART: CREATING MATERIALS AND TEACHING THE TEXTS.....	17
2.1. The Reasons for Choosing to Teach the Short Stories by Edgar Allan Poe and Creating the Materials for a Literary Analysis Course.....	17
2.2. Aims and Learning Outcomes of the Course Underlying the Creation of the Materials and Teaching the Course	19
2.3. Method and Discussion of the Weekly Lesson Plans of the Course.....	20
2.3.1. Lesson Plans for Week 1: Introduction to the Course, Literary Genres and Devices, and Edgar Allan Poe	20
2.3.1.1. Lesson 1: Course Requirements. What is Literature?	20
2.3.1.2. Lesson 2: Short Story. Elements of a Short Story. Most Common Literary Devices	23
2.3.1.3. Lesson 3: Life and Career of Edgar Allan Poe. Contexts of His Works	23
2.3.1.4. Lesson 4: Gothic Elements	25
2.3.2. Lesson Plans for Week 2: "The Tell-Tale Heart"	26
2.3.2.1. Lesson 1: Impressions and Analysis of "The Tell-Tale Heart"	26
2.3.2.2. Lesson 2: Analysis of "The Tell-Tale Heart"	29
2.3.2.3. Lesson 3: Analysis of "The Tell-Tale Heart", Assembling the Plot, Reflecting on the Story	31
2.3.2.4. Lesson 4: Quiz on Edgar Allan Poe.....	34
2.3.3. Lesson Plans for Week 3: "The Masque of the Red Death"	34
2.3.3.1. Lesson 1: A Short Test, Impressions and Analysis of "The Masque of the Red Death"	34
2.3.3.2. Lesson 2: Analysis of "The Masque of the Red Death"	37

2.3.4. Lesson Plans for Week 4: “The Pit and the Pendulum”	39
2.3.4.1. Lesson 1: Impressions and Analysis of “The Pit and the Pendulum”	39
2.3.4.2. Lesson 2: Comparing “The Pit and the Pendulum” with either “The Tell-Tale Heart” or “The Masque of the Red Death.” Watching a Real-Life Experiment Video. Conclusions.....	44
2.3.5. Lesson Plans for Week 5: “The Black Cat”	46
2.3.5.1. Lesson 1: Reading “The Black Cat”	46
2.3.5.2. Lesson 2: Analysis of “The Black Cat”	47
2.3.6. Lesson Plans for Week 6: “The Fall of the House of Usher”	51
2.3.6.1. Lesson 1: Impressions and Analysis of “The Fall of the House of Usher”	51
2.3.6.2. Lesson 2: Analysis of “The Fall of the House of Usher”	51
2.3.6.3. Lesson 3: A Test Using the Materials	57
2.3.6.4 Students’ Feedback on the Course.....	57
2.4.7. Final Assessment in Week 7: Writing an Analytical Essay	60
CONCLUSION	66
REFERENCES	69
APPENDICES: “Literature of a country of B2 foreign language”: A Literary Analysis Course on the Short Stories of Edgar Allan Poe	71
Appendix 1 – Week 1: Lesson Plans	71
Appendix 2 – Week 2: Lesson Plans	76
Appendix 3 – Week 3: Lesson Plans	81
Appendix 4 – Week 4: Lesson Plans	83
Appendix 5 – Week 5: Lesson Plans	87
Appendix 6 – Week 6: Lesson Plans	89
Appendix 7 – Week 7: Assessment	92
RESÜMEE.....	93

INTRODUCTION

The Estonian National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools (Vabariigi Valitsuse 6. jaanuari 2011. a. määruse nr. 2 “Gümaansiumi riiklik õppekava” lisa 2) states that one aim of teaching foreign languages is to develop critical thinking skills which includes teaching students to reflect on their values and ethical beliefs, helping them to learn how to collect and generalize information, express and defend their viewpoints while respecting others.

The aim of the present Master’s thesis is to develop critical thinking skills through the use of literature in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Five short stories by the American author Edgar Allan Poe are employed for creating a literary analysis course. In addition, extra materials and tasks are created to support and guide students in their learning process. The idea for creating the course was inspired by the many opportunities that using authentic literary texts offer for teaching various skills necessary in different spheres of life. As I was given the freedom to create the course as I wished (as long as it follows the criteria of the Estonian National Curriculum), I connected my love for literature to teaching one of the most significant skills in life – critical thinking. As a teacher I strongly believe that critical thinking skills should be taught and developed in school, so that students would be able to engage in reflective and independent thinking while considering different ideas and viewpoints respectfully. Furthermore, analyzing various situations and being able to solve problems are also significant for life.

The present thesis consists of a literature review and an empirical part. The literature review focuses on the aims, problems and methods of using literature in the EFL classroom. In addition, it concentrates on employing Gothic fiction and Edgar Allan Poe for teaching critical thinking skills. The empirical part consists of a description and analysis of six weekly lesson plans and introspective analyses of my teaching experience.

The course was taught to 23 11th grade students between the ages 17 and 18. The students had chosen to study the English language in depth. The lesson plans and extra materials created have been included in the appendices.

1. Literature Review: Teaching Literature and Edgar Allan Poe's Works

1.1. The Concept of Literature

Various sources define literature in a different manner, but mostly it is seen as something that is written or printed. In the present Master's thesis, however, the concept of literature is used in a narrower sense of literary fiction. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Encyclopedia Britannia 2018; Fiction) fiction is "literature created from the imagination, not presented as fact, though it may be based on a true story or situation. Types of literature in the fiction genre include the novel, short story, and novella." A selection of short stories by Edgar Allan Poe forms a basis for a course that was designed and taught by the author of the thesis. Therefore, in this thesis literature is understood as written works that meet certain criteria (chosen texts must be short stories and have elements of the Gothic fiction), are of cultural value and are suitable for teaching critical thinking skills to upper secondary school students.

1.2. The Aim of Using Literature in the EFL Classroom

Using literature in classroom has numerous benefits like increasing students' emotional and cultural awareness and developing students' critical thinking and language skills. Literary texts are not created specifically for teaching and cover many topics that were significant to the author that wrote them (Floris 2004: 2). Therefore, literary texts are usually authentic and cover a variety of important topics that are missing in many EFL textbooks (Floris 2004: 3). Choosing texts with themes that learners are able to relate to their own experiences and thoughts is important because if learners find the texts meaningful, they are more likely to gain lasting linguistic knowledge (Collie & Slater 1987: 6). In addition, by reading various authentic literary texts which are intended for native speakers, learners are introduced to different uses of the written language (Collie & Slater 1987: 4) and see how the reader is directed to feel different emotions through word

use (Armstrong 2015: 8). The common themes that literary texts often apprehend include social issues, love, death and ethnic conflicts (Floris 2004: 2). By relating their own lives to these themes, students increase their emotional awareness and stimulate their imagination which also develops students' pleasure in reading. They are soon able to comprehend the meaning of the text with the help of the content of the reading as well as their own experience. Thus, literature has a crucial role in students' personal development by helping them grow as individuals as their understanding of themselves and the world around them deepens. (Floris 2004: 3)

There are studies which provide evidence that it is possible to develop students' critical thinking skills using literature. One of the studies was carried out in a national university in Japan with 25 mixed-level second year students who took part in a course where they read one short story (by American authors) every week and later discussed it in groups. They were also introduced to literary elements of a short story. (Armstrong 2015: 9) Students had to analyze each story critically, compare the stories, ask questions, and also complete activities on different literary elements (Armstrong 2015: 10). By the end of the course students were able to ask more complicated questions and discuss the chosen story in English while using the literary elements taught (Armstrong 2015: 15). Another study was carried out with 60 female students learning English at Sefarat Language Institute in Iran (Momeni 2015: 29) to show that using literary texts (in this case poetry) helps English learners to acquire critical reading and thinking skills which are necessary to understanding various literary works on a deeper level and create a significant discourse (Momeni 2015: 25-26). They were divided into two groups (a traditional poetry reading group and a critical poetry reading group) that were taught reading skills separately for a term. A traditional poetry reading group learned traditional reading skills including skimming and scanning, whereas the other group was taught how to read critically to decode meaning and symbols

in poetry (Momeni 2015: 29). In the end of the term, both groups took a post-test to measure students' critical reading skills. The critical poetry reading group performed better in a test and results proved that if literary texts are carefully chosen and analyzed, they can improve students' critical reading skills and overall reading comprehension. (Momeni 2015: 34)

Furthermore, using literature has a role in developing knowledge about various cultures. For example, by analyzing the setting, the characters and their customs in short stories helps students to expand knowledge about foreign cultures as well as they can examine their own culture through it by comparing and creating connections between their culture and foreign cultures (Armstrong 2015: 8). By analyzing literature this way, students can reach intercultural understanding (Armstrong 2015: 9). For example, the Japanese students mentioned above said that after participating in the study they were able to make cultural comparisons to characters, items and time while comparing it all to their own Japanese culture (Armstrong 2015: 16). This proves that literature can be a gateway to understanding and experiencing different cultures while seeing the importance of their own (Armstrong 2015: 20).

1.3. Choosing Literary Texts for the EFL Classroom

Choosing a right literary text is crucial when wanting to make the learning process productive. Combining fun and comprehensible texts for students aid in developing a positive attitude towards reading in a second language. It is more likely that students who develop positive attitude towards reading in a second language read during their free-time, which is beneficial for their learning process. (Amer 2012)

It is pointed out that selecting texts which meet the learners' interest or can be somehow personal are more likely to develop positive attitude towards reading and learning. This is where the learners' age and cultural backgrounds play a significant role.

(Floris 2004: 6) For example, younger students may still be interested in fairytales, yet older students would probably get bored easily while reading those.

When selecting texts it is also important for the teacher to decide in advance if during literature course broad range of texts is studied more superficially or a limited number of texts is studied more in depth (Carter & Long 1991: 4). Using breadth approach includes reading a variety of literary texts that are written in different styles and describe various situations and stories. This approach teaches students to gather information on these texts and to relate their reading of different texts to each other. This approach is believed to provide the basis on which more in-depth reading can be initiated and executed. (Carter & Long 1991: 5) Using depth approach includes reading a small range of texts closely and later analyzing and interpreting them. It is important to understand thematic and linguistic particularities of a text. It is believed that using depth approach results in the development of close reading and analyzing skills as well as greater fluency. (Carter and Long 1991: 5) Whether to adopt one of these approaches largely depends on the group of students that are going to be taught and their language competence. Students must be able to comprehend the text to analyze it, so the selected texts should not stay too far beyond the students' level of normal reading comprehension. (Carter and Long 1991: 5) To some extent, students should also be able to relate to the experiences and situations described in the text, otherwise they might get bored easily and not find any pleasure in reading. (Carter and Long 1991: 5-6) The students who are able to relate to the texts and interpret them using their own knowledge and experiences are likely to gain the most benefit from the literature as the way they think and see their surroundings broadens and they gain necessary support for the development of their language skills (Carter and Long 1991: 6).

If it is difficult to spark students' interest by just reading and analyzing the texts, it is also possible to use technology and multi-media resources. It is possible to combine

literature with graphic images or audio files. Students could sometimes listen to the text instead of just reading it or do some online tasks regarding the text. (Melin 2009: 354-355) This way learning is more diverse and fun for students.

1.4. The Problems with Using Literature in the EFL Classroom

On the other hand, some problems can occur while using literature in the classroom. One of the major difficulties in using literary texts is language because it is often viewed as incomprehensible by many teachers and students as literary vocabulary and grammar structures are often very complex. (Floris 2004: 4) Choosing texts with an appropriate length is also difficult. For some students longer texts may be complicated because of the vocabulary while shorter texts may not provide necessary contextual support and repetition (Floris 2004: 4).

Yet another problem concerned with using literary texts is culture. Students with various cultural backgrounds may not always fully understand the texts and references to cultures different from theirs. (Floris 2004: 4) Time is also essential while choosing a story that is more or less suitable for all the students in class. Picking out the right story can be challenging for a teacher as it is important to keep in mind how much time is it possible to spend on working on the text. (Floris 2004: 5)

In addition, a problem may occur when teachers use teacher-centered approaches too much when they first introduce the literature of the foreign language. Teachers often give a lot of information to students at once about the authors, background, literary devices etc and expect the students to learn and make sense of it all. This sort of approach is not encouraging for students as they are not fully engaged in the learning process because the personal investment is minimal. (Collie & Slater 1987: 7-8) Therefore, student-centered approaches should be employed to give students more responsibility and autonomy. One way to engage students in an active learning process is group work, so that students can

interact with each other by participating actively while developing their communicative and collaborative skills. Another way to engage students is to allow them to learn to direct their own learning by giving them tasks that they can complete independently. (Collie & Slater 1987: 8-9)

1.5. The Methods of Teaching Literature

Sometimes, it may be difficult to keep every student motivated and willing to learn. There are some socio-cultural pedagogic principles that could be taken into consideration when planning using literature in the learning process in the EFL classroom that could make the process easier. (Chambers & Marshall 2006: 103)

One of these principles include the principle of engagement which puts forward that introducing the study of literature to students should spark their interest in literature, so that everybody would be motivated to be part of the learning process. This process includes connecting students' previous experience, knowledge, understanding, preconception, skill and desire and employing it and guiding it in necessary directions. (Chambers & Marshall 2006: 104) Thus, instead of starting a literature course with a history of English literature or discussing literary genres and movements, the course begins with students' own reflections on their doings and experiences connected to reading books, magazines and watching films and shows and comparing those experiences, which helps them connect with their emotions and thoughts. Chambers & Marshall 2006: 104-105) The aim of this task is prepare students' minds for the upcoming topics and get them thinking. This way, students can share their knowledge and experiences and get into the mood for the topic to come and everyone can be engaged in the learning process no matter what their personal, gender or ethnic differences are. (Chambers & Marshall 2006: 105)

Another principle mentioned is the principle of intelligibility which states that the things students are taught must be comprehensible to them, so that they are encouraged to

participate. Students should actively participate in the processes of textual analysis-interpretation-evaluation and connect their own everyday experiences to it. (Chambers and Marshall 2006: 105) This approach demands that the teacher must first bring an example and later a definition. Teachers often explain theory and terms and later bring an example. Students might not understand these explanations as they often are not able to connect the example and the definition. (Chambers and Marshall 2006: 106) If students do not understand, they get bored and will not be engaged in the learning process (Chambers and Marshall 2006: 107).

Both previously mentioned principles encourage students' participation which leads to the last principle which is the principle of participation. Students' own participation is promoted through different activities with precise instructions so they could make constructive sense of the tasks. (Chambers and Marshall 2006: 107) For example, students have to read a story and the teacher provides them with the questions related to the story which are meant to lead them to analyze and interpret the text. Later the text is discussed and the teacher is able to anticipate the students' likely answers and rephrase them in a way that they are more academic and closer to the discourse. (Chambers and Marshall 2006: 107) Through this activity students are taken closer to the topic and literary terms. Activities may be different, for example, students are asked to read only an opening paragraph and guess how the story will continue. They have to support their ideas with arguments. It is important to keep students engaged and make sure that they understand what they are doing and why they are doing it. (Chambers and Marshall 2006: 108)

These principles could be followed in selecting and reading texts. Even though students mostly read the texts for lessons independently, sometimes the reading could be done in the classroom so that the teacher can ask what kind of thoughts, ideas or questions these texts awake in students to see if they really grasp the main point.

1.6. Gothic Fiction and the Reasons for Employing It

In the present Master's thesis Gothic fiction has been chosen as a basis material for creating and teaching the literary analysis course to develop critical thinking skills in students. The reasons for employing Gothic fiction are: firstly, most students are familiar with it in a way. People are often introduced to the horror genre and Gothic fiction with ghost stories in their childhood and they are the most common experience that people have with horror and Gothic fiction in general. (Spratford & Clausen 2004: 25)

Secondly, Gothic fiction is engaged with transgression and excess (Botting 2014: 8). In every society and culture there are boundaries and rules that should not be overstepped. People often desire to cross these boundaries and Gothic fiction apprehends the subject and the consequences of doing so. (Weinstock 2017: 2) Therefore, I believe that employing Gothic fiction in the lessons is suitable for teaching critical thinking skills to students because it examines different problematic aspects of society and human nature. In addition, students can connect the problematic situations addressed in the story to their society.

Gothic fiction plays on the universal human fear and is dependent on darkness (Spratford & Clausen 2004: 27). Gothic stories are often set in decaying castles or mansions which may seemingly or altogether be inhabited by supernatural presence that poses threat to living characters in the story (Hopkins 2005: 11). Protagonists are usually mad, selfish, and evil or are obsessed with something or someone. The stories are meant to awaken terror, fear, disgust, revulsion. (Botting 2014: 4) Yet, it is common that there are many fierce contrasts in all sorts of possible fields and it often produces polarities. According to Hopkins (2005: 12), these polarities may include cases where "extreme good is opposed to extreme evil, extreme innocence to extreme power, and very often extreme youth to extreme age".

When discussing the Gothic, it is possible to tell difference between the terror and horror narratives. Terror narrative tries to expand the spirit by defining vice and endorsing virtue and family values. (Botting 2014: 65) Terror is bound to activate mind and imagination, and provide escape (Botting 2014: 68). Horror narrative, on the contrary, tries to freeze the spirit as these tales are often set somewhere underground where the human mind is passive and body immobilized (Botting 2014: 69).

1.7. Teaching the Works by Edgar Allan Poe

According to Magistrle (2008: 140), there are usually two ways how students react to reading works by Poe: they struggle to make sense of his mysterious and gloomy narrative or they gladly read the stories and connect the themes to the contemporary society and their own lives. Poe often uses the first-person narrative in his works. Kimball (2008: 118) states that this is often troubling and fascinating to students because the first person narrators talk from their point of view which may depict things the way they did not happen in reality. When narrators tell their story, the use of first-person experience may establish a sense of certainty, yet it is important to see self-interest and values of the narrator to understand the relevance of the narrative. The context should also be examined. (Kimball 2008: 119)

One way to teach Poe's short stories is through cultural background. It is necessary to first tell the students about the 19th century America, the time and society that Poe lived in, otherwise it may be hard for students to grasp the ideas behind his writings. (Henderson 2008: 69) For example, when students first read Poe's works, many of them see his representation of death as something they can associate with their favorite horror movies and accept it merrily or they dismiss his morbidity and categorize him as pathological. Thus, when introducing Poe's short stories to students, it is important to explain the cultural background of the 19th century. (Henderson 2008: 69)

During the 19th century America was fascinated with death and the understanding of it was changing throughout the century (Henderson 2008: 69). At the beginning of the century there was less distance between the living and the dead as family members prepared their dead for burial and the dead were buried in cemeteries near their homes or churches (Henderson 2008: 69). By the end of the century the distance between the living and the dead grew as many people died in hospitals away from home and were taken care of by undertakers and embalmers (Henderson 2008: 69). The use of new technology and different treatment of the dead created new understandings about death and the practice of mourning (Henderson 2008: 69). Graveyards became popular as tourist destinations where people would have picnics and strolls. Department stores sold various things used to mourn the dead (black clothing, ribbons etc). Many fears associated with death caused panic in the society, such as the possibility of premature burial. (Henderson 2008: 70)

Out of this fascination emerged two styles of representation which depicted death differently – the sensational and the sentimental. Both styles prospered and manifested almost everywhere, including advertising, religious ideology, funeral and memorial practices, as well as art and literature. (Henderson 2008: 70) In the sensational style death is depicted as often born of violence, ghastly and senseless. Moreover, the dead cannot rest and return to the living world as ghosts or wrathful spirits. This style is meant to offer readers a possibility to escape their daily lives by briefly getting a taste of horror. (Henderson 2008: 70-71) The sensational style is opposite to the sentimental style in which death is often depicted as beautiful, peaceful and meaningful. This is meant to provoke a strong reaction in the reader as characters often have to overcome various obstacles such as loss of love, being an orphan, grief or poverty, things that are evident in daily lives of people. (Henderson 2008: 71)

Edgar Allan Poe was also influenced by this cultural phenomenon. Death and its

terrifying representations play a major part in Poe's short stories. Moreover, his works sometimes combine both sensational and sentimental styles, especially when the horror of death is bound with the desire for the dead. (Henderson 2008: 73) For example, Poe explored the fear of premature burial and combined the sensational and sentimental style in his "The Fall of the House of Usher". This is a short story that has many gothic elements and can also be used to teach identifying sentimental and sensational themes and analyzing the fear and love of death in the 19th century America. (Henderson 2008: 74)

2. Empirical Part: Creating Materials and Teaching the Texts

2.1. The Reasons for Choosing to Teach the Short Stories by Edgar Allan Poe and Creating the Materials for a Literary Analysis Course

In the present Master's thesis the selection of suitable texts for classroom was based on different aspects. The students' level of language, their age, their interests and background were considered. 11th grade students studying in one Estonian Gymnasium participated in the course. The students were mostly 17-18 years old and they had chosen to study the English language in depth and had various narrow field courses in English like "American Studies", "Literature of a country of B2 foreign language", "Business English" etc, so their level of English should have been at least B2. The course presented in this thesis was taught as a narrow field course "Literature of a country of B2 foreign language". I was allowed to choose how to approach the course and I chose literary analysis because critical thinking and analyzing skills are significant for students' personal development. The texts had to be in accordance with course aims and help students to achieve those aims. In addition, the Estonian National Curriculum was considered.

The Estonian National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools (Vabariigi Valitsuse 6. jaanuari 2011. a. määruse nr. 2 "Gümaansiumi riiklik õppekava" lisad 1 ja 2)

states that the main aim of studying the subjects of the language and literature field is to develop students' language and literature competence, which means that students are eventually able to analyze, comprehend and create as well as critically assess various texts. This is associated with students' mother tongue as well as the field of foreign languages. Both language and literature help students to achieve better written and oral self-expression skills, and the ability to create and comprehend text. When learning a foreign language these skills are carried to a new cultural context.

The present thesis concentrates on developing students' critical thinking and analyzing skills through studying five short stories by an American gothic author Edgar Allan Poe. The Estonian National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools (2011) stresses that it is important for students to know significant foreign authors and their works and relate them to a time period and cultural context. It is also important to understand different literary genres and movements, to be able to identify the main literary devices in texts and analyze and interpret various types of literary works. According to the points in the curriculum, Edgar Allan Poe is a suitable author to be studied in upper secondary school's English and American literature course as he is a significant American author of the beginning of the 19th century and he is one of the major contributors to Gothic literature.

Another reason for employing Poe's works is that his stories are short enough for students to be read in one sitting and long enough for events to fully develop. Poe's stories are well described by Alfred Bendixen:

Poe's fiction relies on elaborate plotting, a heightened literary language in which mood is established as much by sound as by visual imagery, and the creation of imagined realms that usually exist outside of normal time and space, almost always leading to the depiction of symbolic and psychological landscapes. He was the first American author of fiction to fully grasp the potential of the unreliable narrator, and the first to transform masochism into an art form. His protagonists usually tell their own stories, but their tales almost always focus on acts seemingly inexplicable violence, revealing a divided self engaged in various acts on repression and a desire for self-torture and self-destruction. (Bendixen 2017: 32)

Thus, Poe's short stories contain elements of gothic literature and often combine the

paranormal, horror, mystery and fantasy. Poe's short stories can also be demanding for the students in terms of vocabulary, decoding the meaning of symbols and critically thinking beyond the written word. Analyzing the actions of unreliable narrators can also offer a challenge as Poe's short stories have many layers, and could be approached in various ways. All this gives a possibility to teach students to analyze and think critically to see behind those layers and grasp the deeper meaning of the story. Before starting working with the texts, it is significant for students to be able to understand the world of gothic literature (background, literary terms and elements) and in this case, Poe's world.

2.2. Aims and Learning Outcomes of the Course Underlying the Creation of the Materials and Teaching the Course

The main aim of the course as stated previously is to develop students' critical thinking skills by analyzing five short stories by Edgar Allan Poe. The other aims include developing students' problem solving skills, communication skills, collaboration skills and self-expression skills.

Learning outcomes include the following:

- Students are able to analyze different contexts provided to them
- Students are able to draw logical conclusions from the analysis of an issue or problem
- Students are able to analyze and assess alternative points of view
- Students are able to reflect on one's own thinking as well as on the other points of view and knowledge gained from the course
- Students are able to present their ideas and points of view and support them with relevant examples
- Students are able to find hidden meanings and symbols in the texts

- Students are familiar with various literary devices and gothic elements
- Students work well in a group and are able to contribute and divide the work
- Students freely participate in classroom discussions
- Students are able to recognize Poe's works and his writing style

2.3. Method and Discussion of the Weekly Lesson Plans of the Course

The following chapters contain description and analysis of the literary course given. I am using introspection with critical reflection of my teaching practice. The analysis is based on my notes made during and after the classes and lesson plans. The analysis and description of students' answers are based on recorded notes in the classroom and students' worksheets, tests and feedback.

2.3.1. Lesson Plans for Week 1: Introduction to the Course, Literary Genres and Devices, and Edgar Allan Poe

Week 1 consists of three 45-minute lessons and one 90-minute lesson (see Appendix 1 for the 4 lesson plans).

2.3.1.1. Lesson 1: Course Requirements. What is Literature?

The first lesson concentrates on course requirements and students' own knowledge about literature. At first, students were made aware of what they would have to do in order to pass the course successfully – which stories they would have to read and the formation of their course mark.

After becoming acquainted with course requirements, students were asked several questions about their knowledge of the concept of literature, experience with literature and reading habits. This task was meant as a pre-learning activity to make students feel comfortable and prepare them for the theory. At first, students were asked to define literature for themselves. Most of the students defined literature as something that is

written, something that is valuable, connected to self-expression (creativity) and stories. As a comparison to their own definitions, the students were shown a PowerPoint slide with possible definitions of literature from several dictionaries (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Longman Active Study Dictionary, Oxford English Dictionary*). The main definitions were similar to the ones that students thought of, except one; *Longman Dictionary* also defines literature as “leaflets and other printed matter used to advertise products or give advice”. This ignited a discussion about how, for example, a leaflet introducing a Spa Hotel could be considered literature. The main discussion point was the value and benefits of such piece of written work. A few students came up with the idea that such leaflet could be valuable in the distant future when historians study our time period but no student considered the leaflet valuable as literature. It was established that due to their length and content such leaflets cannot be compared to literary classics like *Jane Eyre* or *The Great Gatsby*.

The discussion led to the second question: “Why do we need literature, why is it beneficial to read?” The students thought that literature is most beneficial for learning new vocabulary or language, learning about history and different cultures and it can be entertaining and a great way to pass the time. Reading can also develop analyzing skills. The students were quick to find the reasons why reading is beneficial but when they had to describe their experience with literature and their reading habits, it was revealed that students themselves do not spend their spare time reading even though most had positive experiences with literature except for some required reading books they had had to read in school that they had found dull and at times difficult to understand. The reasons for not reading on their spare time were different. Most of the 22 students present in class preferred other activities to reading such as surfing on the Internet, chatting with their friends on Facebook and other social media platforms, playing computer games or

exercising. Some students explained that although they liked to read, they did not have time to grab a book since school, studying, extracurricular activities and hobbies took up most of their time. Five students claimed that they read on their spare time because it helped them to get away from daily activities and rest their minds after a long day. Those students also mentioned the fun factor of reading and possibilities of personal development that reading different literary works offers.

In addition, the students were asked about required reading books for their general literature classes. According to the answers, two types of students appeared: those who read the required books in order to get good grades and those who read through different summaries of the books on the Internet in order to pass the test. The students admitted that most books in the required reading list were too long, too old and deal with the problems that they are unfamiliar with. The students are not able to identify with most of the characters in these books mainly because the society, manners and values described are different from ours. A few students said that they would read more gladly if they could choose more books by themselves. This discussion made me seriously contemplate the future of reading habits of the young in general as the students' answers were the proof of reading becoming less important to them. The first question that came to mind was: "What can I as a teacher do to spark students' interest in reading based on the students' answers?" I realized that during the next period when they will have another literature course where they have to read a book at home, I can give them more responsibility and freedom by allowing them to choose the book by themselves. Moreover, I thought that it is always necessary to bring parallels between nowadays and time periods in the texts and discuss similarities and differences. This would probably help the students to engage in reading activities and understand the texts better.

2.3.1.2. Lesson 2: Short Story. Elements of a Short Story. Most Common Literary Devices

The second lesson focuses on the genre of short story and its elements and the most common literary devices. The main aim of the lesson was to give students the necessary knowledge of how to recognize a short story and identify its elements in the text. Students were given a definition of a short story and it was explained how it differs from a novel. Then they were acquainted with the elements of a short story, such as the setting, plot, characters, point of view and the structure. The students were shown a PowerPoint presentation with keywords, so that they could write down the important information. Each keyword was explained in detail, for example, what the setting of the short story includes. The students were also given a list of most common literary devices and their definitions (see Appendix 2). The list was compiled based on the stories dealt with later on during the course. The list was studied with the students in order to see if they can understand each definition. The students seemed to comprehend the materials provided to them. As it might seem strange to teach what a short story is in the 11th grade, I asked the students beforehand what they knew about short stories and it became clear from their answers that the term needed to be explained properly.

2.3.1.3. Lessons 3: Life and Career of Edgar Allan Poe. Contexts of His Works

This lesson was given as a one 90-minute lesson. The third and the fourth lesson both concentrated on Edgar Allan Poe and his life and career. The students were first asked what they knew about Edgar Allan Poe. They did not know much except that he was a famous American author. Then the students were given laptops and divided into six groups, each consisting of 3-4 students. The students could create their own groups. Each group had to take a number 1-6 which gave them a specific task (see Appendix 2). Students

were given a list of websites (see Appendix 2) in order to avoid using unreliable sources (though they were allowed to use other pages too, if they seemed reliable).

After students had found all the necessary information on the Internet, they had to prepare a PowerPoint presentation to present their findings. The main aim of this task is to learn about Poe, develop communication and teamwork skills of the students as well as learn to divide the work between the group members (planning the parts and time management). Another aim is to develop public speaking skills as the students had to present their findings in front of the class, so that other students could learn from it. The students managed to work in groups successfully and presented their topics, so that every student in the group could speak. What turned out to be a little problematic was the use of reliable sources. Two groups used Wikipedia as a reliable source and one group had got the cause of Poe's death wrong. They said that it was a suicide but it was another speculation, not the ultimate truth. This led to discussion why Wikipedia is not always a reliable source as everybody can publish their articles and create Wikipedia pages.

After students had presented their topics, I added some necessary information and talked about the first half of the 19th century America, about the Industrial Revolution, population growth, construction of the first American railroad etc. Students had a chance to add things they knew about this century. They first mentioned slavery. The main idea was to give students the information about the topics and events that could later be connected to Poe's stories such as fascination with death (e.g. premature burial in "The Fall of the House of Usher"), the movement to abolish slavery (e.g. the possibility to observe the relationship between the cat and its owner as the relationship of a slave and his owner in "The Black Cat"), the care of mentally ill being almost non-existent (e.g. mad characters in "The Tell-Tale Heart", "The Black Cat").

2.3.1.4. Lesson 4: Gothic Elements

The last lesson of the week focused on Gothic elements, so that students would later be able to find and identify them in Poe's stories. At first students were asked what the Gothic elements were. They did not know a precise answer but they suggested that Gothic elements have something to do with horror and they refer to something old as their experience with Gothic in general comes from fashion and architecture.

I brought a few examples of Gothic elements and how they may relate to the setting (e.g. castles, mansions, cellars), characters (e.g. ghosts, vampires) and themes (e.g. motiveless murder, violence, ancestral curses) in order to get the students to think. Then the students were asked where they had encountered such elements. They mentioned movies, books, song lyrics and ghost stories. After that, the short overview of gothic elements was given to students in the form of a presentation.

Finally, a quick look was taken at Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" in order to get an idea of what Poe's stories look like. This story was not planned for the course or to be studied in the lesson at first but as there was some time left, I considered it to be a great idea to see what the students make of Poe. I chose this story because it is one of the shortest ones, has distinct characters and setting, and the structure of the plot can be easily assembled.

"The Cask of Amontillado" seemed confusing and at places language-wise difficult to understand for students. This is where students needed help with vocabulary and I realized that I would also have to help them with the vocabulary of upcoming texts. Then the discussion of what happened in the story took place. After the discussion, reconstructing the structure of the plot (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, conflict, complications) seemed relatively easy for the students as they had done this type of an exercise in Estonian literature class before. The students did not

manage to identify the Gothic elements as the time started to run out. All in all, their opinions about this type of texts were mixed: some seemed to like it and some seemed to be bored.

2.3.2. Lesson Plans for Week 2: “The Tell-Tale Heart”

Week 2 consists of four 45-minute lessons and one 90- minute lesson (see Appendix 2 for the 5 lesson plans).

2.3.2.1 Lesson 1: Impressions and Analysis of “The Tell-Tale Heart”

The first task for students was to read Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” at home as their homework. The lesson began with discussing the difficulty and general impressions of “The Tell-Tale Heart”. Everybody in the classroom thought that it was easier to read than “The Cask of Amontillado” as the language was not as complicated and the plot seemed more straightforward. Some students thought it was a little difficult to read but nothing impassable with the help of a dictionary. I asked them if there were any words they needed help with or any passages in the text that prevented overall comprehension, so that we could go them over together and that it would not become a problem later in the lessons. There were a few words like “vehemently,” “suavity” and “dissimulation” but the idea of the story seemed clear to everyone who had read it. There were a few students who had not read the text and they were given a task to go it through while the others were discussing their impressions.

The opinions about the text were varied. Some thought that it was a surprisingly interesting read as it was possible to have a peek into a psychopath’s mind. Others considered it dull because of its many descriptions. One student even mentioned that for her the part where the main character chopped up the body of his victim was described too vividly. In addition, students came up with questions (provided in an unedited form) that came to their mind while reading:

- “What was the main character’s actual illness/problem?”
- “Who was this guy in the first place?”
- “What the hell was wrong with this guy?”
- “What was his real motive?”
- “Why did he actually confess the murder?”
- “Where did they live if it took so long for the police to arrive and the shutters on windows were closed all the time?”

Students came up with important questions and they were assured that each question would be thoroughly discussed while dissecting the story. As a teacher I was happy to see that some students had put thought in the context of the story instead of quickly reading it. Moreover, the questions that students asked were justified and significant for grasping the ideas in the story, what is behind them and the meaning of the story. The point was to teach them how to think critically and try to see beyond the written word and they were already thinking critically which for me, as a teacher, was truly encouraging because they were already engaged in the learning process and had done a great amount of work by themselves. My task now was to help them find the answers to their questions.

As this was their first time to dissect a story in such manner we started with a discussion and I wrote their answers on the board. First, a look was taken at the characters. I asked students to list all the characters in the story. They mentioned the unnamed narrator, the old man and three policemen. They did not list the neighbor which was not surprising as the neighbor was just mentioned not directly described or involved with the main character. I asked them a guiding question about why the police arrived at the house in the first place and how they came to suspect that an ill deed had taken place. One of the students said that the neighbor made the call, and the neighbor was added to the list. I

emphasized that they could make notes on the texts they were given, underline names or mentioned characters in the story, or write notes in their notebooks as this would help them find the necessary information more quickly as it is impossible to remember every detail.

After the list was complete, I asked them to characterize every character based on the text: their looks, their character (nature, temper), their actions. The following list contains students' answers written on the board about the unnamed narrator:

- Crazy (because wants to kill the old man because of his “evil” eye)
- Evil (because he actually killed the old man, he planned the murder)
- Has acute hearing (heard everything)
- Pervert (spied on the old man)
- Careful (planned the murder)
- Man/woman?
- Has a guilty conscience (confesses the murder)
- Violent (chopped up the body)
- Hallucinations (hears the heartbeat of the chopped up body, imagines that policemen make fun of him)

When the list was compiled, the discussion started. I directed the students with guiding questions and asked them to remember a lesson from the previous week when the historical context was discussed. I guided them to think about what is behind “the crazy”. The students quickly offered that the narrator has an untreated mental illness which drove him mad with each passing day. Then they tried to guess the illness and came up with paranoia as the narrator saw the old man’s blind eye as evil. One student who said to be interested in psychology thought that probably the narrator had schizophrenia because he or she heard things that were not real and hallucinated the heartbeat and imagined that the old man’s eye was harmful. I confirmed that the student’s guess was probably right as Poe described

some of the major symptoms of schizophrenia (delusions, hallucinations). This led to the debate whether the narrator was also evil in addition to being mentally ill or just mentally ill. Most of the 22 students present firmly believed that the narrator was also evil because mental illness would probably prevent a person from being extra careful (as they are more forgetful) and planning a murder in detail. In addition, the narrator was violent and he/she knew very well what he/she was doing while chopping up the body. There were a couple of students who thought that the narrator was deeply mentally ill and he/she did not know what he/she was doing. One student supported her claim by adding that the narrator said that he /she loved the old man but could not stand his “evil” eye and in his/her mind the old man was separated from the eye. So, having a delusion that the eye was evil led the narrator to kill the old man. This was exactly the type of discussion that I as a teacher wish to see ignite in the classroom. Students keenly stated their opinion and had ideas to support their answers. The students seemed to be interested in the topic of mental illness as this is also an evident problem in our society. I encouraged all of the students’ answers because I believe that being good or evil is a matter of perspective and there are no right or wrong answers contemplating someone’s evilness. Moreover, I emphasized that “The Tell-Tale Heart” is a piece of literature and it may be interpreted in various ways as different people see different meanings and ideas behind every story. I explained that we are already achieving the aims of the course as they could see behind this word “crazy” that was mentioned earlier. The analysis was continued in the next lesson.

2.3.2.2. Lesson 2: Analysis of “The Tell-Tale Heart”

The second lesson started with contemplating whether the narrator is a man or a woman. There was nothing really said about the narrator being one or the other as there were no pronouns used in the story to clarify the situation. Some students believed that the narrator was a man because he had a lot of strength when he murdered the old man and hid

his body. Some believed that the narrator was a woman because the people who usually take care of the old and sick are mostly women. These students saw a stereotype of a woman nurse in the narrator. I mentioned that to them and added that it is not written who the narrator is. The narrator could have been the old man's helper or his brother, his son or someone else instead. This was another idea that was left open for debate and all the students could have their own opinions on it.

Then a quick look was taken at other characters. The following list contains students' answers written on the board about other characters:

- The old man: rich (had the house, the narrator mentioned that he/she did not care about the old man's riches), sick (blinded from one eye, needed care), friendly or lovable (the narrator mentioned loving him)
- 3 policemen: polite and friendly (based on the narrator's first impressions)
- Neighbor: close by (heard the scream), afraid (called the police because someone screamed once)

Other characters did not ignite a big discussion. As I believed that students' answers were sufficient and we moved on to the setting.

Analyzing the setting turned out to be somewhat problematic. Students mentioned midnight and the house (the old man's room) but they had no idea where to situate the story in time (which century or time period) and where exactly their house was. I asked them when the story was written and it was established that these events probably happened in America during the first half of the 19th century as this was when Poe lived and when mental illnesses were difficult to treat. I asked the students where in time they would fit the story if they did not know it was written by Poe and published in 1843. They offered that it could be almost any time and any place because any person could become mentally unstable and decide on not getting help, it could even happen in our society. In

addition, I asked them to think about the neighbor and how long it took for the police to arrive. They thought the neighbor must be very close if the old man's scream was heard. This led them to think that the house could be in a town. Yet, it took a long time for the police to get to the house (the narrator managed to hide the body and evidence of the murder), so it was finally established that they probably lived in a rural area. I concluded that students need more guiding when it comes to the matter of events and parts of the story that are wider and are not as easily found and comprehensible as, for example, the characteristics of the characters.

The themes of "The Tell-Tale Heart" were discussed next. Students suggested two themes: madness (going mad, testing the boundaries of mental illness) and murder/violence. Here it was possible to go back to the question "What was his real motive?" Students mentioned the eye but if one takes away his mental illness then there was no motive at all (motiveless murder).

2.3.2.3. Lesson 3: Analysis of "The Tell-Tale Heart", Assembling the Plot, Reflecting on the Story

Lesson three was taught as a 90-minute lesson. At first the focus was still on analyzing the story as symbols, gothic elements and literary devices had not been previously discussed.

Finding symbols proved to be somewhat difficult. The students could not come up with anything. I mentioned "the eye" and asked them what it could symbolize. They thought it symbolizes going insane but after that they remained silent. I pointed out "the heart" and asked them to think what the heart or the heartbeat could represent. They thought it could represent his guilty conscience as his sanity was restored for a brief moment so that he confessed the deed. The old man's room and the lantern were also discussed. I realized later after the lesson that I should have asked students whether they

knew what “symbol” was. I know that they have learned to find symbols in Estonian literature classes but revising is often necessary. I believe that the task would have turned out to be more successful if the meaning of symbol had been explained.

Finding Gothic elements proved to be rather easy for the students as they had their notebooks where they had notes from the previous week. They mentioned the murder, violence, the “evil” eye (superstition), mental illness (I helped them to rephrase it into deterioration/decay of the mind), main event happening during the midnight, evil character, and innocent character becoming a victim.

Finding literary devices turned out to be time consuming. It took the students about 30 minutes to go through their handout previously given to them and find some devices in the story. They mentioned personification of the eye and the death, the irony of planning the murder, symbolism, and imagery. I added alliteration, simile and consonance to the list. It was quite complicated for students to understand the devices I added to the list as they are associated with the language and not so much with the story. We did not linger on literary devices any longer because the plot needed to be assembled.

I gave students a handout (see Appendix 2, lesson plan 3) on the elements of the plot. They had to find the main points that make up the story: exposition, rising action, falling action, conflict, complications climax, falling action, resolution. Students had to do this in pairs so that they would have a chance to discuss their answers. Another aim of this task was to develop teamwork and time management skills. I strongly believe that in literature classes it is very important for all the students to be able to express their opinion and for those who do not feel as comfortable stating their opinions in front of everyone can do it in pairs or smaller groups. I believe that pair work builds trust and even confidence as students must hold each other accountable and divide the work, also communicate by sharing and perfecting their answers. I gave them about 10 minutes for the task and then

we discussed their ideas. I think that they did the task successfully. Here are their answers:

- Exposition: The narrator is talking about his acute senses and introduces his problems
- Rising action: Planning the murder, going to the old man's room
- Climax: Killing the old man
- Falling action: Hiding the body, talking to the police
- Resolution: Confessing the murder
- Conflict: Between the "evil" eye and the narrator, also between the narrator and his conscience as he goes up to the old man's room many nights before killing him
- Complications: Maybe narrator's conscience at first, maybe the fear of old man being awake when the narrator goes in his room

After that task the plot was briefly discussed in general. We arrived to the point of contemplating whether the narrator was reliable or unreliable and would it be possible to believe anything that the person says. It was established that the narrator was unreliable as he had a mental illness and tried to convince the reader of his sanity from the beginning.

After finishing with the story I asked students what they had learned and if they now saw the story in a different light. They thought that after analyzing the story it made much more sense from the craziness of the narrator to the sound of the heartbeat. After a more thorough analyzing of the story and Gothic elements, one of the students said that the narrator must have been male because such violent and mad woman would not fit into the category of gothic elements as women are usually victims and in distress in Gothic stories. A few students did not like the process of dissecting the story as it made the story boring in their eyes. On the other hand, others believed that analyzing the story like that was a great way to see beyond the written word and find answers to the questions that had come up in their mind during reading.

Finally, I showed them a movie adaptation of “The Tell-Tale Heart” (a clip from the movie *Extraordinary Tales*). This was not planned as part of the lesson, but I took it with me in case there was some time left. As this group of students was new to me, I was careful with planning my lessons to give them enough time if analyzing in depth proved to be very difficult. The focus of this thesis is not on teaching movie adaptations but I think that showing adaptations to students may help some of them to comprehend the story more thoroughly as students are different and for some analyzing in depth can be difficult. In addition, movie adaptations are a great way to engage students who might get bored and it is a change from the usual learning process in the course. After watching the adaptation students had to compare it to the written story and point out differences between the two.

2.3.2.4. Lesson 4: Quiz on Edgar Allan Poe

Students answered the questions about Poe’s life and career (See Appendix 2, lesson 4). The aim of the quiz was for students to study the important facts about Poe’s life to be able to understand the writer and his world better in order to analyze his stories. The quiz was generally well done and fulfilled its aims. None of the students failed the quiz.

2.3.3. Lesson Plans for Week 3: “The Masque of the Red Death”

Week 3 consists of a 90-minute lesson and a 45-minute lesson (See Appendix 3 for the 2 lesson plans).

2.3.3.1. Lesson 1: A Short Test, Impressions and Analysis of “The Masque of the Red Death”

This week started differently as there were three lessons instead of five that were planned. Two lessons were cancelled because of my absence. As usual, students had to read the story at home but to compensate for the cancelled lessons (as these were the last lessons of the day, they could go home), they had to write a character analysis on Prince

Prospero (approximately 100 words) and send it to me via e-mail. 14 out of 23 students did their homework.

Thus, the first activity in this lesson was intended for the students who had not sent me their homework. They had 15 minutes to write down 10 sentences about the plot of “The Masque of the Red Death”, others had a break during that time. I told the students that I was going to mark their tests as “pass” or “fail” because the character analysis of the other students had been assessed on the same basis. The aim of this task was to find out if the students, who had not done the analysis, had read the text and also to remind them that everybody has to read and do their homework. There were 20 out of 23 students present and 7 of them wrote the test. It was clear that a few students were not happy that they had to do this task as their faces reflected annoyance. They were not allowed to use any of their materials. Two students certainly had not read the text as they secretly tried to use their smart devices to find out what the story was about. I addressed the problem by telling them to put their devices away. They did it while rolling their eyes.

This test was not planned beforehand and I felt that I was in a somewhat conflicted situation because I had hoped that more students would do their homework as two lessons had been cancelled and writing 100 words should not have taken that long. As stated before, I wanted to remind the students that it was important to do the homework but when I thought about it later, it was rather demotivating for them. I saw the test as an alternative to the character analysis but I felt that they took it as a punishment for not doing their homework. This was surely a situation to learn from as a teacher, as it was my first time to be teaching a literary analysis course where the students had a responsibility to read a text at home in order to actively participate in the lesson. Even though 5 students out of 7 managed to write 10 accurate sentences about the plot and passed, I would not employ this task in the future because the students who used their phones did not participate much in

the later discussions about the story and answered my questions rather reluctantly. In the future, I would probably give them a new task to do at home instead of the character analysis. I would make the task a little more difficult by asking them to analyze more than one aspect of the story. Perhaps this would send a message that by doing their homework on time results in doing less. In addition, offering a second chance would be less demotivating as they would have time to concentrate on the task at home instead of getting a bad grade in the lesson. Moreover, it would be a good way to promote student autonomy because it would be their choice if they wanted to get the same grade by doing less or more homework.

Then I asked the students what they thought of the story. The overall opinions were similar to what I thought they would be. Some considered the story was quite interesting because of the plot and some thought it was boring because of the long description of the rooms. All in all, students found that “The Masque of the Red Death” was in general easier to read than “The Tell-Tale Heart”. The students liked the story more because of the setting as the rooms were colorful and it was not dark all the time. Some students said that they thought that the rooms must symbolize something (one of the students pointed out: “A strange rainbow.”) but they could not figure out exactly what. One student thought that the Death was described in an interesting way as it was depicted wearing red instead of the usual black.

I wrote eight questions (See Appendix 3) on the board and asked them to discuss the questions in pairs and write the answers down in their notebook. I tried to compile the questions in such a way that students could analyze the characters, setting, historical context, themes, symbols, plot and the Gothic elements. The aim of the task was to see if students were capable of analyzing the story without my help after analyzing “The Tell-Tale Heart” together. That was the reason why I did not give them a lot of questions either.

The first question was about the Red Death. They suggested that it was an illness that people died of and they also answered the second question here by describing the symptoms of the disease. Connecting the Red Death to a real historical period proved to be challenging. I told them that there was a similar plague centuries ago that decreased the world's population. They realized that the Red Death was similar to the Black Death that had killed millions of people during the Middle Ages. Questions 3-6 were relatively easy for students and they had no problems finding answers to them. Questions 7 and 8 proved to be more challenging. The opinions were varied on why Prince Prospero believed he could escape death. Some students thought because he had an abbey, some because he was rich and proud. One student thought that Prospero did not believe he could in fact escape death but his actions were just to control his subjects and the people in the abbey. This sparked a discussion in the classroom but none of the other students agreed that Prince's actions were to hold onto his power but rather to save himself and forget about the plague outside by throwing a ball. The last question was about the Gothic elements in the story. Students mentioned the presence of death, the abbey, the supernatural (the Red Death disappearing). The students did not mention the atmosphere of suspense and mystery or the fear (strong emotions) the people felt when the clock struck. I explained to the students how the various rooms, the masquerade and the clock created the atmosphere of mystery and how fear and other strong emotions are considered to be Gothic elements.

After having discussed the answers to the questions, I asked the students to construct the plot into their notebooks using the elements of a plot as was done with "The Tell-Tale Heart". This task proved to be feasible and students had no problems with it.

2.3.3.2. Lesson 2: Analysis of "The Masque of the Red Death"

In the second lesson we had a class discussion by looking at the characters, setting, themes and symbols. The narrator of the story raised the most questions in the classroom.

In addition, “The Masque of the Red Death” was the only story chosen for the course that did not have a first-person narrator. Some students believed that the Red Death was in fact the narrator of the story because nobody survived the ordeal in the castle. It is debatable but it is a possibility. Students’ responses showed that they were looking for various explanations for the identity of the narrator and were comfortable expressing their ideas. Other ideas included that someone in the castle somehow survived, that the death let somebody live to tell the story. Other characters, the setting and themes were feasible to students. Students found most of the symbols in the story but they did not mention the colored room which was surprising because colors are often given various meanings. I asked them to use their electronic devices to find out how the colors could be significant and what could they symbolize, I also guided the students to pay attention to the order of the rooms. They found the answers quickly and offered that the rooms symbolize the stages of life, from birth to death. I believe it is important for students to be able to find information but I realized the negative side of this task. Some students looked up the colors as told but it seemed that some searched for the meaning of the rooms in “The Masque of the Red Death”. Students often prefer to stay in their comfort zone and choose the easy way out. In the future, I will ask a question about the colors beforehand to avoid copying the answers from the Internet.

I showed them a movie adaptation from *Extraordinary Tales*. The students had to compare and contrast the adaptation and the written story. The students enjoyed the adaptation. They mentioned that it created a more vivid picture of the masquerade in the abbey as some scenes were added that were not described in detail in the story. In addition, the students claimed that the foreshadowing of the Red Death’s arrival was intensified by showing how the food started to rot on the table. However, they said that Poe had given a better description of the state that Prospero’s quest fell when they heard the clock struck. In

my opinion the movie adaptation helped the students to concentrate on some of the details like Prospero's pride and the colors of the room. Moreover, it helped the students who were absent from the previous lesson and missed the discussion of the questions to understand the story better

2.3.4. Lesson Plans for Week 4: "The Pit and the Pendulum"

Week 4 consists of one 90-minute lesson and one 45-minute lesson (see Appendix 4 for the 2 lesson plans).

2.3.4.1 Lesson 1: Impressions and Analysis of "The Pit and the Pendulum"

19 out of 23 students participated in the lesson.

The first impressions of "The Pit and the Pendulum" were not great. Students thought that this story was the most boring of all the stories read so far because of the long descriptions of the narrator's feelings and thoughts. They also claimed that "The Pit and the Pendulum" was difficult to read because it was hard to concentrate on these descriptions as they seemed to lead nowhere. A few students mentioned that they skipped some of the parts where the description seemed to be unnecessarily long. Moreover, the story seemed strange and jumpy to students as many of the events depicted did not make any sense, such as rats acting the way they did or the lack of reason that the narrator was thrown into the prison in the first place.

As we had already analyzed two stories which were the shortest from the five chosen for the course, I chose "The Pit and the Pendulum" to be the next because I believed this story to be the most complicated and foreign to students, yet I saw it as an opportunity to test how students' analyzing and critical thinking skills had been developing.

This led to the group work. This time I arranged the students into groups, so that they would step out of their comfort zone and would work with different people than usual.

I had compiled 5 sets of questions (see Appendix 4). The questions were compiled based on their level of complexity, so that each group had questions to which they could find answers from the text and questions they would have to elaborate and give their opinions on to dig and see beneath the story.

After they had finished answering the questions, it was time for a discussion. Groups took turns to present their answers and other groups had a chance to complement in case they felt the need and more difficult questions were discussed more closely. Overall, students managed to answer most of the questions well but there were a few that proved to be difficult and guidance was needed. The most difficult question from Set 1 was: “What is wrong with the historical context of the story? Which piece does not fit?” To answer that, it was necessary to find an answer to the question about the setting first which was also in Set 1. Students thought that the story was probably taking place somewhere in the Middle Ages because of the dungeon and its dirtiness, and because of prisoners being tortured. They also mentioned Toledo, Spain as this was written in the story. They did not address the Inquisition which was in fact mentioned in the story. I asked them to think about which ways of killing and trials the narrator described while contemplating his fate. Students addressed burning but still did not associate it with the Inquisition. I told them that the Inquisition is mentioned in the story and asked them how much they knew or remembered from their history classes about the Spanish Inquisition in general. They did not know much except for people being burnt alive as punishment for their different religious beliefs. Students were not able to answer the question about the historical context. I told them that there was one element that did not suit in the story based on the narrator’s descriptions that connected the events with the Inquisition. The students could not identify that element, so I asked them to use their smart devices and look up the character called General Lasalle on the Internet. I did not want to simply give them the answer, I wanted the students to see

and experience that every story has a context and sometimes it takes more work to fully comprehend it and grasp the inaccuracies that it may contain. Searching for the answer also gave students the opportunity to use the Internet for finding helpful information. They found that General Lasalle had been a real person and he was a French general during the Napoleonic Wars which did not fit into the overall context of the story.

This led the students to think that the narrator was completely unreliable and all of the descriptions that the narrator offered could have been inaccurate. The question about the reliability of the narrator was in the next set of questions, so we decided to further discuss this. The group who had the question had also deemed the narrator unreliable because he never mentioned the reason why he was imprisoned and what his punishment was. In addition, the students thought that the rats would have probably killed the narrator or at least injured him while chewing on the straps as wild and hungry rats are known for their vicious nature. The narrator seemed to be mentally unstable which made him unreliable. One student said that it was not the narrator's fault that he seemed unreliable because he was constantly drugged, tortured and kept in darkness. It was interesting to see that everybody did not accuse the narrator based on his descriptions of the situation but rather tried to approach the situation from the human aspects. I think that this type of approach is a good basis for in-depth character analysis and also for analyzing the effects of being tortured.

Another student concluded that it seemed that Poe had made all of his characters mad in one way or another as the narrator in "The Tell-Tale Heart" had schizophrenia, Prospero in "The Masque of the Red Death" probably had megalomania as he thought that he could escape the death and had strange and creepy rooms in his abbey, and the narrator in "The Pit and the Pendulum" described things that seemed impossible. I was happy to see that the students were learning to draw conclusions from and parallels between the stories

and characters in Poe's stories.

The question that proved to be challenging in set 2 was "What are the two themes evident in the story? (What does the story focus on?)". The group thought that the main theme of the story was torture and dealing with one's feelings while being tortured. They did not talk about the second theme but other students offered that maybe being close to death or being afraid of death could be another theme.

The most difficult question in set 3 was "Which crime did the narrator commit and what type of judgement is the narrator sentenced to?" The part of judgement was easy but I managed to confuse students a little with the first part of the question as they started to think that it might have been indicated in the story which crime the narrator was guilty of, even though I did not say that they were wrong when they expressed their opinion about the story earlier saying that it was strange because his crime was not stated.

Set 4 proved to be relatively easy for students. The question that took the most time to discuss was "How does the narrator's personality affect his survival?" The students thought that the fact that the narrator was almost always hopeful and his determination to use anything available in the dungeon to try to survive and get out affected his survival the most. One student offered that the narrator's naivety played an important part in his survival as he was naïve enough to believe that if the rats helped him out from under the pendulum, he would be free. It seemed like he did not fully grasp the situation he was in because even though he got free and the pendulum did not kill him, he was still locked in the dungeon. One student commented in Estonian: "Lootus on lollide lohutus" (Hope is for fools.) to support the previous idea.

Set 5 proved to be relatively easy too which for me was a little surprising, especially finding the symbols. Students said that the three symbols could be the pit, the rats and the pendulum. According to the students the pit symbolized death because in case

the narrator would have fallen, he would have fallen to death, the rats symbolized hope because the narrator saw his way to freedom in them, and the pendulum symbolized fear and the slow approach of death as the narrator could do nothing, except for being afraid while waiting for his fate.

All in all, during the class discussion students were actively helping each other which showed that they were trying to engage in the learning process as much as possible. Many students spoke up and tried to guess the answers to the questions even when they were not entirely sure of their idea. I encouraged the students to speak up and emphasized that it is possible to see and analyze the story from different angles, and that there may be more than one or two correct answers to these questions as some require making assumptions based on what can be understood by reading and some answers can be based on students own opinions and interpretations of the story.

The only problem was that there were a few students (5-7 throughout the lesson) who did not want to talk, seemed to be bored or were insecure about participating in the discussion. For me as a teacher it is important that students feel comfortable in the classroom while engaging in the discussion, especially in literature classes because I know that many students are not interested in literature and see it as something that is forced upon them and they have no choice of freedom. This is one of the reasons why I want the discussions to be open in a way that everybody can express their opinion on the story, ask questions or add something whenever they feel like doing so. The only rule is the mutual respect and politeness, as in one waits until the other person has finished talking. From time to time I asked the students who were not actively participating to answer. They responded but they seemed to be somewhat hesitant. It is difficult to keep every student interested and motivated but I tried my best to engage everyone in the classroom.

In general, I was satisfied with the results of the lesson even though students'

opinions about the text were not particularly high. They managed to analyze the story well and the parts that were confusing seemed to have become comprehensible. They had already developed an understanding of Poe's world and this understanding seemed to be widening. The students were more capable of finding and identifying symbols and literary devices used in the story compared to the previous texts.

2.3.4.2 Lesson 2: Comparing "The Pit and the Pendulum" with either "The Tell-Tale Heart" or "The Masque of the Red Death". Watching a Real-Life Experiment Video. Conclusions.

21 out of 23 students participated in the lesson.

This lesson focused on comparing Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum" with one of the two stories read previously. They received a worksheet (see Appendix 5) and had to fill it in independently. I told the students that I was going to give marks for it. They were allowed to use their texts and their notes in their notebooks. Those who did not manage to finish it in the lesson were allowed to do the task at home.

The task was more or less successfully done as nobody failed it. 2 out of 23 students scored an "E", 6 a "D", 8 a "C", 3 a "B" and 4 an "A". I believe that I made a mistake by telling them that they were allowed to finish the worksheet at home because some of the students did not concentrate on it in the lesson and tried to talk to each other instead. While they were working I checked on their progress and it was evident that some students who wanted to finish the worksheet at home had not written anything new on it. It was hard to conclude whether the worksheet was difficult for them or they did not do their homework for whatever other reasons. One student had not read the task properly and compared "The Pit and the Pendulum" with both of the stories previously read and the worksheet looked messy as there was no room to compare everything.

In general, students preferred to compare "The Pit and the Pendulum" to "The Masque of the Red Death". Finding similarities and differences of literary elements proved

to be the most difficult. They wrote out the ones from “The Pit and the Pendulum” that were discussed in the previous lesson but finding the literary elements from the other stories seemed difficult. Comparing the symbols seemed to be the easiest. I also noticed a connection between students actively participating in class and the mark they received for the worksheet. Those students who actively engaged in class discussion received better marks than those who were less active, seemed reluctant to answer or had been absent from the lessons.

The second part of the lesson included watching a video as the students had previously enjoyed the adaptations. I decided to show them something different connected to “The Pit and the Pendulum,” a video on YouTube where the model of the pendulum was built and experimented with. The purpose of this video was to keep students motivated and help them to connect the story with reality. I asked them whether they thought if such torture device as pendulum in Poe’s story was simply the fruit of Poe’s gruesome imagination or it could have been real. Students’ opinions were mixed as they said that all sorts of torture devices were used in the Middle Ages and in different cultures, yet some thought that the structure of such device seemed too complicated for the Middle Ages. Students seemed to like the video of the experiment and the idea of such device being real seemed a little scary.

The lesson was finished with the discussion of what the students had learned in the last three lessons and their thoughts on the story after analyzing it. Students admitted that dissecting the stories became a little easier each time and that the idea behind the story could be something entirely else when examined in depth. Most students still found the story to be boring but it was added that after analyzing it made more sense.

2.3.5. Lesson Plans for Week 5: “The Black Cat”

Week 5 consists of 2 lessons (see Appendix 5 for the 2 lesson plans).

2.3.5.1 Lesson 1: Reading “The Black Cat”

As an entire week of lessons was cancelled due to the Winter Sports Week, I had to make some changes in teaching. I had to teach the course in five weeks instead of the intended six as the last week was for the assessment. This meant that students did not get a chance to read “The Black Cat” over the weekend as we finished with “The Pit and the Pendulum” in the middle of the week. As a result students had to read the story in the classroom which took an entire lesson.

I now firmly believe that it was good that that the students had to read the story in the classroom because it became evident to me that this is not the story I wish to employ in the future courses. I observed students’ reactions to the story while they were reading it. The whole class experienced an emotional turmoil and for me it was shocking, because during my almost 3 years’ worth of teaching experience I had not encountered such outburst of emotions. The students reacted to the story in various ways. One student started crying, apparently as a result of animal violence depicted in the story, and left the classroom for some time. Three students were laughing quietly which seemed strange even though I know that people may react to awful situations/experiences by laughing as this is their way of handling their emotions. Another student, who seemed to have finished reading more quickly than the others, was looking around in the classroom checking others’ reactions and laughing over them. Overall, most of the students looked disturbed and a few had a blank expression on their faces.

I had no idea how to act in this situation as I had never handled such emotional turmoil in the classroom before and this is probably my weakness as a teacher and also as a person because I am not good at handling such situation in everyday life either. I had to

react somehow, so I decided to act on instinct. I first told the student who was laughing that it was not appropriate to laugh at classmates' reactions and emotions. The student understood and stopped staring around and concentrated on the story again. When the student who was crying came back, I went to the student and asked if the student was feeling okay or needed more time to recover. The student said it was okay and tried to concentrate on the story again.

When most of the students seemed to have finished reading, I asked them what they thought about the story as I believed that it was necessary to talk about the emotional state of the entire classroom, so I asked each student separately what they thought of it. 18 students out of the 21 present told that they either hated it or did not like it because of the animal violence. The use of violence seemed to be senseless and unnecessary to them. One of the students exclaimed that there was absolutely no point or moral in the story, but just a series of descriptions of a crazy person hurting the animals and in the end killing his wife. I promised the students that the story was not meaningless and could be interpreted in various ways and that we would come to it after everybody had expressed their opinion. Three students found the story interesting because it had been full of suspense and the story had shown the effects of alcoholism well.

2.3.5.2 Lesson 2: Analysis of "The Black Cat"

"The Black Cat" was analyzed in the same way as "The Tell-Tale Heart" because I believed that students would feel better if they did not have to go through that violent story on their own again as they had not reacted to it well while previously reading it. In addition, most of the students already saw the story as completely meaningless piece of writing, so they seemed reluctant to deal with it any further. I did not want to put the story aside without at least trying to show the students that there was more to the story than met the eye at first. Thus, I decided not to dwell on the story for very long.

We started with discussing the characters and I wrote the list on the board. Students managed to mention all of the characters: the narrator, Pluto, the narrator's wife, the second cat and the policemen. Then a close look was taken at the narrator. The students' answers on the board included:

- Crazy and violent (abused his animals and wife without no apparent reason)
- Had problems with alcohol
- Was not mad at the beginning of the story, loved his pets
- Cold-blooded because did not feel guilt after killing his wife
- Did not expect the reader to believe his story and tried to tell he is not mad (unreliable narrator)
- Superstitious (black cats being witches in disguise)
- Felt afraid easily (was scared of the second cat)
- Maybe bipolar because his moods changed quickly

Based on their answers, I asked the students to assemble a timeline in pairs or in groups of three about the development of the narrator's state of mind and analyze the reasons he started to abuse those surrounding him. Then I asked them to present their ideas. The students started with the fact that the narrator was a normal and loving person in his childhood and later in life used to love his pets and his wife. He had an especially good relationship with his cat Pluto which had lasted for several years. Then he started to gradually lose his mind due to his alcohol abuse. Alcohol made him violent, he grew suspicious and superstitious, and he started to hurt his pets and his wife. The more he drank, the more violent he became. His actions could be described as the ones of a person with bipolar disorder as the narrator mentioned that he had not recognized himself while he cut out Pluto's eye. He felt like there was something that took power over him and before hanging Pluto he admitted that he knew that killing Pluto was wrong but described that

there was some sort of spirit of perverseness that made him commit the deed. It seemed to students that the narrator believed that there was a “demon” inside of him that forced him to be violent, that in a way he did not want to acknowledge the damage that abusing alcohol was doing to him, so he tried to find other explanations to justify his deeds. The students said that the narrator wanted a new similar pet to replace Pluto and he did replace him with a similar pet. The only difference was the white spot on its neck. When the second cat lost his eye, the narrator went even madder and became afraid of the new cat and described that the white spot on the cat’s neck had formed into gallows. The cat became the reminder of murdering Pluto. Then one day when the narrator, his wife and the cat were in a cellar, the narrator lost his mind completely and tried to hit the cat with an axe but his wife stopped him. He became even crazier and killed his wife instead and walled up the body. He did not notice that he had also walled up the cat. He felt calm after killing his wife and even happy because he thought that the cat had run away for fear. The students thought that the narrator acted foolishly in the end because he showed the policemen the cellar and touched the walls which hid his wife’s body. They said that it was karma that the cat was still alive and policemen heard the cries and the narrator was sentenced to death.

I then asked the students whether they still thought that the story had no meaning. As the first emotions had passed, the students realized that the story touched the effects of alcohol and showed the worst that may become of the person who abuses it and does not look for help. Of course help back then was not always available or people did not look to cure themselves. On the other hand, students still felt that the awful violence towards Pluto could have been less descriptive. I asked them whether they could connect these images of abuse to today’s society. The students admitted that domestic violence is a serious problem nowadays though the help for addictions is available. The stories of domestic abuse can be often read about in the newspapers or even seen in the news. I asked the student who had

previously expressed the opinion of “The Black Cat” being meaningless if a meaning could be seen after analyzing it more closely. The student admitted that the story had a point and a moral that alcohol abuse could ruin a life quickly.

I also wanted to introduce them another approach that could be used to make sense of the “The Black Cat”. I asked the students to think about the beginning of the 19th century and about where Poe was from and in what aspect of the 19th century the relationship between the cats and his owner could have been reflected. They could not come up with the answer. When I mentioned the white owner and the black cat, a student mentioned slavery. I explained that if one looked closely, the relationship between the cat and the owner could be described like the relationship between the slave and his owner. The owner treated the cat any way he wanted and it could not do anything about it, except suffer in silence. It also showed that any resistance resorted in more violence (the cat bit the owner, the owner took out the eye of the cat). After losing the pet, he could just take another. Students were surprised by this approach and did not seem to understand this idea. They found it easier to discuss the problems caused by the severe alcoholism.

I concluded from this teaching experience that the context of “The Black Cat” was too complicated for students to discuss the idea of slavery. It seemed that the idea of slavery in the story was too alien for the students and difficult to understand because they could make no connections to either our Estonian society or American society today. This probably also proved difficult due to their age and the lack of experience analyzing such stories. I think that this story could be approached by analyzing the ill effects of alcohol abuse as this topic is more familiar to students and a real problem in our society. I stated before that because of the first impressions of the students, I probably would not employ this story in future literary analysis courses. Now thinking about the discussion we had in the classroom, I believe that this story could be employed but the students should be

warned beforehand about the violence in the story or parts of this story could be used to introduce Poe's works in a way I used "The Cask of Amontillado"

2.3.6. Lesson Plans for Week 6: "The Fall of the House of Usher" and Feedback on the Course

Week 6 consists of two 45-minute lessons and one 90-minute lesson and one 45-minute lesson for feedback (see Appendix 6 for the 4 lesson plans).

2.3.6.1. Lesson 1: Impressions and Analysis of "The Fall of the House of Usher"

20 out of 23 students participated in the lesson.

As usual, students had to read the story at home beforehand. The impressions of "The Fall of the House of Usher" were varied. Some students claimed it to be the best story out of all the stories they had had to read so far because it had mysterious atmosphere and depicted the loneliness of the family members who lived in the same house. These students stated that it was easy to connect this story to nowadays family problems. Some students stated it was the worst story because it endlessly described the house and Roderick Usher.

I gave the students 10 questions and asked them to form groups (4 members) to work on the questions. In addition, they had to discuss the plot. I was walking around the classroom while they were working and the questions seemed to be challenging. Most groups vigorously discussed the questions, yet there was a group who was reading the story most of the time. It seemed they had not read the text beforehand. The students were working until the end of the lesson. I asked the students to be ready to discuss the questions in the next lesson.

2.3.6.2. Lessons 2: Analysis of "The Fall of the House of Usher"

18 out of 23 students were present in the two lessons.

We started with discussing the questions given in the previous lesson. I asked each group to answer a question and then asked whether other groups agreed or had something

to add. The answers were written on the board. The first question was about establishing the mood in the story. One group of students stated that the mood was established by the narrator describing his surroundings when he reached the Usher house. Other students added that the mood was depressing and made the narrator feel nervous.

The second question was about the appearance of Roderick Usher. Students described his appearance well and how he had changed compared to when he and the narrator were children. The third question was about the history of the Usher family and possible incest. Students had no problems describing the history but none of the groups were able to find any hints of incest in the family history. I directed their attention back to the story and read the passage from the text out loud:

I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all-time honored as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. (Poe 2007)

The discussion arose from this as the entire family would not be able to lay in the direct line of descent without having relationships between relatives. Students were quick to debate whether the illnesses of Roderick and Madeline were caused by them being born of incest.

The fourth question was about finding how the realm of the story differed from the ordinary world. Students described how the house and its surroundings looked but also brought Gothic elements as examples; the supernatural, decaying, the sorrow of Roderick. It was surprising how students managed to involve Gothic elements without asking which I was delighted to see as it showed they had constantly been learning.

The fifth question was about personification. The students mentioned the house and described it almost as a living being and how it fell when the family died. The sixth question were difficult for two groups who were not sure what the similarities between the poem “The Haunted Palace” and the Usher story were. One of those groups thought that

perhaps the fate of the palace and the house are similar: once beautiful and now almost destroyed. I assured them that they were on the right track but asked other groups to talk about their ideas. All the other groups thought that the poem described the fall of a beautiful palace and how once happy people turned sad and the same thing happened to the Ushers.

The seventh question was tricky for everybody because the students could not find the exact answer from the text. One group offered that Roderick died of cardiac arrest because he was ill and seeing Madeline's ghost was too much for him. The second group stated that Roderick probably died of fear when he saw Madeline's ghost. The third group thought that Roderick died because he had buried his sister alive, so when he saw her apparition he died of guilt. The fourth group offered that Madeline was not dead at all and had somehow managed to get out of the coffin and when Roderick saw her he died of cardiac arrest when Madeline fell on him. The last group also thought that Roderick died of fear.

The eighth question was feasible for the students. They had brought examples from the text about Roderick's acute senses and had compared his condition to the man's from "The Tell-Tale Heart".

The ninth question concerned the problem of unreliable narrator. Students brought several examples from the text. They claimed that the narrator was not reliable because already at the beginning of the story he was describing everything as depressive and dark. He did not seem to feel any positive emotions. He was nervous most of the time. One group offered that the narrator may have been a drug user as he describes the effects of Opium. This was one of the elements I had missed. When I was preparing the course and working through the stories myself I noticed the description of Opium but I had never thought to connect it to the narrator's reliability. It is human to miss things but as a teacher

I think I should have noticed it earlier and I am glad that students noticed it. The last thing that the students said was that the narrator could not recall what they had done together with Roderick and also that the narrator mentioned that Roderick's madness/superstition was already affecting him.

The last question was about the role of art in Roderick's and the Usher family's life. Students deemed the role of art very important in Roderick's life as he was constantly painting and these paintings seemed to be very vivid, at least according to the narrator. In addition, painting pictures seemed to be one of the few things Roderick could do due to his acuteness of senses. He could also play guitar as this was Roderick's instrument of choice as all music was described as intolerable for him. Students actually found it strange as how can one play the guitar if he cannot tolerate any music. The discussion arose that Roderick's illness allowed him to hear only the music that he played as he could focus on it when he was playing the guitar. It was good to see that students were thinking further from the written word.

After discussing the question in the classroom, it seemed that the students had contemplated on the story greatly. However, I wished to know how much they had learned from the previous lessons and see whether they were able to discuss the characters, the setting, the themes and find Gothic elements and symbols without my help. I gave them some time to write the answers down into their notebooks and then I wrote their answers on the board.

We started with the themes. The first theme they mentioned was the fear of the supernatural and fear in general. Their example of it included Roderick's fear of him and Madeline being last of their family and Roderick's fear of losing Madeline to illness. The second theme mentioned was decay and downfall. The students stated that the house and the family were both decaying and slowly dying. I helped the students to find a better word

for what they described as decay would rather go under the category of Gothic element. I believe that the better word for what the students described would be deterioration as the house was falling apart and so was Roderick's mind. In addition, friendship and family ties were mentioned. One of the students mentioned premature burial. The student had remembered the discussion in one of the first lessons of the course where I had told them about the fear of being buried alive in the American society during the early 19th century and the student thought this story explored the topic well. As a teacher I was glad that this was brought up and the student was able to connect the story to the real society. Nobody mentioned insanity or spiraling towards insanity as a theme but this could also be added under deterioration mentioned earlier.

The setting part had been feasible for everybody: countryside, autumn, mostly dark and at times stormy, the old decaying house. As for the time period, the students placed it somewhere in 18th-19th century. Opinions were varied but after discussing the premature burial, they thought the action is probably taking place in the 19th century.

Analyzing the characters was somewhat tricky. Everybody missed the physician's presence in the story. They were surprised when I asked them about the physician. The students stated that they had missed it. I asked them to look it up from the text and asked them how they would describe the character. One of the students said that the narrator's thoughts on the physician may have suggested that the physician was either taking advantage of the family or the narrator was paranoid because arriving at the house had made him nervous. Moreover, I asked the students to say why they think they had missed his presence in the first place. A few students said that he had seemed so irrelevant yet other said they simply had not noticed probably because he was described in four lines. One of the students now thought that this instance also showed that the narrator was unreliable because by simply having a glance at the physician he had deemed him ill-

wisher. It was good to see that students connected the characters and their actions to their possible mindset.

Finding the Gothic elements in “The Fall of the House of Usher” was rather feasible. In my opinion the students managed to find plenty because the story was Gothic like the other stories and the main elements are usually similar. For example, they counted supernatural events, set in the old house, atmosphere of mystery and suspense, high emotions, decay, a woman in distress (because it is not told to the readers clearly whether Usher knew he had buried Madeline alive or not), omens and visions, death, fear.

However, finding the symbols proved to be more difficult. The students mentioned the house as the house is the representation of the family and its downfall. They claimed that the collapsing of the house could symbolize the death of the Usher family. The students fell silent after. Then one of the students mentioned the eyes though the student was not sure about it. The student gave an explanation that they eyes could reflect the madness and decay as Roderick’s eyes were often described and the windows of the house were also described as eyes. I questioned what they thought about the weather as the symbol because the weather was constantly changing and so were the mood of the characters.

Overall, the students had done well in my opinion. “The Fall of the House of Usher” is a long story with lots of descriptions and they had noticed many aspects of it. Compared to the earlier stories they were more capable of analyzing it thoroughly and searching for hidden meanings. Although, I believe the story was more feasible to the students because it tackled the topic of sanity/insanity as some of the other Poe’s texts analyzed during the course. In addition, it engaged the topic of the importance of friendship and family and problems accompanying the relationships.

2.3.6.3. Lesson 3: A Test Using the Materials

In this lesson the students took a test (see Appendix 6) where they could use their notebook and all the notes they had made during the course. The main aim of the test was to see what they have learned and also to see whether they take notes in the lessons. Another purpose of the test was to prepare them for the essay writing. They could also use their worksheets but the use of the texts was not allowed. The test apprehended all the aspects learned and analyzed during the course from the characters to literary devices. The students did well on the test as 16 students got an “A”, 6 a “B” and one a “C”. Everybody took notes during the lessons, so the results were as expected. What I noticed was that the students who were absent more often received a grade below “A”. I believe that the students’ test answers do not need to be elaborated on further because all of this was discussed in previous lessons.

2.3.6.4. Feedback on the Course

For the fourth lesson I compiled a set of 10 questions concerning the course (see Appendix 6) which I asked my students to answer anonymously. The aim of the questions was for me to find out what the students thought about the course in general and to see which aspects I could take into account or change while teaching the course next time. 18 students out of 23 were present in the classroom.

All in all, most of the 18 students wrote that their vocabulary and analytical/critical thinking skills improved and that they found out how to see beneath the many layers of the stories. Recognizing Poe’s writing style was also mentioned. “The Masque of the Red Death” seemed to be the most liked story as students wrote that it was the one they could relate to the most and it was easy to read. The least liked was “The Black Cat” as students found the story boring, too dark, and could not stand animal violence. This is the story that I probably will not employ in future courses as the feedback on “The Black Cat” was

generally negative.

The opinions on difficulty of the course were varied. Four students considered the course easy. Two of the students mentioned that they loved to read and analyze, so they were used to doing so and it was fun for them. Other two students mentioned that it was not difficult because every story was analyzed in the classroom and tasks were feasible. Three people found the course difficult. The students felt that their vocabulary was not sufficient enough for completely understanding the texts but analyzing them in the classroom had helped. One of them thought that the tests were difficult but did not elaborate on it. The rest of the students present found the course to have been balanced. It was claimed that reading the texts at home was difficult at times because of complicated vocabulary, yet analyzing the stories helped them to comprehend the texts. For some students reading was easy but analyzing not so much as they were not used to going through that many aspects of one story. In addition, two students mentioned that the hard part was analyzing the stories because they were depressing.

Nine students felt that they had studied enough during the course and had always come to the class prepared. One student wrote that they could have done better in the class but did not elaborate on it. Six students claimed that they did not study or come to the class prepared because they felt the need to study other subjects or they had work after school and did not have time to read. Two students wrote that they did not study because they had no interest in the subject and their laziness prevented them from doing any homework. All of the students present claimed that they think it would be easier for them to comprehend different stories in the future because they had learned various literary devices, how to assemble the plot of the story, how to find symbols and understand the actions of the characters.

While reading the feedback I realized that instead of asking about teacher's

strengths and weaknesses, I should have asked what the teacher had done well and what should have been done differently because the question did not provide me with information about students' thoughts on the course but rather what they thought of my personality. However, some students had expressed their opinion on the course. On the positive side, some students claimed that the study program was enjoyable, the tests were feasible, the materials were clear, the videos were a good change to texts. On the negative side, a few students mentioned that there should have been more variety in the group work. In the future I will certainly pay more attention to this aspect because during the course I allowed the students to form groups by themselves most of the time. The reason for doing so was that when I formed the groups for the students, they were reluctant to do the group work and discuss the questions. It seemed to me that there were many students who did not want to work together. Nevertheless, all of the students are different and I think I should observe the class' reaction to group work to form the groups that work well together. In addition, five of the students mentioned that the lessons would have been more attractive if there had been texts by other authors included in the course as well. I believe that this is an idea to think about whether to add other authors and decrease the amount of Poe's stories because Poe's writings can be very difficult and depressive for students to read as some of them claimed during the course. 15 students wrote that all the assignments had been clear for them whereas three students stated that some tasks had seemed confusing at first but had become feasible after the teacher had explained them more closely.

The students' expectations of what the course would be like and reality were somewhat varied. Some students stated that they expected the course to be about a variety of writes. A few students imagined it to be (more) boring because they thought that they would be forced to learn the history of literature. A few students said that they were surprised that the course was interesting and that they had learned that much from

analyzing. A few students mentioned that they did not know what to expect as it was their first literature course in English and a few stated that the course was what they expected it to be but they did not describe it any further.

The students claimed that the knowledge gained from the course can be used in their lives in the future. For example, when writing research papers, analyzing books in Estonian literature classes or when reading for fun, when thinking about their own life experiences, and analyzing different situations.

The way I see it, this course was enjoyable to teach but there is plenty of room for development. This was the first time for me to teach a literature course and I felt that some of the things could have been done differently. I believe that analyzing the texts by only one author eventually becomes tedious for students as some of the students mentioned in the feedback. In my opinion, Gothic fiction is great to teach critical thinking skills because they address many problems of the society but I will probably add authors like Radcliffe, Shelley and Walpole to the course to make it more appealing to the students. In addition, I would probably leave out the test on the author's life because it is unnecessary for analyzing the stories and learning about literature. I would still discuss the author but without compiling a test.

2.4.7. Final Assessment in Week 7: Writing an Analytical Essay

The 7th week of the learning period in the school where the course was taught is the assessment week and every teacher can decide how they will assess their students based on the course they are teaching. I ended the course with an essay which had the most weight among all of the tests students had taken during the course. So, the final course mark that students received appeared to be the same as their essay, or one mark lower or higher depending on their other marks.

The aim of writing the essay was to see if after analyzing all the stories students

had learned to think more critically and if they were capable of relating the problems/beliefs from the short stories to nowadays society.

There were five topics given to students and they had to choose one and write an analytical essay (see Appendix 7). It took time to decide on the suitable topics. My aim was to see whether the students were able to use the skills taught during the course. In addition, I wanted to give the students some responsibility and allowed them to choose the topic from the ones I had prepared. Essay topics were created considering all the previous lessons and analysis of the stories. Each topic allowed to analyze an aspect covered during the course (characters, setting, themes, Gothic elements) and connect it with today's society. Furthermore, four out of the five topics concentrated on short stories analyzed and the fifth topics was more general.

4 students out of 23 decided to write about the portrayal of the family in "The Fall of the House of Usher," 11 students chose to compare the narrators of "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat," 1 student wrote about the role of historical context and setting in "The Pit and The Pendulum," 4 students wrote about the themes of "The Masque of the Red Death," and 3 students decided to write about superstition.

The students that chose topic 1 concentrated mostly on the bond between the twins and also on explaining how the Usher family was different compared to most families nowadays. The topic of mental illness was also observed and how it made the Ushers isolate themselves from the outside world. The students who chose this topic managed to stay focused and mostly support their ideas. Here are a few examples from students' essays (students' answers are presented in an unedited form):

- Student 1: "Typically brother and sister do not live together in a huge house, especially when adults. They had always been together and the fact that they were twins as well, made their bond even stronger."

- Student 2: “Maybe in these day the continuity of the family’s name was more important than it is in today’s culture and that’s why he felt such immense pressure. I think that the family’s great past was the biggest cause of the pressure. In today’s world there are not many families with their own abbeys/ mansions / family houses and there are not many families with only two living members.”
- Student 3: “In addition, twins’ relationship differs a lot from a normal traditional family. They don’t talk to each other but nothing really keeps them apart either. They are close but at the same time it feels like they do not know each other at all. Nowadays, in a traditional family, people talk to each other about their worries and problems. That is exactly what was lacking about the relationship between Roderick and Madeleine.”

The second topic proved to be the most popular among students, probably because the mental illness was one of the most discussed concepts during the course. The essays concerning this topic were mostly well-written as nobody deviated from the main subject. On the other hand, a few students had problems with bringing examples from the story to support their viewpoints, for example, a student claimed that the madness of the narrator in “The Black Cat” could have been temporary compared to the narrator in “The Tell-Tale Heart” but did not elaborate on how. Two students concentrated mostly on the mental illness and did not compare the narrators much. Everybody offered ideas how to help the narrator in “The Black Cat” as alcoholism is curable nowadays as there are many ways to seek and get help. Most students thought that the narrator in “The Tell-Tale Heart” was too far gone and the only way to help this criminally insane man would have been to lock him away in a psychiatric ward, so that he would not be able to hurt anyone ever again. The essays were interesting to read because students had some surprising ideas. One student approached the essay very creatively: “Edgar Allan Poe has written many intriguing and

mysterious short stories, although, two of his famous works share an awfully similar protagonist. In my opinion, these characters are the same person.” The student concentrates on the similarities of the narrators and supports this idea with evidence from the stories, for example, that both narrators have an obsession with the eye, that both hide the body inside the house in a similar way by hiding it under the floorboard or behind the wall. The student also said that the events in “The Black Cat” must have taken place before the events in “The Tell-Tale Heart” because the narrator was not mad at the beginning but must have escaped the custody at the end of the events in “The Black Cat.” The student also claimed that the narrator did not specifically explain his hatred for the old man’s eye but that it could have been a painful memory of cutting out Pluto’s eye a long time ago. This approach in particular made me smile because it was evident that the student had paid attention in the classes and drawn interesting conclusions after analyzing both stories thoroughly.

The fact that only one student chose topic 3 was not surprising for me as most of the students had found “The Pit and the Pendulum” dull and understanding the historical context had been quite difficult. The student who wrote the essay struggled to analyze the role of history as well as the setting. The student mostly described what was happening in the story and did not analyze it much. The student wrote that the darkness in the prison and the lack of knowledge of his whereabouts made the narrator feel scared. The fear that the pendulum installed in the narrator was also mentioned. Yet, the student failed to analyze the historical context of the story as the time and place (Toledo, Spain during the Inquisition) were stated but not elaborated on.

Topic 4 was chosen by 4 students. Two of the students managed to successfully write their essay. Both of them chose to discuss the inevitability of death in the story and today’s society. In addition, parallels between people wearing masks at the party, so that their fear

would not be showing, and people wearing different masks every day to hide their emotions, were brought out. Another two students were not as successful. One student did not bring any examples from the story to support the claims that were made. The other student failed the task entirely because the student had written about the rich and the poor in general and how people should be thought of as equal and all of us die in the end anyway. The gap between the rich and the poor as well as the inevitability of death are the themes in “The Masque of the Red Death” but the student did not relate the essay to the story.

Choosing the fifth topic gave students more freedom to use their imagination. The students who elaborated on superstition and the supernatural wrote compelling essays. One student approached the topic by explaining that our world is not used to the unknown (supernatural) and Poe’s characters are also afraid of the unknown and things they cannot explain. Furthermore, death is one of the main themes in Poe’s stories and being close to death or murdering someone may later create the supernatural in the stories (characters stay to haunt the narrator, even if it is just in his mind). The student also elaborated on how Poe makes his world feel familiar to readers by giving the narrators the tools to justify their actions and their madness. Sometimes events and the actions are blamed on the supernatural. The other student analyzed the idea of superstition in today’s society and compared it to the superstition in Poe’s stories. For example, the fact that in the story it was believed that black cats are witches in disguise and today some people believe that when you see a black cat cross the road, it brings bad luck. The last student who chose this topic mentioned that people in the 19th century were superstitious and Poe used it to his advantage to write captivating stories. The student then analyzed the supernatural elements in “The Black Cat” and “The Fall of the House of Usher” and elaborated on the effect the supernatural in these stories had on a reader back then and would have on the reader

nowadays. People were more religious and superstitious back in the day and the science was not as advanced as it is today. Thus, the student concluded that people who read the story during the 19th century got a bigger scare out of reading compared to the people who read the story nowadays.

All in all, based on the essay the course seemed to have been quite successful. Most of the students were capable of writing an analytical essay and support their ideas and claims with the examples from the text and bring parallels between the society depicted in the stories and our society. One out of the 23 students did not pass at the first try, but did pass the second time. What I noticed was that some of the students (not all) who were quieter during class discussions received lower grades than the students who actively engaged in discussions. In addition, I can conclude that being absent from the classes can often affect the grade. Students who were absent more than 5 lessons (there was one exception) mostly got lower grades than the students who were always in the class. I believe that writing an essay is a great way to end the literary analysis course because students can employ what they have learned during the course. The students' essays can give accurate feedback on how students' skills have developed during the course. Furthermore, when students get their essays back with teacher's comments, they are able to see what they have managed to learn and which skills they still need to practice.

CONCLUSION

Literature in the English as a Foreign Language classroom can be a valuable tool because of its authenticity. Through using literature students' language skills can be improved, their emotional and cultural awareness can be increased, and their analytical and critical thinking skills can be developed. (Armstrong 2015; Deboris 2004)

The main aim of the current Master's thesis was to create a literary analysis course to teach critical thinking skills to upper secondary students. In order to execute the course, lesson plans and tasks were created based on the short stories by Edgar Allan Poe. Poe's stories were chosen because of various possibilities they offer for teaching critical thinking skills. Poe's story realms hide many meanings and he uses the unreliable narrator masterfully to explore the human mind and desire for self-destruction. (Bendixen 2017) The course was taught as part of the subject "Literature of a country of B2 foreign language" to 23 11th grade upper secondary school students who had specialized in the English language. The course lasted for seven weeks and each week students' analytical and critical thinking skills were developed and tested. Here is a short overview of the course:

- Lesson plans for week 1 helped the students to prepare themselves for the rest of the course. Students learned about the structure of the short story, various literary devices and Gothic elements. In addition, the students were familiarized with the life of American writer Edgar Allan Poe and the life in America at the beginning of the 19th century.
- Lesson plans for week 2 let the students discuss, analyze, and share their opinions on "The Tell-Tale Heart". The students realized that analyzing the story in depth helped them to understand the story better, especially the characters. The worksheet given provided the students with the necessary support for understanding the plot.

- Lesson plans for week 3 enabled the students to discuss, analyze, and share their opinions on “The Masque of the Red Death”. The lessons showed that students found it more feasible to analyze the characters and the setting whereas finding Gothic elements proved to be difficult. The students were guided to find Gothic elements in the story.
- Lesson plans for week 4 made it possible for the students to discuss, analyze, and share their opinions on “The Pit and the Pendulum”. The students had a chance to practice their team-working skills and later had to compare and contrast the story with the ones previously read.
- Lesson plans for week 5 allowed the students to discuss, analyze, and share their opinions on “The Black Cat”. Working with this story proved to be difficult since the topic of animal violence was addressed. The students were directed to see behind the violence and find the main idea of the story but they were reluctant to discuss and analyze it.
- Lesson plans for week 6 let the students discuss, analyze, and share their opinions on “The Fall of the House of Usher”. The lessons showed that students’ analytical skills had developed greatly and they were able to answer most of the questions without the teacher’s help. The students had missed one aspect of the story but were guided to contemplate on its importance.
- Lesson plan for week 7 required the students to write an essay. The written essays showed that learning outcomes of the course were mostly fulfilled and 22 out of 23 students had acquired all or most of the skills they were expected to during the course.

The course was mostly successful and showed that it is possible to teach critical thinking skills through literature. With each week the students were more capable of analyzing the

story, its characters, setting, themes, symbols, and Gothic elements more thoroughly, finding the hidden meanings and comparing/contrasting the stories. Considering the students' feedback on the course, they felt that their analytical and critical thinking skills had improved. In addition, their vocabulary had increased. Their essays also showed their ability to evaluate and analyze the given topics critically. However, there are a few concerns regarding teaching the course in the future. For some students the texts were difficult to read due to Poe's writing style and use of language, so it might be worth considering using the versions of the texts that have been adapted to the level of the students taught. This would make comprehension and analyzing more feasible for the students. Another concern is that students tire reading the same author, so the texts from different authors could be used. All things considered, the course fulfilled its aims and with a few changes it could be successfully taught in the future.

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Appendices – “Literature of a country of B2 foreign language”: A Literary Analysis Course on the Short Stories of Edgar Allan Poe

Appendix 1 – Lesson plans for week 1: Introduction to the Course, Literary Genres and Devices, and Edgar Allan Poe

Key words: literary genres, literary devices, short story, Edgar Allan Poe, 19th century America, literature, Gothic elements, American literature, Gothic literature

LESSON PLAN 1

Topic: Introduction to the Course

Aims:

- To introduce the course and its requirements to the students
- Students are familiar with the course requirements and know how they will receive their final grade
- To find out about students' reading habits and their experience with literature

Time: 45 minutes

Activity 1: a PowerPoint presentation about the course requirements

- Students see a PowerPoint about how the course and the final grade are formed, which stories are read

Course requirements:

- Attend at least 75 % of the lessons and while in the lesson participate actively in the learning process.
- Notebook for the notes is compulsory
- Read these five short stories at home (1 short story every week)
 - Week 2: “The Tell-Tale Heart“
 - Week 3: “The Masque of the Red Death”
 - Week 4: “The Pit and the Pendulum”
 - Week 5: “The Black Cat”
 - Week 6: “The Fall of the House of Usher”
- A test with materials
- A test on important facts about Edgar Allan Poe and his time period (short test)
- Filling in the worksheets given in the lessons
- Assessment week: Write a short four-five-paragraph essay (introduction, main body (2-3 paragraphs) and conclusion)

Activity 2: Pre-learning activity: Answer the following question:

- ✓ Give your definition to literature. What is it for you?
- ✓ Why do we need literature, why is it beneficial?
- ✓ What is your experience with literature?(What about required reading books for Estonian literature classes)
- ✓ Tell about your reading habits.

- Students think about the questions and answers are discussed in the classroom. The PowerPoint slides with possible definitions for literature are also shown to the students.

LESSON PLAN 2

Topic: Short Story. Elements of a Short Story. Most Common Literary Devices.

Aims/learning objectives:

- Students are aware of the function, structure and elements of the short story
- Students know given literary elements and how to find them in the texts

Time: 45 minutes

Activity 1: a PowerPoint presentation on short story

- Students are introduced to the definition of short story, its elements and how it differs from a novel.

Activity 2: Learning about literary devices

- Students are given the list of some literary devices.
- The list is looked at in the classroom to see whether the students understand everything

The list was put together using this page: <https://literary-devices.com/> Two of the definitions were taken from elsewhere (the links are behind the devices). Most definitions were altered by me, so it would be shorter for the students. The list was compiled based on what I thought was necessary for the course and in accordance with Poe's texts.

Common Literary Devices

1. **Alliteration.** Involves the quick repetition of the first letters belonging to the same sound group. Alliterations are also created when the words all begin with the same letter.
 - The wicked witch of the West went her own way.
2. **Personification.** Giving inanimate objects, animals and phenomena human traits.
 - "The wise owl"
3. **Simile.** Comparing or drawing parallels between two unrelated things, people, beings, places and concepts to create a new understanding and meaning. Similes are marked by the use of "like," "as," or "such as."
 - His eyes were as blue as the sky.
4. **Foreshadowing.** Words, phrases, or events that hint or suggest to the reader what's going to happen in the story without revealing the events in the story.
 - "He had no idea of the disastrous chain of events to follow". In this sentence, while the protagonist is clueless of further developments, the

reader learns that something disastrous and problematic is about to happen to/for him.

5. **Satire**. Using humor, wit, or sarcasm to make fun of human weakness or character flaw.
6. **Symbolism**. Using an object or action that has a hidden meaning to it.
 - ‘The phrase “a new dawn” does not talk only about the actual beginning of a new day but also signifies a new start, a fresh chance to begin and the end of a previous tiring time.
7. **Onomatopoeia**. Words whose sound is similar to natural sounds or sounds of an object.
 - “the hum of a thousand bees”
8. **Metaphor**. Means that one subject is another, brings new meaning to the original subject to draw a comparison between their similarities and shared traits.
 - “Henry was a lion on the battlefield”.
9. **Hyperbole**. Exaggerating and overemphasizing a statement or idea to show a point or emotion more firmly
 - “I am so tired I cannot walk another inch”
10. **Oxymoron**. Using two contradictory ideas together to create complex meaning.
 - He possessed a cold fire in his eyes.
11. **Allegory**. Often has a hidden meaning. Mostly hides moral or political concept.
 - Faith is like a stony uphill climb: a single stumble might send you sprawling but belief and steadfastness will see you to the very top.
12. **Allusion**. When the author refers indirectly to a figure, place, event, or literary work originating from somewhere else.
 - It’s no wonder everyone refers to Mary as another Mother Teresa in the making; she loves to help and care after people everywhere, from the streets to her own friends.
13. **Epigraph**. A quotation set at the beginning of a literary work or one of its divisions to suggest its theme (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epigraph>)
14. **Imagery**. When the author uses words and phrases to create “mental images” which appeals to the reader’s senses. The device is used to help the reader visualize the story better.

15. **Irony**. Playing with words to express an opposite meaning than the one literally expressed by it. The deeper level of significance is revealed by the situation and the context.
- Writing a sentence such as, “Oh! What fine luck I have!”. The sentence on the surface conveys that the speaker is happy with their luck but actually what they mean is that they are extremely unhappy and dissatisfied with their (bad) luck.
16. **Repetition**. Repetition is when a word or phrase is written multiple times, usually for the purpose of emphasis. It is often used in prose and poetry.
- (<https://literarydevices.net/repetition/>)
17. **Consonance**. Repetition of identical or similar sounds produced by consonants within a sentence or phrase. The repetitive sound is often found at the end of a word.
- He struck a streak of bad luck.

LESSON PLAN 3

Topic: Life and Career of Edgar Allan Poe. Contexts of His Works

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students learn about the first half of the 19th century America to understand the historical context behind Poe’s stories
- Students get to know life and career of Edgar Allan Poe

Time: 90 minutes

Activity 1: Group task

- Students create the groups consisting of 3-4 students.
- Students get their research topics:
 - Group 1: Poe’s early years. (4 students)
 - Group 2: Becoming a professional writer, Poe’s occupations. (4 students)
 - Group 3: Poe’s main works and most famous works (4 students)
 - Group 4: Poe’s reputation and personal life (4 students)
 - Group 5: Historical period, first half of the 19th century America (5 important events, things etc) (3 students)
 - Group 6: Adaptations of Poe’s works, why are they important? (4 students)
- Students are given the following websites to find the information
 - <https://www.poemuseum.org/index>

- <https://www.poets.org/>
- <https://www.eapoe.org/index.htm>
- <https://poestories.com/>
- Students compile a PowerPoint presentation on their topic
- Students present their findings on Poe

Activity 2: The first half of the 19th century America

- Students are given some information about the first half of the 19th century America, so they would understand the historical context of some of Poe's works better.
- Students can discuss what they know about the given time.

LESSON PLAN 4

Topic: Gothic Elements

Aims/learning objectives:

- Students learn about Gothic elements and how to find them in the short stories

Time: 45 minutes

Activity 1: Do you know what Gothic elements are? Where have you encountered Gothic elements?

Class discussion.

Activity 2: A PowerPoint Presentation on Gothic elements.

Students are shown a presentation and they write down the important information into their notebook.

The following activity was added to the course later:

Activity 3: Getting a glimpse at Poe's story "The Cask Amontillado"

- Students read through the text and it is followed by the class discussion and reconstruction of the plot. The aim of the task was to introduce Poe's writing to the students before analyzing the other stories.

Homework: Read "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe

Appendix 2 – Lesson Plans for Week 2

Keywords: literary analysis, American literature, Edgar Allan Poe, The Tell-Tale Heart, Gothic elements, Gothic literature

LESSON PLAN 1

Topic: Impressions and Analysis of “The Tell-Tale Heart”

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students can discuss and analyze “The Tell-Tale Heart”
- Students express and support their opinion
- Students find necessary information from the text and draw logical conclusions based on it
- Students’ analytical and critical thinking skills are developed
- Students practice and develop their communication skills

Time: 45 minutes

Activity 1: Students express their opinion on the story

- Teacher asks the students what they think about the story, whether they like it or not, what raised questions etc.

Activity 2: Class discussion and analyses of the characters

- Students name all the characters and the teacher writes them on the board.
- Each character is analyzed thoroughly by students (their looks, their nature/temper, their actions, why they did what they did etc) with the help of a teacher (if necessary). Students’ answers are written on the board and discussed in the classroom.

LESSON PLAN 2

Topic: Analysis of “The Tell-Tale Heart”

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students can discuss and analyze “The Tell-Tale Heart”
- Students express and support their opinion
- Students find necessary information from the text and draw logical conclusions based on it
- Students’ analytical and critical thinking skills are developed
- Students practice and develop their communication skills

Time: 45 minutes

Activity 1: Continuing with class discussion and analyses of the characters

- Each character is analyzed thoroughly by students (their looks, their nature/temper, their actions, why they did what they did etc) with the help of a teacher (if

necessary). Students' answers are written on the board and discussed in the classroom.

Activity 2: Class discussion and analyses of the setting

- Students say what they know about the setting (the places, the time, the weather)
- Students' answers are written on the board and discussed in the classroom
- The teacher guides the students to find the answers and analyze them if necessary

Activity 3: Class discussion and analyses of the themes

- Students suggest the themes of the story
- Students' answers are written on the board and discussed in the classroom

LESSON PLAN 3

Topic: Analysis of "The Tell-Tale Heart", Assembling the Plot, Reflecting on the Story

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students can discuss and analyze "The Tell-Tale Heart"
- Students express and support their opinion
- Students find necessary information from the text and draw logical conclusions based on it
- Students' analytical and critical thinking skills are developed
- Students practice and develop their communication and collaboration skills
- Students develop their time management skills
- Students assemble the plot of the story
- Students reflect on the story read

Time: 90 minutes

Activity 1: Class discussion and analyses of the symbols

- Students find as many symbols as they can from the story.
- Students' answers are written on the board and discussed in the classroom.
- The teacher helps the students and asks guiding questions if necessary.

Activity 2: Class discussion and analyses of the Gothic elements

- Students find as many Gothic elements as they can from the story.
- Students' answers are written on the board and discussed in the classroom.
- The teacher helps the students and asks guiding questions if necessary.

Activity 3: Class discussion and analyses of literary devices

- Students find examples of literary devices used in the story
- Students' answers are written on the board and discussed in the classroom.
- The teacher helps the students and asks guiding questions if necessary.

Activity 4: Assembling the plot, filling in the worksheet

The following worksheet was created for students to understand the plot and its elements better. The worksheet was inspired by the task presented in the book "Teaching the Stories and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe" by Tara McCarthy (page 48).

The Elements of a Plot

Plot is the series of events that make up a story. Write notes about “The Tell-Tale Heart”

INTRODUCTION: Who are the main characters in the story? What happens at the beginning?

RISING ACTION: What are the events that lead to the point of the greatest interest in the story?

CONFLICT: What is the conflict/the problem that has to be solved? (Between who?)

COMPLICATIONS: What stands in the way of solving the conflict?

CLIMAX: What is the most important point/crisis point/ exciting action that takes place that helps to solve the problem?

FALLING ACTION: How are the loose ends in the story closed? How is the narrative wrapped up?

RESOLUTION: *How does the story end? Closure?*

Activity 5: Discussion of the worksheet

- When students have finished the worksheet, the plot is discussed in the classroom.

Activity 6: Reflecting on the story

- Students are asked what they learned and whether they see the story differently after analyzing in thoroughly

The following activity was added later to the course:

Activity 7: Watching a movie adaptation of “The Tell-Tale Heart” (a clip from the movie *Extraordinary Tales*)

- Students watch the adaptation and compare it to the written story.
- Students point out differences and similarities between the two

The activity is useful for the students who have difficulties understanding the text thoroughly or and for the students who have been absent in previous lessons.

Homework: Study for the quiz on Edgar Allan Poe

LESSON PLAN 4

Topic: Quiz on Edgar Allan Poe

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students are familiar with the writer Edgar Allan Poe

Time: 45 minutes

Activity 1: Answer the following question:

The quiz has two versions.

Quiz: Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)

Name:

1. Describe the early years of Edgar Allan Poe (5 points)
2. Who did Poe marry? (1 point)
3. How did Poe die and what did he die of? (Speculations) (2 points)
4. Describe Poe’s reputation during his life (2 points)
5. What was Poe’s official job? (1 point)
6. Name a few of Poe’s most famous works (3 points)
7. What do you think is the most interesting/important thing to know about Poe and his life?

Quiz: Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)

Name:

1. Describe Poe's family and the relationship with his step-father (5 points)
2. Why did Poe, his wife and his aunt wandered from city to city? (1 point)
3. What was Poe's official job? (1 point)
4. How did Poe die and what did he die of? (Speculations) (2 points)
5. Name a few of Poe's most famous works (3 points)
6. Describe Poe's posthumous reputation (2 points)
7. What do you think is the most interesting/important thing to know about Poe and his life?

Homework: Read the "Masque of the Red Death" by Edgar Allan Poe

Appendix 3 – Lesson Plans for Week 3

Keywords: literary analysis, American literature, Edgar Allan Poe, The Masque of the Red Death, Gothic literature

LESSON PLAN 1

Topic: A Short Test, Impressions and Analysis of “The Masque of the Red Death”

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students can discuss and analyze “The Masque of the Red Death”
- Students express and support their opinion
- Students find necessary information from the text and draw logical conclusions based on it
- Students’ analytical and critical thinking skills are developed
- Students practice and develop their communication and pair-work skills
- Students practice their time management skills

Time: 90 minutes

Homework was to read “The Masque of the Red Death” and write a 100-word character analysis of Prince Prospero and send it to the teacher via email.

Activity 1 (intended for the people who did not send the analysis of Prospero): Write down 10 sentences about the plot of “The Masque of the Red Death”.

- Students have 15 minutes to do the task. They are not allowed to use any materials. Other can have a break.

Activity 2: Students express their opinion on the story

- Teacher asks the students what they think about the story, whether they like it or not, what raised questions etc

Activity 3: Discuss the following questions in pairs and write the answers into your notebook.

1. What is the Red Death? Is it possible to connect the Red Death to a real historical time period?
2. What happens to the Red Death’s victims?
3. What kind of people did Prince Prospero invite to the abbey? Why?
4. Compare the inside and the outside of the abbey? Based on the comparison, what does the abbey symbolize?
5. What happens when the guests hear the clock strike? Why do they react the way they do?
6. What is the main theme or the moral of the story?
7. Why does the prince believe he can escape death?
8. Which Gothic elements are present in the story?

Activity 4: Class discussion of the previous questions

- Students discuss their answers in the classroom. The teacher guides them if necessary.

Activity 5: Constructing the plot

- Students independently construct the plot of “The Masque of the Red Death” into their notebooks with the help of the worksheet they received during the discussion of “The Tell-Tale Heart”
- Discussing the plot in the classroom

LESSON PLAN 2

Topic: Analysis of “The Masque of the Red Death”

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students can discuss and analyze “The Masque of the Red Death”
- Students express and support their opinion
- Students find necessary information from the text and draw logical conclusions based on it
- Students’ analytical and critical thinking skills are developed
- Students practice and develop their communication skills

Time: 45 minutes

Activity 1: Class discussion and analyses of the characters, the setting, themes and symbols

- Students answers are written on the board and discussed in the classroom
- The teacher’s role is to guide the students when they miss something

The following task was added during the course:

Activity 2: Watching the movie adaptation of “The Masque of the Red Death” (from *Extraordinary Tales*)

- Students compare and contrast the adaptation and the written story

Homework: Read “The Pit and the Pendulum” by Edgar Allan Poe

Appendix 4 – Lesson Plans for Week 4

Key words: American literature, Edgar Allan Poe, The Pit and the Pendulum, literary analysis, Gothic literature

LESSON PLAN 1

Topic: Impressions and Analysis of “The Pit and the Pendulum”

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students can discuss and analyze “The Pit and the Pendulum”
- Students express and support their opinion
- Students find necessary information from the text and draw logical conclusions based on it
- Students practice and develop their communication and collaboration skills
- Students put their analytical and critical thinking skills into practice (they are also developed)
- Students practice their time management skills

Time: 90 minutes

Activity 1: Students express their opinion on the story

- Teacher asks the students what they think about the story, whether they like it or not, what was challenging etc.

Activity 2: Answering the set of questions in a group

- The teacher divides the students into five groups and each group get a different set of questions (each set contains 5 main questions and more specifying questions connected to the main questions)

The questions were created to fit the course aims and give students a chance to put the skills learned into practice.

SET 1

1. How does the narrator change throughout the story?
2. When and where is the story taking place (the setting)?
3. What is wrong with the historical context of the story? Which piece does not fit?
4. When the narrator regained consciousness after swooning at first, what was he most afraid of?
5. How is the pendulum described? (different ways) What can you compare the pendulum to?

SET 2

1. What's the point of view in the story?
2. How did the judges look like? How many of them were there? Which supernatural character do they remind you of?
3. How was the narrator supposed to die in the first place?
4. What are the two themes evident in the story? (What does the story focus on?)

5. Is the narrator reliable or unreliable? Provide evidence from the story to support your answer.

SET 3

1. What happens to the narrator in the end?
2. Which crime did the narrator commit and what type of judgement is the narrator sentenced to?
3. At the beginning of the story there were candles on the table. How did the candles make the narrator feel? How many candles were there and what do you think what do they represent?
4. What allured the rats to the narrator in the first place and how did the narrator allure rats to his bindings?
5. How do they finally try to kill the narrator when all else has failed?

SET 4

1. How does the narrator's personality affect his survival?
2. Who are the characters in the story?
3. Describe the place where the narrator was imprisoned
4. Which literary devices does Poe use in this story? (at least 3 and bring examples)
5. After the rats helped the narrator to his freedom, where is the irony of his sudden freedom?

SET 5

1. How does the narrator's dungeon change? Describe this from the beginning of his imprisonment to his rescue.
2. What are the main symbols in the story and what do they symbolize? (at least 3)
3. According to the narrator, when sentenced to death, what was the most common method of murder?
4. What does the narrator look like? (describe his appearance)
5. What does the narrator see when he first regain consciousness?

Activity 2: Class discussion of the previous task

- Students discuss their answers in the classroom. The teacher guides them if necessary.

LESSON PLAN 2

Topic: Comparing "The Pit and the Pendulum" with either "The Tell-Tale Heart" or "The Masque of the Red Death". Watching a Real-Life Experiment Video. Conclusions.

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students find necessary information from the text and draw logical conclusions based on it
- Students compare and contrast the stories by using the knowledge acquired
- Students put their analytical and critical thinking skills into practice (they are also developed)
- Students practice their time management skills

- Students watch the experiment connected to “The Pit and the Pendulum” and draw logical conclusions based on it

Time: 45 minutes

Activity 1: Filling out the worksheet on comparing and contrasting Poe’s stories

- The task is individual.

The task was created to help students analyze the stories.

Compare and contrast Poe’s “The Pit and the Pendulum” with either “The Tell-Tale Heart” or “The Masque of the Red Death.

	DIFFERENCES	SIMILARITIES
SETTING		
THE MAIN CHARACTER		
THEMES		
SYMBOLS		
LITERARY DEVICES		

GOTHIC ELEMENTS		
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Activity 2: Watching a video on YouTube about the experiment connected to “The Pit and the Pendulum”

- Students watch the video and express their opinion on it

The video is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnuqyBfglCo>

The idea of the video is to visualize the story and try to connect it to reality.

Activity 3: Reflecting on the story

- Students are asked what they learned and whether they see the story differently after analyzing in thoroughly

Appendix 5 – Lesson Plans for Week 5

Key words: American literature, Edgar Allan Poe, The Black Cat, Gothic literature, literary analysis

LESSON PLAN 1

Topic: Reading “The Black Cat”

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students familiarize themselves with the story
- Students can discuss and analyze “The Black Cat”
- Students express and support their opinion

Time 45 minutes

Activity 1: Students read “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe in the classroom

Activity 2: 1: Students express their opinion on the story

Teacher asks the students what they think about the story, whether they like it or not, what was challenging etc

LESSON PLAN 2

Topic: Analysis of “The Black Cat”

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students can discuss and analyze “The Black Cat”
- Students express and support their opinion
- Students find necessary information from the text and draw logical conclusions based on it
- Students develop their analytical and critical thinking skills
- Students practice and develop their communication and collaboration skills

Time: 45 minutes

Activity 1: Continuing with class discussion and analyses of the characters

- Each character is analyzed thoroughly by students (their looks, their nature/temper, their actions, why they did what they did etc) with the help of a teacher (if necessary). Students’ answers are written on the board and discussed in the classroom.

Activity 2: Assembling the timeline about the narrator’s state of mind

- Students assemble a timeline in pairs or in groups of three and analyze the reasons the narrator started to abuse those surrounding him.
- Class discussion follows

Sidenote: “The Black Cat” was meant to be taught more thoroughly due to the lack of time and students’ responses to the story the lesson was changed, I also changed the lesson plan.

Otherwise, “The Black Cat” could be analyzed similarly to “The Tell Tale Heart” (see Appendix 2).

Homework: Read “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allan Poe

Appendix 6 – Lesson Plans for Week 6

Key words: American literature, Edgar Allan Poe, The Fall of the House of Usher, literary analysis, Gothic literature

LESSON PLAN 1

Topic: Impressions and Analysis of “The Fall of the House of Usher”

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students can speak about and analyze “The Fall of the House of Usher”
- Students develop and practice their communication and collaboration skills
- Students analytical and critical thinking skills are developed

Time: 45 minutes

Activity 1: Form a group (4 members) and discuss the following questions. Write the answers into your notebook.

1. How is the mood of the story established by Poe?
2. How does the narrator describe Roderick when he first encounters him? How is Roderick compared to his childhood version?
3. Describe the history of the Usher family? Is there any hint of incest in the family history?
4. How does the realm of the story differ from the ordinary world? Bring examples.
5. Which item in the story is personified? How?
6. Which similarities can be found between the poem “The Haunted Palace” and the Ushers’ story?
7. What does Roderick actually die of?
8. How’s Roderick’s “morbid acuteness of senses” described? Which other Poe’s story is this condition similar to? What could having acuteness of senses actually refer to?
9. Is the narrator reliable? Bring examples from the text.
10. What is the role of art in Roderick’s life? What has the role of art been in the Usher’s family in general?

LESSON PLAN 2

Topic: Analysis of “The Fall of the House of Usher”

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students can speak about and analyze “The Fall of the House of Usher”
- Students present their answers and support them with examples
- Students participate in the class discussion and develop their communication skills
- Students use and develop their argumentative skills
- Students analytical and critical thinking skills are developed
- Students find necessary information from the text and draw logical conclusions based on it

- Students are able to identify symbols and Gothic elements in the text

Time: 90 minutes

Activity 1: Discussing the answers to the questions from the previous lesson.

- Each group gets to answer a question in turn. The question is discussed in the classroom and other groups can contribute and add information if they feel that something important was not said.
- The teacher guides the students attention to problematic situation or explains incomprehensible questions if they occur during the discussion

Activity 2: Discussing the characters, the setting, the themes, symbols, and Gothic elements in “The Fall of the House of Usher”.

- First students had to independently write out all the characters and describe them shortly. They also had to describe the setting, the themes and find symbols and Gothic elements.
- Class discussion

LESSON PLAN 3

Topic: A Test Using the Materials

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students are able to use their materials and find necessary information
- Students demonstrate their ability to analyze various aspects of the stories addressed during the course
- Students prepare for the writing the essay

Time: 45 minutes

Activity 1: Answer the following questions. You may use your course notes and the worksheets but not the stories.

1. Why is literature and reading it beneficial? Bring out 5 reasons.
2. Now, that all the stories have been analyzed, what do you think which of the five stories deals with the issues that are closest to today’s world problems? Why?
3. Which literary devices are used in “The Black Cat”? Name at least 3
4. How does the setting of “The Masque of the Red Death” influence the characters?
5. Compare the narrator from “The Tell-Tale Heart” to the narrator from “The Black Cat?” How are they different, how are they similar? How did they change throughout the story?
6. Which gothic elements seem to be most common in gothic fiction based on Poe’s stories?
7. Choose one of the stories and write a paragraph on themes (approximately 100 words). How is the theme expressed in the story? Is a theme suggested through the elements, symbols, description etc?

LESSON PLAN 4

Topic: Feedback on the Course

Aims/ learning objectives:

- The teacher receives students' opinions and ideas on the course to conclude what had been done well and what could be done differently in the future
- Students critically think about the course and reflect on what they've learned
- Students are able to express their opinion and support their ideas with arguments

Time: 45 minutes

Activity 1: Answer the following questions thoroughly. The questionnaire is anonymous, so please do not write your name.

- What did you learn during the course when reading and analyzing Poe's stories? (Name at least 2 things)
- Which of the stories do you like the most? Why?
- Which of the stories do you like the least? Why?
- How easy/difficult is this course for you? Explain
- Do you feel that you have studied enough during the course and did you always come to the class prepared? If not, what prevented you?
- Do you think it now is easier for you to see beneath the stories you read after analyzing Poe's stories? Why/why not?
- What are the teacher's strengths and weaknesses in your opinion?
- Are the assignments clear for you?
- Is this course what you expected it to be? Why/why not?
- Can you use your knowledge from this course elsewhere? Explain

Homework: Think about the stories dealt with during the course, so that you are prepared to write an essay. If necessary go over the essay structure.

Appendix 7 – Lesson Plan for Week 7

Topic: Writing an Analytical Essay

Aims/ learning objectives:

- Students are able to demonstrate the skills acquired during the course
- Students are able to analyze the given topic, bring example to support their viewpoints and draw logical conclusions from the analysis

Time: 90 minutes

Activity 1: Choose one of the topics below and write a short essay (at least 200 words)

These topics could be changed or replaced depending on how the course and the students taught have developed. These topics were created based on the analyses of the course and class discussions.

Here are the given topics:

1. The portrayal of family by Poe in “The Fall of the House of Usher“. (How is the family portrayed, the relationships, how is the Usher family different compared to a traditional family?)
2. Compare and contrast the mental state of the narrator (their journey to madness, their guilt etc) in “The Tell-Tale Heart“ and the narrator in “The Black Cat“. (If these people existed today would it be possible to “save“ them, how? Think about those two characters, if you knew them and they showed these same signs of losing their minds, what would you do?)
3. Role of history and setting in “The Pit and the Pendulum“. (How does historical context and setting of the story help to create the concept of fear/terror?)
4. How do the themes of “The Masque of Red Death” fit into today’s society? (Which actions of the people in the story depict the fear of death and trying to escape it, and how do they reflect today’s people?)
5. Superstition and Supernatural: Poe’s VS Our World.

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Marit Iila

Teaching a Literary Analysis Course on the Short Stories of Edgar Allan Poe: An Analysis of the Lesson Plans and Assessment [Kirjandusanalüüsi kursuse õpetamine Edgar Allan Poe lühijuttude põhjal: tunnikavade ja hindamise analüüs]

Magistritöö

2019

Lehekülgede arv:

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärgiks on koostada kirjandusanalüüsi kursus ameerika kirjaniku Edgar Allan Poe viie lühijutu põhjal, mille abil arendada gümnaasiumi õpilaste kriitilise mõtlemise oskust. Antud töö koosneb kahest osast: kirjanduse ülevaatest ja empiirilisest osast. Kirjandusülevaade keskendub kirjanduse kasutamisele ja õpetamisele koolis. Lisaks sellele kirjeldatakse viise, kuidas õpetada kirjandust Edgar Allan Poe tekstide kaudu. Töö empiirilises osas kirjeldatakse ja analüüsitakse läbi viidud tunde, hindamist ja õppemeetodeid. Selleks on kasutatud eneseanalüüsi. Kursus jaotati seitsmele nädalale, kus esimesel nädalal tegeleti kirjanduslike terminite, gooti kirjanduse elementide ja kirjanik Edgar Allan Poe tutvustamisega. Järgneval viiel nädalal analüüsiti viit lühijuttu, kasutades erinevaid õppemeetodeid nagu klassidiskussioon, rühmatööd, paaristööd ning iseseisvad tööd. Viimasel nädalal kirjutati essee kursusel õpitu põhjal. Tundide analüüsid näitasid, et iga nädalaga suutsid õpilased järjest paremini kriitiliselt mõelda ning lühijuttudesse süüvida. Samuti suutsid õpilased leida juttudest kiiremini üles sümboleid ja gooti kirjanduse elemente. Õpilased andsid ka ise kursusele tagasisidet, mida on samuti töös analüüsitud. Kursusel kasutatud õppematerjal on leitav antud töö lisades.

Märksõnad:

Inglise keel, gümnaasiumi riiklik õppekava, ameerika kirjandus, Edgar Allan Poe, eneseanalüüs, kirjanduse õpetamine, kriitiline mõtlemine

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