
USING *LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD* TO TEACH GENDER IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Gothenburg University

Dept of Languages and Literatures/English

Helena Melin, 880914

C-level paper, 15 hec

Interdisciplinary Degree Project

Teacher Education Program LP01

Supervisor: Ron Paul

Examiner: Fereshteh Zangenehpour

Grade:

Date/Signature:

ABSTRACT

Title: Using *Little Red Riding Hood* to teach gender in the English classroom

Author: Helena Melin

Term and year: Fall 2012

Institution: Department of Languages and Literature

Supervisor: Ron Paul

Key words: Literature, pedagogy, Upper Secondary School, language, gender, *Little Red Riding Hood*

In this essay I explore ideas about how to work with fairy tales and gender, but also discuss the potentials and problems with the approach. Gender roles can often be cemented and maintained in Upper Secondary School, which is the reason why I want to highlight and discuss the matter with students. The questions I seek to investigate in the essay are: *Which teaching methods can be used when working with gender stereotypes in the fairy tale, in the English classroom? In what way is Little Red Riding Hood suitable to work with in class?* The main goal with this classroom project, which can extend over a period of five weeks, is to give students in Upper Secondary School tools to problematize, analyze, and discuss the idea of gender stereotypes in one of the world's most well-known fairy tales: *Little Red Riding Hood*. Another aim is for the students to be critical and aware of what they read so that they can see hidden meanings in a text. Ideas of exercises, inspired by Collie & Slater and Josephson, to work with in a classroom context are presented. These are used as tools in order to problematize gender in fairy tales. The exercises cover comparing beginnings, dramatizing a part of a story, writing the inner dialogue of a character or tale, and finally the hot seat.

TABLE OF CONTENT

1 Introduction	1
1.2 Thesis	2
1.3 Pedagogical aspects	4
1.3.1 Using literature in language teaching	4
1.3.2 <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i> in the language classroom	9
2 Versions and aspects of <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i> to work with	11
3 The process of working with <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i>	20
3.2 Comparing beginnings	20
3.3 Trailers	23
3.4 Writing the inner dialogue of a character.....	24
3.5 The hot seat	24
4 Conclusion.....	26
References	27
Appendix I.....	29

1 INTRODUCTION

A basic value in Upper Secondary School is equality between women and men (The National Agency for Education, 2011 b). There is also emphasis on teaching from a gender equality perspective as an overall goal to strive for. In support of these core values of Upper Secondary School, I have chosen to work with gender in literature, or fairy tales to be more exact. I believe that working with literary texts in the English language classroom is a natural part of teaching today.

In this essay I will not only explore some ideas about how to work with literature, but also discuss the potentials and problems with this approach. The timetable which will be presented is preliminary and can be modified to suit different conditions for the teacher and the classroom. The main aim with this classroom project, which can extend over a period of five weeks, is to give students in Upper Secondary School tools to problematize, analyze and discuss the idea of gender stereotypes in one of the world's most well-known fairy tales: *Little Red Riding Hood*. The reason I have chosen this aspect of working with the fairy tale is to challenge the students on something they, in most cases, have an opinion about and are familiar with. I want the students to advance in the reading process rather than simply seeing the words and the story the words form; the goal is to reveal the hidden meanings behind the fairy tale. Proceeding with the discussion of what affects a possible underlying meaning might have on readers can be the next step in the project process. All students are probably not at the same language level which means that the teacher will need to bring up, and support, those who need it.

The core aim of the project is therefore for students to become critical and aware of what they read. According to The National Agency for Education, schools should make every endeavor to encourage and help students develop critical thinking (2011 b). A critical

approach is not only useful in English 6 and 7, it is a goal to aim for (The National Agency for Education, 2011 a). The student skills the teacher should aim to improve are, as Hedge notes, reading, listening, writing and speaking. In addition, the aim is to encourage students to improve their skill in interpreting a chosen text.

Collie & Slater describe several methods to use in the language classroom when including literature in teaching. Not all suggestions by Collie & Slater are feasible in all groups of students however, due to different needs of the students. Part of the teacher's role will therefore be to choose between the methods in order to pinpoint the teaching practice in a specific group or class. I find the methods I choose to present as functional tools in the process of problematizing gender. Another aim in the syllabus for English in Upper Secondary School is "through teaching students should also be given the opportunity to develop correctness in their use of language in speech and writing, and also the ability to express themselves with variation and complexity", which I hope these tools will encourage and develop (The National Agency for Education, 2011 a).

1.2 THESIS

Do fairy tales stereotype gender roles? The purpose of this project is to explore ideas about how to work with literature and gender in an English classroom in Upper Secondary School. Since I want to start a discussion about and encourage awareness of gender roles amongst students, I have chosen to work with the fairy tale, *Little Red Riding Hood*. According to The National Agency for Education "teaching should encourage students' curiosity in language and culture ...", which is a point I find very important when working in Upper Secondary School (2011 a).

In this literary project the class will work with several versions of the fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood* in order to problematize, analyze and discuss how gender stereotypes are

portrayed in the different versions. Thus, students can choose a version to analyze from a gender perspective of their choice: masculinity, femininity, seduction, etc. Since *Little Red Riding Hood* is well-known, and read all around the world, the tale can function as a common denominator for the class. According to Lundahl, this could be an advantage in the sense that most of the students will have read the tale in their mother tongue and therefore are already acquainted with the story (Lundahl, 23). This can be beneficial both for themselves and the group members who have not read it. Students who are unfamiliar with the tale have the opportunity of hearing a classmate's version and memories of it and those who are familiar with it get to refresh their memories by retelling it. The many versions of the tale give the teacher an even better range of material to discuss and analyze. The tale is relevant today since it is still rewritten and used both in books and in the film industry such as the TV-series *Once upon a time*, and several movies: *Little Red Riding Hood* from -03, -05, -07, and -11. The different versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* should be used as tools in this discussion. First of all they give an overview of the development of the tale. Moreover, the tales provide clear contrasts and issues to work with gender stereotypes. During students' time at Upper Secondary School, gender roles can be cemented and maintained, something which is important to bring to light and question. I believe that working with gender in *Little Red Riding Hood* is a way to be up to date with the present gender discussion and bring it into the classroom context where it is needed the most.

The main aim of this essay is to give teachers a clear idea of how to work with this fairy tale in the context of gender. The questions I seek to answer and discuss throughout the essay are:

- Which teaching methods can be used when working with gender stereotypes in the fairy tale, in the English classroom?
- In what way is *Little Red Riding Hood* suitable to work with in class?

1.3 PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS

There are many aspects of working with literature in the language classroom which both teachers and students can benefit from, but also some challenges. In this section I will discuss why teachers should use literature, such as *Little Red Riding Hood*, and how it is relevant as a tool in the language classroom in accordance with the National Agency for Education, Hedge, Paran, and Collie & Slater. I will also discuss potential problems when using literature as the method in second language learning classroom.

1.3.1 USING LITERATURE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Hedge emphasizes the communicative classroom as important to the second language learner (57). She also argues that the aim is to focus on meaning instead of form and the learner as a producer of opinions, ideas, and information. I agree with her point and believe it is essential to language learning, especially since I think learning benefits from interaction. According to Hedge, when working with literature it is crucial to develop the four skills: reading, listening, speaking, writing, and to respond and interpret the material one is working with (ibid.). I believe this to be a fundamental goal if language teaching is to be versatile and fruitful to the learner. It is also something I think is important in order to engage the student in learning activities. Another aspect in the communicative classroom is using and understanding authentic materials, which in this project takes the form of a fairy tale (Hedge, 67). Later on in the essay, I will discuss the question of authentic materials further, since there is much to say regarding the advantages and disadvantages in using such texts.

Reference to using literature in Upper Secondary School is found in the syllabuses for English 5, 6 and 7. The importance of using literature is shown by the fact that it is obligatory at all levels where the demands of comprehension depend on the levels of the course. I choose to focus on English 6 and English 7 in the project because the level requires a better

knowledge of the language, compared to English 5. According to the syllabus for English “students should be given the opportunity, through the use of language in functional and meaningful contexts, to develop all-round communicative skills” (The National Agency for Education, 2011 a). I interpret “functional and meaningful contexts” as situations where the students are exposed to authentic materials relevant to their lives, which I believe the themes of *Little Red Riding Hood* do in terms of gender. The syllabuses state that teaching English literature should include “contemporary and older literature, poetry, drama and songs”, and “texts of different kinds and for different purposes ...” (ibid.). The several versions of the fairy tale suit these purposes since they were written during different times in history for different purposes, which should help students analyze an aspect of their choice. For the project to succeed in its purpose, interpretation, discussion and reflection are important key elements. When reading the versions there is a possibility that students will interpret them differently and this in turn will give the project a stronger basis, since diversity in opinion often improves the discussion. There is, however, the risk that diversity in opinion can result in a debate with a negative tone, but I believe the opportunities outweigh the risks in this case. A meaningful discussion in terms of challenging the students can be eye-opening. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the students are being trained in literary awareness, which in turn means that they need a functioning language. Paran claims that testing literature and testing language are two separate things and it should be made clear which one is being tested (146). In a language learning environment I would say that it is almost impossible not to have interplay between testing literature and testing language. As I mentioned earlier, students need an awareness of both vocabulary and grammar in order to express their opinions, or reflections about a certain matter.

Collie & Slater give many reasons why teachers should use literature in the language classroom, such as cultural and language enrichment, authenticity, and personal involvement.

To clarify, by authenticity Collie & Slater claim that texts used in classroom activities should not be created for teaching purposes (3). Instead, the texts should consist of undistorted and genuine language in the classroom context, since they are varied in style, not simplified or shortened, and therefore very important in the language learning process. Collie & Slater argue that in order to gain insight into the language, both linguistically and culturally, students need to be exposed to language intended for native speakers, which is something I very much agree with (ibid.). I believe that this is important in order to fully master a language. Certainly there are few students in Upper Secondary School who fully master this, but to be exposed to authentic language can be an important step in their development towards fully grasping the language. The problem, if any, could be that common language learning mistakes for Swedish students will not be noticed if the teacher does not attend to it. What I mean is when using literature suitable for learning there are often notes about difficult vocabulary and, or, grammar and sometimes even helpful tips and pointers about things to be aware of when reading the text. In itself this is a support to the learner. So when using authentic materials in class it is imperative for the teacher to act as the support in terms of vocabulary, grammar and such in order to create a similar learning process compared to if the student would have been reading a book suitable for second language learning.

When it comes to cultural enrichment, Collie & Slater argue that literature is a tool for students to get an insight into English speaking countries regarding customs, behavior, codes, beliefs, thoughts, etc. (4). As there are many aspects to address concerning cultural studies, I have chosen gender studies as the main focus. This is an aspect that can be applied to Collie & Slater's arguments (behavior, codes, etc.) regarding cultural enrichment. However, I do not claim that all arguments and aspects show a clear and fair picture of all societies. Students can get an idea of how society works, and sometimes historic events in the country chosen without having to go abroad. This is an important point made by Collie & Slater, first of all

because it is true not all students can afford travelling overseas. If the choice of literature is less suitable, there is the risk of it having a distant connection to the real place. However, this is another important assignment for the teacher to fulfill: finding appropriate literature. One can argue that historical events might have been altered, settings changed, or even that the behavior and thoughts described do not correspond to the people of that specific country. It is important for the teacher to be aware of these counter-arguments with reference to teaching literature, but in my opinion one should not be afraid of them. I agree with Collie & Slater concerning cultural enrichment because it is a useful way of emphasizing certain aspects of a culture which are hard to explain clearly without lecturing the students. If the students are made aware of a certain problem by reading about it, they acquire an element of first experience and can more easily relate to and discuss the phenomenon.

Concerning language enrichment, Collie & Slater state that language in literature “provides a rich context in which individual lexical or syntactical items are made more memorable” so that the reader gains awareness regarding basic skills such as how to form sentences, structures, connecting ideas and writing (Collie & Slater, 5). I am convinced that with active support from the teacher, language can be enriched by literature. However, I am skeptical to whether students have the awareness to notice and process the lexicon and syntax on their own, which is why I advocate teacher support when it comes to these steps. A counter argument against claims made by Collie & Slater is that the language found in literature is not representative of everyday usage, and therefore not ideal to a second language learner regarding vocabulary, grammar, etc. (4). In my opinion, this will not become an issue in the language classroom as long as the teacher raises awareness among the students of the problem.

The last argument Collie & Slater mention for using literature in the language classroom is personal involvement (6). They argue that reading literature engages the reader beyond the

typical language learning zone. Paran questions how literature is tested and assessed in the language classroom, for example whether public knowledge or private appreciation about/of literature are tested (151). Aesthetic reading, or private appreciation, means that the focus lies on the experience itself and the pleasure of reading the book and efferent reading, or public knowledge, is reading which results in common knowledge (ibid.). Paran claims that in order to acquire the best learning environment there should be interplay between aesthetic and efferent reading (153). In accordance with Collie & Slater and Paran, I also believe the reader will benefit from the consequences of getting personally involved in a story, but with a close interplay between public knowledge and private appreciation. The key words are motivation and interest, which means that the choice of literature will have an influence on how the reader relates to the story. Some argue that a fairy tale is a difficult choice to motivate and claim that it is childish and predictable. This is why I have chosen several different versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*, since the different versions will in most, if not all, cases be new to the students. They also show a change of language and time concurrently with historical changes, and are determined by different themes compared to the original fairy tale. What needs to be emphasized is that the changes are from one perspective and hence not applicable to all history. Furthermore, these aspects are important to emphasize early on in the project to raise motivation and inspiration among the students.

According to Collie & Slater, choosing suitable literature depends on several factors such as language level, cultural background, interests, subjective needs, group, identity and so on (6). They emphasize the importance of choosing literature relevant to the current life situation of students, regarding experience, feelings, aspirations, etc. to make it more appealing to the students. The greatest challenge as a teacher is to support the students to aim in the right direction of this process. Again, some will argue against using a fairy tale, but by focusing on new aspects, in this case characterization, point of view, gender, and themes, I

hope to engage the students more actively. Collie & Slater argue that “if it is meaningful and enjoyable, reading is more likely to have a lasting and beneficial effect upon the learners’ linguistic and cultural knowledge” (ibid.). If the literary work is too difficult or uninteresting in any way it will not be as rewarding compared to a more inspirational choice of text. Being inspired by and enjoying a book, or a story, can motivate the reader to overcome a possible fear of language difficulties. By choosing a fairy tale to discuss, the expectations from the beginning can be quite low, possibly creating a lack of interest. The process of inspiring the students will therefore be crucial to working with the fairy tale. Revealing new ways of reading and analyzing the tale will be of key importance to the project.

1.3.2 *LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD* IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

It is a challenge to engage students in the fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood*, however, by highlighting and emphasizing new aspects of the tale, I hope to stimulate the students’ response to the text. First of all, the original and the newer versions are quite short, which will make it easier for the students to read. They will have a chance to read several short versions of the tale, if there is a demand, which I believe will raise their self-confidence when it comes to reading. In Upper Secondary School it is important to emphasize this, since the level of motivation can differ depending on what class you are teaching. Moreover, *Little Red Riding Hood* is a classic example to use in the language classroom in terms of factors such as authenticity, language, style, history, and cultural enrichment. The students get the opportunity to visit a miniature world by reading such a fairy tale.

I believe the fairy tale is relevant for the students to analyze and discuss since it has many aspects to consider: norms, morals, gender, etc. These are some aspects which one might not have thought of when reading it as a child. By problematizing the different fairy tale versions, the students can begin to see contrasts of time and moral values. A goal in

English 7 is to grasp “how stylistics and rhetorical devices are used for different purposes and how language is used as an instrument to exercise power” (The National Agency for Education, 2011 a). The contrast between the versions of the fairy tale will hopefully show exactly this: what happens when the tone changes, or when the protagonist is grown-up, or when the different characters change roles, and so on.

The development of the versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* provide interesting materials to discuss because they extend over a long period of time, showing the influence on how the different versions were written. The aim is for the students to be able to distinguish the periods and determine possible social affects of for example the Second World War or feminism. Finally, the themes the fairy tales demonstrate are important to explore in a context where the right critical tools are provided: in an English language classroom. The fairy tale in itself can of course cement stereotypes by displaying a certain pattern of characters’ word choice, descriptions, behavior, habits, etc. As I have mentioned before, these gendered patterns are hard to detect and criticize if the reader is not aware of the possible existence of them. In that case, which is one of the goals in this project, the learning context is essential in order for the students to reach a deeper understanding of a text they are probably already familiar with.

2 VERSIONS AND ASPECTS OF *LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD* TO WORK WITH

In this chapter I give an account of what versions I choose to focus on and possible aspects to work with in the English classroom. The written versions I have selected are *Little Red Cap* by Jacob & Wilhelm Grimm (1812), *Little Red Riding Hood* by Walter de la Mare (1927), *The Girl and the Wolf* by James Thurber (1939), *Little Red Riding Hood as a Dictator would tell it* by H.I. Phillips (1940), *Little Red Cap '65* by Anneliese Meinert (1965), *Not So Little Red Riding Hood* by Anne Sharpe (1985), and *The Waiting Wolf* by Gwen Strauss (1990). The versions are all found in Jack Zipes anthology *The Trials & Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*. Additionally, extracts from the TV-series *Once upon a Time* created by Horowitz and Kitsis can be shown to the students. The reasons for focusing on these versions are mainly their difference in language style contrasting older and more modern language usage, changes of morals, depending on the point of view or when the text was written. Furthermore, I believe that by comparing the different versions of the story will help contribute to a discussion of gender in various ways in terms of femininity and masculinity. In English 7 it is stated that students should be able to handle “strategies for drawing conclusions about the spoken language and texts in terms of attitudes, perspectives, purposes and values, and to understand implied meaning” (The National Agency for Education, 2011 a). This project is intended to realize this aim.

In the versions I have chosen to focus on, *Red* is, characterized as “the sweet little girl”, “the confident teenager”, “the vain girl”, “the evil girl” and “the independent girl” while, *the Wolf* is, portrayed as “the wicked wolf”, “the sad friendly wolf”, “the sophisticated wolf” and “the wolf in love”. Students should consider how characters are described in terms of appearance, speech, and behavior in the different versions in order to reveal underlying

stereotypical gender roles. Hence, explore norms and values hidden in the fairy tales. The National Agency for Education emphasizes the importance of being able to interpret different types of texts, but also to handle different attitudes and sets of values (2011 b). This is something I aim to achieve by having the students analyze the versions in terms of gender roles.

According to the National Agency for Education, the teacher and the students should discuss moral values, opinions, problems and their consequences (2011 b: 12). In order to do this, the students need to compare, analyze, and criticize the images of gender. Focusing on the moral of the story will help students in their analysis of *Red* as a female role model and *the Wolf* as a male role model, or prototype if you will. Another skill the students should develop is "having the ability to critically scrutinize and assess what he or she sees, hears and reads in order to discuss and take a stand concerning different questions of life and questions of value", which applies to all versions (The National Agency for Education, 2011 b: 10, my translation). To question the moral is an important step towards gaining understanding of whether or not the fairy tales cement gender stereotypes. In order to do this, the students should problematize the following aspects: characterization, point of view, theme, and gender.

Problematizing a text without teacher support can be daunting for the students. It can even be seen as impossible to some. Knowing how to proceed with a text after a first encounter is not something the students should be required to handle alone. As both Hedge and Collie & Slater emphasize, the teacher is expected to guide them and create a learning environment best suited for their students. I am prepared to do so by presenting a template of questions for them to follow during the process of analyzing, and problematizing. A worksheet with questions that help the student problematize the moral message is the following:

- *Whose voice (character or narrator) clarifies the moral message to the reader?*
- *Is there an intended listener or person for the moral message – who?*
- *What does the moral message imply? What is the reason?*
- *Does someone or something benefit from the moral message – how?*
- *Does someone or something suffer from drawbacks from the moral message – how?*

Implementing a critical approach to all versions is important for the students in order to achieve a critical insight into gender stereotypes, since these are not clearly shown. By adhering to the set of questions, I intend to facilitate the problematizing of the texts for them.

Working with authentic texts is an important part of the project both because the students are exposed to language intended for native speakers and more importantly because the versions show a development concerning gender (Hedge, Collie & Slater). The depictions of gender in the different versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* vary depending on time, place, author, etc. Grimm's version is considered to be a classic and is most likely the one which some students have come in contact with (Zipes, 135). The reason for including it in the project is to get the students to read and analyze the most well-known version of *Little Red Riding Hood* from a critical perspective with the aim of challenging their own personal response to the text. The students should therefore problematize the characterization of *Red* and *the Wolf* so that a greater awareness of their personal response to and appreciation of the classic is developed. The questions I mentioned earlier will support them in their work. As a result, the students will hopefully be able to analyze and discuss gender in terms of both personal experience and more critically in general.

The contrast to earlier written versions is interesting when looking at characteristics, especially when it comes to Meinert's and Sharpe's versions, since they can remind the students of their own time (Zipes 324, 239). The fact that *the Wolf* has acquired human traits and behavior is yet another aspect which the students should think about. The two versions

are therefore important in the process of motivating the students during the project, since the characters differ from the Grimm version to such a great extent. I hope this will encourage the students' curiosity in reading the fairy tales, hence creating interplay between aesthetic and efferent reading, and help them in their analysis of the theme of gender (Paran).

Walter de la Mare's version was written in 1927 and deals with a contemporary phenomenon: vanity (Zipes, 208). I want the students to discuss how a tale written in 1927 can reflect our own society but also if the depiction of gender and vanity of the tale would be different had it been written today. Vanity permeates our society in different ways. It is important to have the students ponder this in comparison to time period and changes, especially since it can be a big part of their teenage lives. Hence, a form of personal involvement (Collie & Slater). It is a way of enticing the students into further reading, but also in terms of motivation. In order to discuss contrasts in terms of gender, the students can motivate their choice by comparing it to an older version of *Little Red Riding Hood*.

In Thurber's version *Red* is no longer easy to trick, which practically all her fellow *Reds* are (Zipes, 229). The students should therefore compare the versions in terms of femininity and masculinity. It is suggested that as an initial approach to identify what is considered feminine and masculine and continue with a comparison to their own idea of gender, or if they prefer a magazine, movie, song, etc. depiction of gender. I want students to question the portrayal of gender, how gender is constructed and if any truth is to be found in gender stereotypes. This implies having the students develop proficiency in both language and world knowledge in order to develop critical awareness (Hedge).

Students should also consider how, and if, Grimm's *Wolf* is a portrayal of a stereotypical masculine male through his deception and greed (Zipes, 135). They should discuss if this is a stereotype or not and develop their views with regard to gender. Once again, since this might be one of the fairy tales the students have read themselves I think it can

be fruitful to look at something else than the plot. In this case, I suggest analyzing the version in terms of language, such as sentence structure, writing style, and how to unravel underlying ideas and meaning (Collie & Slater, 5). In doing so, I hope students will be inspired to continue further in the project with regards to understanding “how oral and written communications in different genres are built up” (The National Agency for Education, 2011 a).

In Sharpe’s version many gender issues are dealt with (Zipes, 324). The portrayal of masculinity and femininity are more modern compared to older written versions. There are elements of stalking and male violence in the fairy tale, which are important but difficult contemporary problems to discuss. This version is in no way predictable or childish, as I mentioned earlier in the essay, instead it is innovative and problematizing. Students can find it uneasy to discuss these matters in a classroom context. Some might have a history of stalkers or violence and not feel comfortable talking about it, and others might have too little knowledge of the subjects. When dealing with a sensitive issue, I believe that forming smaller groups and increasing teacher support helps. By setting clear rules and building a common base of knowledge I aim to create a better environment for learning.

Strauss’ version is revealing since the reader gets inside *the Wolf’s* head (Zipes, 328). Because *the Wolf* is dramatically different from the other versions, it will be a challenge for the students’ way of seeing him as a male figure. Even though this version is quite short it provides the reader with much to analyze. Hedge presents a framework of questions for working with critical reading, which I believe can support the students. The framework questions are “Why is this topic being written about? How is this topic being written about? What other ways of writing the topic are there? Who is the text’s model reader?” (Hedge, 213). As *the Wolf* in Strauss’ version can be perceived as difficult to understand or far-fetched, this tool can be an aid for the students and a passage to analyze him. My intention is

also to show extracts from an episode of the TV-series *Once Upon a Time* (Kitsis & Horowitz). The students will have the chance of seeing how she looks and how someone else (producers) want her to look like. It is important that the students are aware of this and consider how this affects their own perception of *Red*, in this version named *Ruby*. Emphasis on using “text-comparison as a basis for critical reading” is made by Hedge, which I intend to advocate with this version (215). Provided that a comparison is made between either a personal opinion or another version, I believe the students’ awareness of outer influence will be enhanced.

The themes I want to emphasize to the students are obedience, tradition, war, deceit, seduction, and so on. A sense of obedience permeates Grimm’s version and it is *Red* who has the role of either opposing or showing it (Zipes, 135). The students should consider how obedience is expressed in the fairy tale and what the theme gives to the tale. Why is obedience a theme to analyze? Obedience is something students will know of and have a personal relation to, whether they are against or in favor of it. It is a theme which is easy to relate to and discuss, which I want them to do when it comes to gender (Collie & Slater). They should ask if obedience differs depending on gender, culture, family, or environment. Students can compare this version to a more contemporary one in order to problematize the content and depiction of *Red* with support from the worksheet.

Another version I think will have a big impact on the students in terms of motivation and inspiration is Thurber’s one, because of the short length and the moral message (Zipes, 229). *Red* remains the “traditional” *Red* up until the end when she recognizes *the Wolf* in the disguise of her grandmother and shoots *the Wolf*. I think this particular version is a classic example of the change in time that offers students a chance to problematize the content. Students should compare this version with another one, since this is short, in order to see how the moral reflects upon *Red* and *The Wolf*. The moral can be seen as more representative for

modern times in terms of gender and therefore important in any comparison with a tale not typical for time. Further support for this claim can be found in the Swedish Curriculum, which states that “no-one should be subjected to discrimination at school based on gender, ... or subjected to other degrading treatment” (The National Agency for Education 2006).

Another theme that is important to emphasize is war, which is found in Philips’ version (Zipes, 230). By including a version of *Little Red Riding Hood* written during a war, students will not only familiarize themselves with the language of that time, but also with how culture, and history is reflected in literary texts. I view this version as important for students to be acquainted with, even though it deviates from the common structure of other versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*. What the students need to take account of is when it was written, namely during the Second World War, since it reflects the society and world of that time. In English 7 it is stated that in order to achieve certain goals students should be exposed to material with “societal issues, cultural, historical, political and social conditions ... in different contexts” (The National Agency for Education, 2011 a). The students are exposed in this context to a piece of history wrapped up in a fairy tale. It is a form of cultural enrichment which I believe will be easier to process in the perspective of this historical event (Collie & Slater).

A version which probably will be easier for the students to relate to is Meinert’s version with the theme youth (Zipes, 239). *Red* is a young adult who drives a sportscar and displays the moods of a teenager. Collie & Slater emphasize the importance of having students relate to the literature in several ways and this is one reason to why I include this version in the project (6). More importantly, students should think about how the theme changes *Red*’s character. Several interpretations are possible in the version. Students should have the opportunity to practice and improve their skills regarding interpretation and at the same time consider if, and how, they recognize themselves in *Red*. Whether they recognize themselves

or not, there will be questions to discuss. The students will have to support their opinion by drawing parallels in the text.

Another theme to have in mind is the relation to adults. In *Once Upon A Time* the grandmother hides the fact that *Ruby's* mother is a werewolf and that it was passed on to *Ruby* (Kitsis & Horowitz). Students should consider how this affects *Ruby* and the relationship between *Ruby* and the grandmother. I want the students to reflect on whether it is accepted behavior for adults to lie to children or not. In addition, they should consider if their views change should the question be children lying to parents. The theme is significant since it is relevant to today and emotionally charged: the students will in most cases have an opinion on the matter due to a feeling of recognition (Collie & Slater).

The last theme I want to emphasize is seduction, which permeates Strauss's version (Zipes, 328). It is important to engage the students in the theme due to the change in point of view from *Red* to *the Wolf*, since as a gender issue this can be considered provocative. This version will be foreign to the students and so, less easy to relate to. Even though the students possibly have come in contact with seduction, it can be regarded as awkward to speak about. Depending on how students interpret the story, the analysis and discussion will differ from each other. As several interpretations can be made, it is advised to increase the teacher support. My intention is to use worksheets as support, either on the basis of critical reading or from a problematizing point of view (Hedge, 213).

When it comes to point of view in the versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* it is the versions from *the Wolf's* point of view that I want to make the students aware of the most, for example Sharpe's version (Zipes, 324). The syllabus for English state that "understanding of spoken and written English, and ... the ability to interpret content" (The National Agency for Education, 2011 a) is an important goal to aim for. The students should be reminded, of this goal especially when critically reading this version since interpretation is required in order to

fully grasp the meaning (Hedge, 213). There are features of feminism, such as behavioral, which I want the students to understand by analyzing the point of view of *the Wolf* with a critical awareness. Strauss's version is also structured differently compared to other versions in it being narrated in the first person, but also like a poem (Zipes, 328). The reason for including the version in the project is because the deviating structure regarding point of view and language can be fruitfully compared to the other versions the students will read.

3 THE PROCESS OF WORKING WITH *LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD*

In this chapter I discuss approaches to how the versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* can be used in the English language classroom in order to investigate gender, themes, characterization, and point of view, but also the suggestion of a time plan. The project could extend over a period of five weeks with approximately four hours per week; a total of 20 hours. Again, this is a preliminary plan, which teachers will be able to adapt to schedules and purposes of their own. I am aware that conditions differ depending on the class, the teacher, the school, opportunities given by the school environment and so on, which in turn means that the project will look different. As Hedge notes, “each learner will have different strengths to build on and different weaknesses to overcome. . . . The teacher will need to focus on different goals at different times and use a range of materials and tasks”, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking (205).

With the aim of raising awareness of the subject of gender in fairy tales, I will present ideas inspired by Collie & Slater, and Josephson of how to work with *Little Red Riding Hood*. In my opinion, working with traditional texts such as fairy tales requires a varied set of methods to use during the process.

3.2 COMPARING BEGINNINGS

Making a comparison of the beginnings of the tales involves having the students react to a couple of extracts of stories with similar beginnings (Collie & Slater, 31). This exercise gives the students a glimpse of what is to come: different versions of the fairy tale and diversity in style and structure. The extracts can be analyzed in terms of style, structure, description, and language. Examples of parts to choose, from *Little Red Cap '65* written by Anneliese Meinert:

“Little Red Cap”, the mother said, “I’ve prepared a basket for granny. Cake and whisky. I’ve got to rush to an appointment, so be nice and bring it to her.” Little Red Cap was

not too happy about this. She had a date. But since she was a friendly person, she growled, "Give it to me." Little Red Cap jumped into her sportscar. She zoomed through the woods. Though the road was not a highway, there was so little traffic that one could speed. Past the trees. Past the warning signs with silhouettes of animals marked on them. A gray shadow stood on the side of the road and signaled to hitch a ride. Nothing doing! (Zipes, 239)

From *Not So Little Red Riding Hood* written by Anne Sharpe:

It was her mother, not Scarlet, who was in the habit of saying that in November, night arrived in one sudden bound to land on your shoulders and overpower you with blackness. Women in particular were vulnerable then. But scarlet was not fanciful or concerned that dusk had fallen. As her strides, opened out her red cape, she did not pull it closer. Treading crisply on unnoticed twigs, her eyes followed the rooks' ungainly flop into high nests on the tops of oak trees. Each bird harshly squawked out a place for itself before settling down fussily for the night. Scarlet smiled. The laden basket under her arm did not drag her down. It helped her pace her step as the wide swaying umbrella of the fir trees gradually welcomed her to itself. (Zipes, 324)

From *Little Red Riding Hood as a Dictator would tell it* written by H.I. Phillips:

Once upon a time there was a poor, weak wolf. It was gentle and kindly and had a heart of gold. It loved everybody and felt very sad when it looked around and saw so much deceit, selfishness, strife, treachery and cunning on the loose. All it wanted was to be let alone. Now in a cottage near the edge of the forest lived a little girl who went by the name of Little Red Riding Hood. (It was obviously an alias.) She was a spy, a vile provocateur and an agent of capitalistic interests. Anybody could tell by one look at Little Red Riding Hood that she was full of intrigue. Her golden curls reeked with base designs. Her pink skin showed tyranny in every pigment. (Zipes, 230)

From *Little Red Riding Hood* written by Walter de la Mare:

In the old days when countrywomen wore riding-hoods to keep themselves warm and dry as they rode to market, there was a child living in a little village near the Low Forest who was very vain. She was so vain she couldn't even pass a puddle without peeping down into it at her apple cheeks and yellow hair. She could be happy for hours together with nothing but a comb and a glass; and then would sit at the window for people to see her. Nothing pleased her better than fine clothes, and when she was seven, having seen a strange woman riding by on horseback, she suddenly had a violent longing for such a riding-hood as hers, and that was of a scarlet cloth with strings. (Zipes, 208)

These versions have been chosen because I consider the beginnings to be suitable for the purpose, namely to notice and analyze contrasts. In accordance with Collie & Slater, comparing beginnings will allow the students to discuss character description, word choice, language usage, and so on, in order to gain an overview of how gender is portrayed. As mentioned earlier in the text, active teacher support is essential to the language learning process, especially regarding vocabulary and grammar, since the exercise deals with authentic materials without explicit support for Swedish second language learners (Collie & Slater). This exercise can be used as a first encounter when starting a new project in class (Collie & Slater). The first encounter may not be unproblematic, students might have difficulties processing or relating to the fairy tale due to lack of interest or uncertainty or simply by thinking that the tale is childish. I hope to overcome these difficulties by adapting the teaching regarding the task of reacting to a set of stories. The teacher should provide the groups with questions to discuss:

- *What happens to the characters in the different versions?*
- *In what way is masculinity and femininity embodied in the version? Do they challenge stereotypes? How?*

- *In what way do Red and the Wolf reflect the time they were written?*
- *In what way do(n't) you recognize yourself in the tale?*

This should be done in groups of 3-4 students, instead of analyzing in class, which some perceive as daunting. They should read the beginning, discuss the questions and take notes of the similarities and differences in characterization, themes, point of view, and gender. In order to avoid unstructured discussions the students should form groups and delegate tasks in terms of which group member is doing what (chairperson, secretary, support, etc.).

3.3 TRAILERS

Having the students dramatize versions of the fairy tale is a clever way of discovering underlying meanings. According to Josephson “To play a role, we usually do not have, can allow us to catch sight of norms that have previously been unclear for us” (196; my translation). The students should choose a version of *Little Red Riding Hood* and highlight parts they find interesting. This is used to create a trailer: a short sequence created in order to advertize a movie or television program (Collie & Slater, 77). However, in this scenario the students shall advertize their fairy tale.

As Hedge observes, “some students find role-play easier than free discussion ...” while others lack motivation for the task (280). Provided that the teacher emphasizes advantages, such as cultural and language enrichment, to the students I believe that motivation will increase (Collie & Slater). The teacher will give instructions of what the trailer should consist of: a narrative during the performance, and highlighted parts of the tale. Students can choose to do a live performance of the version in classroom context or record the trailer with their cell phones as tools and then show a class presentation. Hopefully, it creates a sense of identification amongst the students which can raise awareness regarding gender (The National Agency for Education 2006). According to Collie & Slater the different depictions and

interpretations of the versions can generate interesting discussions after the trailers have been shown (78). Should this not be the case, the students shall be provided with a list of questions that should start a discussion (see Appendix I).

3.4 WRITING THE INNER DIALOGUE OF A CHARACTER

Another exercise which is suitable for students working with gender is writing the inner dialogue of the fairy tale (Collie & Slater, 59). The inner dialogue would parallel the outer dialogue, with the aim of revealing the implied meaning of the tale. The goal is for the students to “gain a fuller understanding both of the imaginary world itself, and also of the narrative or dramatic codes by which an author creates, and a reader re-creates, this complex world of imagination” (ibid.). The students should create a table where both what the character is saying and what the character is thinking is included. As the students write, they should post the inner and outer dialogue on Twitter. In accordance with the National Agency for Education, I believe social media is useful in the English classroom to motivate and encourage the students (2011 a). It is a useful learning tool because it limits the students to a number of 140 characters. I believe this limit will help the students in concretizing the inner dialogue. Conceivable problems with the exercise can be an assumption that all students have enough imagination in order to write the inner monologue. It would be very unfortunate if some students got stuck in the exercise due to lack of imagination. In accordance with Hedge and Collie & Slater, I want to stress that the teacher should support the students at this stage. Suggestions, other examples, or simply some pep talk could be offered to the students should they get stuck. This can also be done via Twitter. By having a Twitter-account, the teacher will have an instant overview of students’ progress. In addition, the teacher can keep watch of student interaction and make sure it is conducted in a civil tone.

3.5 THE HOT SEAT

The hot seat is a classic exercise in classroom context, especially when dealing with valuation questions (Josephson, 192). Students should sit in a ring of chairs while someone, preferably the teacher, reads a statement with regards to *Little Red Riding Hood*. The teacher should inform the students that by standing up they agree and by sitting down they disagree with the statement, do not know, or do not want to speak about it. In accordance with basic values stated in the Swedish Curriculum, students should also be reminded to listen attentively to their classmates, not to question anyone's standpoint, and that it is allowed to change his/hers opinion at any time (The National Agency for Education 2006). I am an advocate of the hot seat in a gender context because it can encourage the students into forming an opinion and engage them into discussion. Seeing the students as producers of opinions and ideas is a key element in the exercise which the teacher should also make the students aware of (Hedge, 57). After some statements have been read, the teacher and the students carry on a dialogue of thought and reflections. A small selection of statements to include in this exercise is:

- I like candy/movies/books.
- Girls can be strong. Boys can be strong.
- The Wolf is better than Red at being evil.
- I like Red as a teenager.
- Girls are weak. Boys are weak.
- Red is better at being evil than the Wolf.
- I like the Wolf as in love.
- Children can lie to their parents. Parents can lie to their children.
- Red is independent. The Wolf is independent.
- Girls can be vain. Boys can be vain.
- Red is a female role model. The Wolf is a male role model.
- I think Red is cool as a spy.

Students should motivate their opinions by drawing parallels to the versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* when they can. By starting with a non-charged question the students will hopefully ease into the exercise. I think it is important to mix general and specific statements in order for the students to reflect on them with regards to their personal involvement (Collie & Slater, 6).

4 CONCLUSION

In this essay, I have explored ways of using the fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood* as a tool in the English classroom in Upper Secondary School in order to analyze and discuss gender. The starting point has been the Swedish Curriculum, the syllabuses in English and literature from a pedagogical perspective. Moreover, I have focused on those fundamental values concerning gender and equality which I perceive as most important to deal with in school. I have shown the possibilities, and possible obstacles, with working with literature in the English classroom. I have had the overall aim of improving and developing the four skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing as a guide throughout the project. I have identified and discussed aspects which I have found important to include in the project, including characterization, point of view, gender, and theme. A gender perspective has been important to emphasize throughout the project, especially questions concerning feminism, war, youth, the characterization of *Red* and *the Wolf*, point of view and gender stereotypes of masculinity and femininity in the different versions. I have argued that using literature in the English language classroom is both fruitful to the student when exploring gender issues in society.

To conclude, I believe that problematizing gender in a classroom context will raise awareness amongst the students of the subject. With support from critical reading and worksheets that question moral, students can acquire a deeper understanding of gender aspects and thereby prevent cementing stereotypes. As mentioned earlier, students are producers of opinions, ideas, and information and, I believe, very capable of reaching the goals of the project (Hedge). By using the different versions as tools, the purpose can be achieved with teacher guidance along with students' motivation. Students will in the end of the project be able to draw conclusions of attitudes, values, etc. and to understand implied meaning regarding gender in *Little Red Riding Hood* (The National Agency for Education, 2011 a).

REFERENCES

Print

Collie, J. & Slater, S. *Literature in the language classroom. A resource book of ideas and activities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. Print.

Hedge, Tricia. *Teaching and learning in the language classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.

Josephson, Agneta. "På väg mot normkritiskt arbete med forumteater, forumspel och värderingsövningar" *Normkritisk pedagogik – Makt, lärande och strategier för förändring*. (2010): 183-206. Uppsala: Centrum för genusvetenskap. Print.

Lundahl, Bo. *Läsa på främmande språk. Om autentiska texter, kreativ läsning och läsförmågans betydelse för språkinläringen*. Malmö: Studentlitteratur, 1998. Print.

Paran, Amos. "Between Scylla and Charybdis: The Dilemmas of Testing Language and Literature" *Testing the Untestable in Language Education* (2010): 143-164. Clevedon: Channel View Publications. Print.

Zipes, Jack. *The Trials & Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*. New York & London: Routledge, 1993. Print.

Web.

- The National Agency for Education (2011 a) *Course plan for English – English 5, English 6, English 7*. (accessed 2012-09-19)
http://www.skolverket.se/polopoly_fs/1.174543!/Menu/article/attachment/English%20120906.pdf

- The National Agency for Education (2011 b) *Läroplan, examensmål, och gymnasiegemensamma ämnen för gymnasieskolan 2011*. (accessed 2012-10-05) <http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=2705>
- The National Agency for Education (2006) *Curriculum for the non-compulsory school system Lpf 94*. (accessed 2013-01-03) <http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=1072>
- Kitsis, Edward & Horowitz, Adam. *Once Upon A Time*. Season 1, episode 15. 2012.

APPENDIX I

Possible questions to start a discussion after the trailers have been shown. Some questions can be applied to all versions, and others are typical for a specific version.

- *Little Red Cap* by Jacob & Wilhelm Grimm (1812)
Does the moral reflect the idea of femininity? How does the moral reflect the idea of obedience? In what way do the descriptions of the character cement gender stereotypes?
- *Little Red Riding Hood* by Walter de la Mare (1927)
Why is Red portrayed as being vain? What does this tell us?
- *The Girl and the Wolf* by James Thurber (1939)
What does the author tell us about Red? What can have caused a male author to write this version?
- *Little Red Riding Hood as a Dictator would tell it* by H.I. Phillips (1940)
Is Red supposed to resemble an actual person during this time period? Why was the Wolf portrayed as a good citizen? What is the author trying to convey by switching good and evil? How has the period of time affected Red and the Wolf?
- *Little Red Cap '65* by Anneliese Meinert (1965)
How does the fact that Red is a teenager affect the story?
- *Not So Little Red Riding Hood* by Anne Sharpe (1985)
Is the Wolf's behavior appropriate? Why (not)? How do we notice traces of feminism in the tale? In what way is masculinity embodied in the version?

- *The Waiting Wolf* by Gwen Strauss (1990)

What has happened to the Wolf? How has the change affected his character in terms of point of view/masculinity?

- Season 1 Episode 15 in *Once upon a Time* (2012)

What is the moral of this version? Why did the grandmother lie to Ruby?