



# Teaching literature at AS and A Level in Modern Languages

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# Objectives

- Place Literature teaching in MFL in context
- Explore the Benefits
- Understand why is it so hard for our pupils
- Explore text selection and course design
- Try out three stage reading
- Explore methods of textual analysis
- Discuss resources and preparation advice

# The decline and return of literature in language study

*‘Literature is back, but wearing different clothes.’* (Maley, 1989)

## **Traditional View (until approx. 1930s)**

- Learning a foreign language meant a study of the canonical literature of that language (Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000).

## **Communicative Approach (1960s)**

- ‘Literature was seen as extraneous to everyday communication needs’, (Carter, 2007)
- Also seen as ‘elitist’ and ‘remote from ordinary language production’ (Gilroy & Parkinson, 1997).

## **Proficiency Movement (1970s and 1980s)**

- Use of L2 literature as authentic texts
- Recognising literary texts as an opportunity to develop vocabulary acquisition, reading strategies and reasoning skills (Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000).

## **Current system**

- Optional literature
- Many schools opting for region or historical study instead

A graphic featuring a large red hexagon in the center with the text "A LEVEL REFORM" in white. Surrounding the hexagon are several smaller, tilted red cubes, each displaying a different A-level subject logo, including subjects like Art, Biology, Business, Chemistry, Design, Economics, English, Geography, History, Maths, Music, PE, Physics, Psychology, Religious Studies, Science, Sociology, and Technology.

# A LEVEL REFORM

# Benefits of studying literature in MFL for language acquisition

- Seeing language items and vocabulary used in (authentic) context (Widdowson, 1975).
- It pushes them to ‘halt and ponder’ over usual language and reflect on its usage and effectiveness (Cook, 1994).
- Recognition of ‘language organisation’ (i.e. syntax) (Carter, 2007).
- Range of styles, registers and text types, sometimes within one work (Duff and Maley, 1990).
- CLT approach: literature creates ready-made ‘opinion gaps’ for discussion (Duff and Maley, 1990).
- Literary language is aesthetically pleasing and memorable (Collie and Slater, 1987).

# Other benefits of studying literature in MFL

- Developing intercultural awareness and understanding

‘It is thought that cultural awareness can be promoted particularly effectively through language and literature pedagogies, since language [...] reveals much about its users and the societies they interact with, and can also be used to prompt learners’ growing awareness of their own individual and cultural identities, beliefs and values. (Hall, 2005, p. 41)

# Other benefits of studying literature in MFL

- Learners begin to acquire an appreciation for the richness and variety of the language they are studying (Gilroy & Parkinson, 1997).
- Developing interpretive and inferential skills, or ‘critical thinking’ (Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000).

# Other benefits of studying literature in MFL

- Engagement and interest

‘Unlike most other types of text, a work of literature has the potential to engage the reader’s interest in an unfolding narrative and in the fate of strongly delineated characters’ (Allford and Pachler, 1998).



# Why is studying literature in MFL so hard?

## 1) It contains language which deviates from the standard.

Poetry is ‘organised violence committed on ordinary speech’ (Jacobson, 1980).

### Poetry as different and difficult on three distinct levels:

- Issues of sound – structure, such as alliteration and assonance
- Choice of words (in terms of variety and archaic or colloquial vocabulary)
- The combination of these words, such as inverted word order and unusual collocations.

*‘The vocab is hard because it’s all religious themed and that is not going to come up in a regular conversation, so you don’t know it already, but it is good because it widens the range of topics that you can talk about.’* **Candidate 6, study undertaken by Angharad Simpson Jan 2015**

# Why is studying literature in MFL so hard?

## 2) Free Indirect Discourse

‘Nobody actually speaks, however clearly we may think we hear their voices as we read,’ since the boundaries between speech and thought are extremely blurred (Hall, 2005, p. 25).

# Why is studying literature in MFL so hard?

## 3) Lack of experience

Their relative lack of experience of life and limited literary reading experience leaves them ill-placed to pick up on items within the text, leading to bewilderment and a tendency to give up (Richards, 1929) in (Hall, 2005).

# Why is studying literature in MFL so hard?

## 4) Previous negative experiences

Martin and Laurie (1993) reported that previous negative experience of (L1) literature often contributed to a negative attitude towards L2 literary study, where students expressed doubts about their own competence to read literature in a foreign language.

*'I didn't really like doing literature in English at GCSE so the prospect of doing it again but in another language... well that was very daunting.'*

*Candidate 1, study undertaken by Angharad Simpson Jan 2015*

# Why is studying literature in MFL so hard?

## 5) Point-driven reading vs. information reading

Vipond and Hunt (1984) stress the difficulties of ‘point-driven reading’, which assumes that any evidence given will somehow be seen in due course to contribute to a larger meaning, picking up on the aforementioned linguistic complexities of a text and considering why they are used.

L2 processing, being less automatic, renders the more elaborate inference skills required to understand literature more difficult.

*‘Sometimes I understand what the words mean but it’s hard... you have to think about what it means on a second level even when you know the words.’*

***Candidate 3, study undertaken by Angharad Simpson Jan 2015***

# Challenges and possible solutions

|                                                |  |
|------------------------------------------------|--|
| 1) Language which deviates from the standard   |  |
| 2) Free indirect discourse                     |  |
| 3) Lack of life and literature experience      |  |
| 4) Previous negative experience of literature  |  |
| 5) Point driven reading v. information reading |  |
| 6) Other?                                      |  |

# Choosing a text

## Some considerations:

- Story structure
- Length
- Historical setting and usefulness to general topic coverage
- Obvious analysis material
- References
- British texts within the same canon

‘If a work is historically remote from the reader she will possess a limited understanding of the society and period for which it was written, or she might be confronted by TL works about whose English counterparts she is ignorant. [...] Before tackling for instance Goethe’s *Werther* or Laclos’ *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* she might read an eighteenth century epistolary novel in English.’ (Pachler and Allford, 1998).

# **Approaching Literature Teaching: Language work**

## **Point-driven reading taking priority**

- ‘If we have to look at the nuts and bolts (the grammar and the vocabulary), then of course we will do so if it helps’ (Gower, 1986, p. 127).

## **When to undertake language work?**

- Before?
- During?
- After?



# Approaching Literature Teaching: Socio-historical Background work

When to undertake background work?

- Before?
- During?
- After?

# Approaches to Literature Teaching:

## “Three Stage Reading”

### **Stage 1) Read for plot and understanding**

- Teacher as translator
- Pupils as translator
- Skim and summarise (paragraph, page, chapter)

### **Stage 2) Read for language acquisition**

- Highlight all the verbs in this extract in the past historic.
- Highlight all the subjunctive triggers and verb conjugations
- What does the ‘la’ refer to in this sentence?

### **Stage 3) Read for analysis**

- Making judgements about information in the text
- Relating information to elsewhere in the text
- Anticipate what might happen later on
- What is the author’s message here?
- What imagery is being used here and why?

## *In a small group...*

1) *What is going on here? Read your extract and summarise it here briefly in English:*

2) *Reflect on the language used in this extract, ticking all that apply and noting down some key useful vocab in the box.*

- ☐ *Colloquial*
- ☐ *Formal*
- ☐ *Regional*
- ☐ *Archaic*
- ☐ *Descriptive*

*Vocab*

3) *What do you think the author is trying to tell us in this extract?*

*Why is this an important scene / extract in the wider context of the novel?*

Quell'anno il grano era alto. A fine primavera aveva piovuto tanto, e a metà giugno le piante erano più rigogliose che mai. Crescevano fitte, cariche di spighe, pronte per essere raccolte.

Ogni cosa era coperta di grano. Le colline, basse, si susseguivano come onde di un oceano dorato. Fino in fondo all'orizzonte grano, cielo, grilli, sole e caldo.

Non avevo idea di quanto faceva caldo, uno a nove anni, di gradi centigradi se ne intende poco, ma sapevo che non era normale.

Quella maledetta estate del 1978 è rimasta famosa come una delle più calde del secolo. Il calore entrava nelle pietre, sbriciolava la terra, bruciava le piante e uccideva le bestie, infuocava le case. Quando prendevi i pomodori nell'orto, erano senza succo e le zucchine piccole e dure. Il sole ti levava il respiro, la forza, la voglia di giocare, tutto. E la notte si schiattava uguale.

*Io non ho paura,*

Niccolò Ammaniti

## Teacher as translator

- T goes through extract slowly, pupils annotate words on their page they didn't understand.
- Good for building confidence initially.
- Makes sure that basic plot understanding is secure.
- T can then delve into some language work e.g. underline all the imperfect tense verbs here.
- T can help guide ideas on what the author might be trying to tell us here.

# Un gioco di vocabolario

La  
primave  
sa

heat

giocare  
notte

Le  
colline

tomatoe

The sun

famous

Le case

waves

Centigr  
ade

Le

It used  
to burn

orchard June

estate

Brusquement, il s'est levé, a marché à grands pas vers une extrémité de son bureau et a ouvert un tiroir dans un classeur. Il en a tiré un crucifix d'argent qu'il a brandi en revenant vers moi. Et d'une voix toute changée, presque tremblante, il s'est écrié : « Est-ce que vous le connaissez, celui-là ? » J'ai dit : « Oui, naturellement. » Alors il m'a dit très vite et d'une façon passionnée que lui croyait en Dieu, que sa conviction était qu'aucun homme n'était assez coupable pour que Dieu ne lui pardonnât pas, mais qu'il fallait pour cela que l'homme par son repentir devînt comme un enfant dont l'âme est vide et prête à tout accueillir. Il avait tout son corps penché sur la table. Il agitait son crucifix presque au-dessus de moi. ...

## *L'Étranger*

Albert Camus

### **Pupil as translator**

- P translates extract with help from T where necessary.
- Pupils can pre-prepare vocab for their given paragraph as homework.
- Builds confidence
- T can then delve into some language work e.g. underline all the imperfect tense verbs here.
- T can help guide ideas on what the author might be trying to tell us here.

*Habitación blanquísima del interior de la casa de Bernarda. Muros gruesos. Puertas en arco con cortinas de yute rematadas con madroños y volantes. Sillas de anea. Cuadros con paisajes inverosímiles de ninfas o reyes de leyenda. Es verano. Un gran silencio umbroso se extiende por la escena. Al levantarse el telón está la escena sola. Se oyen doblar las campanas.*

*(The bright white interior of Bernarda's house. Thick walls. Arched doorways with canvas curtains edged with tassels and ruffles. Rush chairs. Paintings of non-realistic landscapes with nymphs and legendary kings. It is summer. A vast shadowy silence fills the scene. When the curtain rises the stage is empty. The tolling of bells is heard. The Servant enters.)*

## *La casa de Bernarda Alba* Federico García Lorca

### **Reading for analysis**

- What is the author trying to tell us through the description of the house?
- What is the significance of it being summer?
- What mood is prevailing on the stage?  
How do we know this?



# A note on annotations

explicaba a los más próximos;

—La Jerónima y yo tenemos un telégrafo amoroso.

En aquel momento una rondalla rompía a tocar en la calle.

Alguien cantó:

*En los ojos de los novios*

*releían dos luceros;*

*ella es la flor de la onina,*

*y él es la flor del romero.*

La segunda canción después de un largo espacio de alegre jota de baile volvía a aludir a la boda, como era natural:

*Viva Paco el del Molino*

*y Águeda la del buen garbo,*

*que ayer eran sólo novios,*

*y ahora son ya desposados.*

La rondalla siguió con la energía con que suelen tocar los campesinos de manos rudas y corazón caliente. Cuando creyeron que habían tocado bastante, fueron entrando. Formaron grupo al lado opuesto de la cabecera del salón, y estuvieron bebiendo y charlando. Después pasaron todos al comedor.

En la presidencia se instalaron los novios, los padrinos, Mosén Millán, el señor Cástulo y algunos otros. Labradores acomodados. El cura hablaba de la infancia de Paco y contaba sus diabluras, pero también su seriedad contra los bichos que mataban por la noche a los gatos extraviados, y su deseo de obligar a todo el pueblo a visitar a los pobres de las cuevas y a ayudarles. Hablando de esto vio en los ojos de Paco una seriedad llena de dramáticas reservas, y entonces el cura cambió de tema, y recordó con benevolencia el incidente del revólver, y hasta sus aventuras en la poza del agua.

Nada que en la comida la perdiz en adobo ni la trucha al horno, ni el capón relleno, fran de mano en mano porrones, botas, botellitas, con vinos de diferentes cosechas.

La noticia de la boda llegó al caracol, donde las viejas hilanderas bebieron a la salud de los novios el vino que llevaron la Jerónima y

el zapatero. Éste se mostraba más alegre y libre de palabra que otras veces, y decía que los curas son las únicas personas a quienes todo el mundo llama padre, menos sus hijos, que los llaman tíos.

Las viejas aludían a los recién casados:

—Frescas están ya las noches.

—Lo propio para dormir con compañía.

Una decía que cuando ella se casó había nieve hasta la rodilla.

—Malo para el novio —dijo otra.

—¿Por qué?

—Porque tendría sus noblezas escondidas en los riñones, con la helada.

—Eh, tó, curó de la negra. Cuando enviudes, échame un parte —gritó la Jerónima.

El zapatero, con más deseos de hacer reír a la gente que de insultar a la Jerónima, fue diciendo una verdadera letanía de desvergüenzas:

Cállate, penca del diablo, pata de afilador, albarda, zurripeta, tía chamusca, estropajo. Cállate, que te traigo una buena noticia: Su

Majestad el rey va envidao y se lo lleva la trampa.

—¿Y a mí qué?

—Que en la república no empleamos a las viejas.

Ella decía de sí misma que volaba en una nube, pero no permitía que se lo dijeran los demás. Iba a responder, pero el zapatero continuó:

—No digo a chichales, trucha, chiricaita, mochilera, musgo, pendón, zancaja, pinchatripas, ojassola, mojarra, fajina.

La ensalmadora se apartaba miedosa. Ella seguía con sus bromas. Las viejas del caracol reventaban de risa, y antes de que llegaran las respuestas de la Jerónima, que estaba confusa, decidió el zapatero retirarse victorioso. Por el camino tendía la oreja a ver lo que decían detrás. Se oía la voz de la Jerónima:

—¿Quién iba a decirme que ese monicaco tenía tantas diendas en

"Fanega, the measure for land (1.59 acres) and wheat (1.58 bushels) is colourfully applied to the vulgar term for 'backside' to indicate the width of the cobbler's through sitting."

"The King's been sent packing and he's lost the trick, i.e. the game's up (through misadministration)."

"So what?"

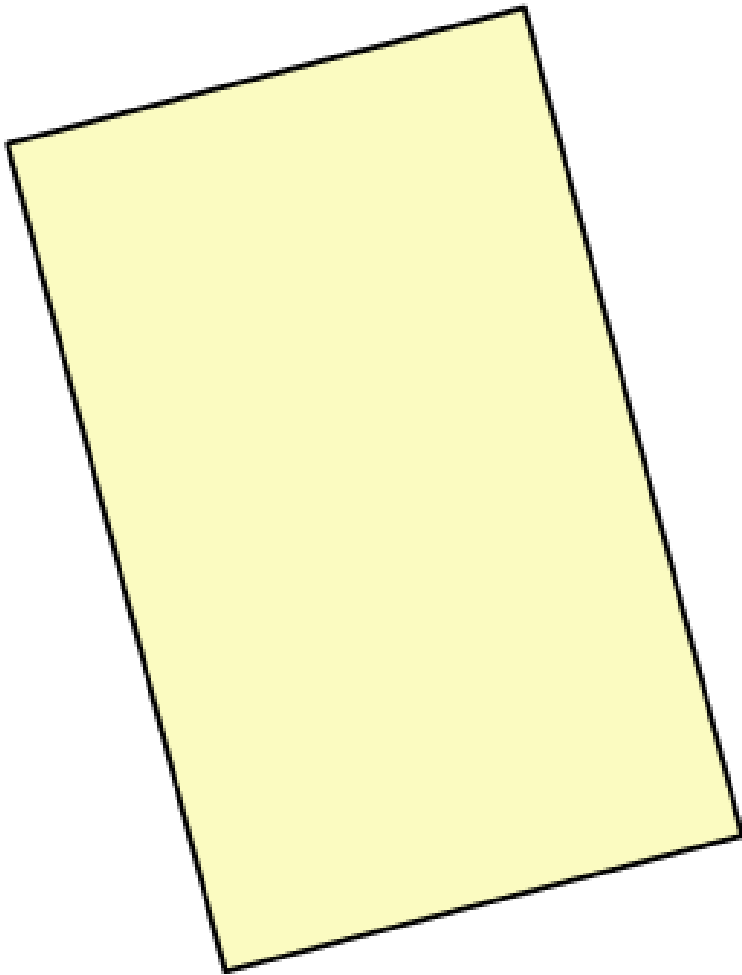


# Analysis at the end of a chapter / section

- Summarising key events in the chapter
- Look at character development of protagonist(s) through those events
- Make links to elsewhere in the novel
- Possibly discuss author's message

Haz una lista de los acontecimientos que  
recuerdas de la infancia de Paco

*(Make a list of all the events that you can remember from Paco's childhood)*



|                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                         |                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                        | <b>El Bautizo</b><br><i>(The Baptism)</i>                                                                                               | <b>El perro y el gato</b> <i>(The dog and the cat)</i> | <b>El viejo revólver</b><br><i>(The old revolver)</i>                                                                                                                     | <b>La Semana Santa</b><br><i>(Holy Week)</i>                                                                       | <b>La visita a las cuevas</b><br><i>(The visit to the caves)</i>                                                                                             |
| <b>¿Qué pasó?</b><br><i>(What happened?)</i>                                                           |                                                                                                                                         |                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>¿Qué nos dice del personaje de Paco?</b><br><i>(What does this tell us about Paco's character?)</i> | La familia de Paco es izquierdista y trabajador.                                                                                        |                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Vínculos a su vida adulta / su muerte</b><br><i>(Links to his adult life / his death)</i>           | De adulto, Paco impulsa la reforma agraria y por esto, se mete en líos con las tres familias pudientes y las autoridades nacionalistas. |                                                        | De adulto, Paco aventaja a las guardias y huye cuando ha sido detenido.<br><br>Toma las armas de las guardias del duque y úsalas para protegerse cuando está en el monte. | La escena de muerte de Paco es presentada como la crucifixión de Cristo. Mosén Millán traiciona a Paco como Judas. | Su pasión por la justicia social y la importancia que pone en ayudar a la gente va a causarle problemas con las autoridades nacionalistas en la vida adulta. |

# Mensajes del autor

# Técnicas estilísticas del autor

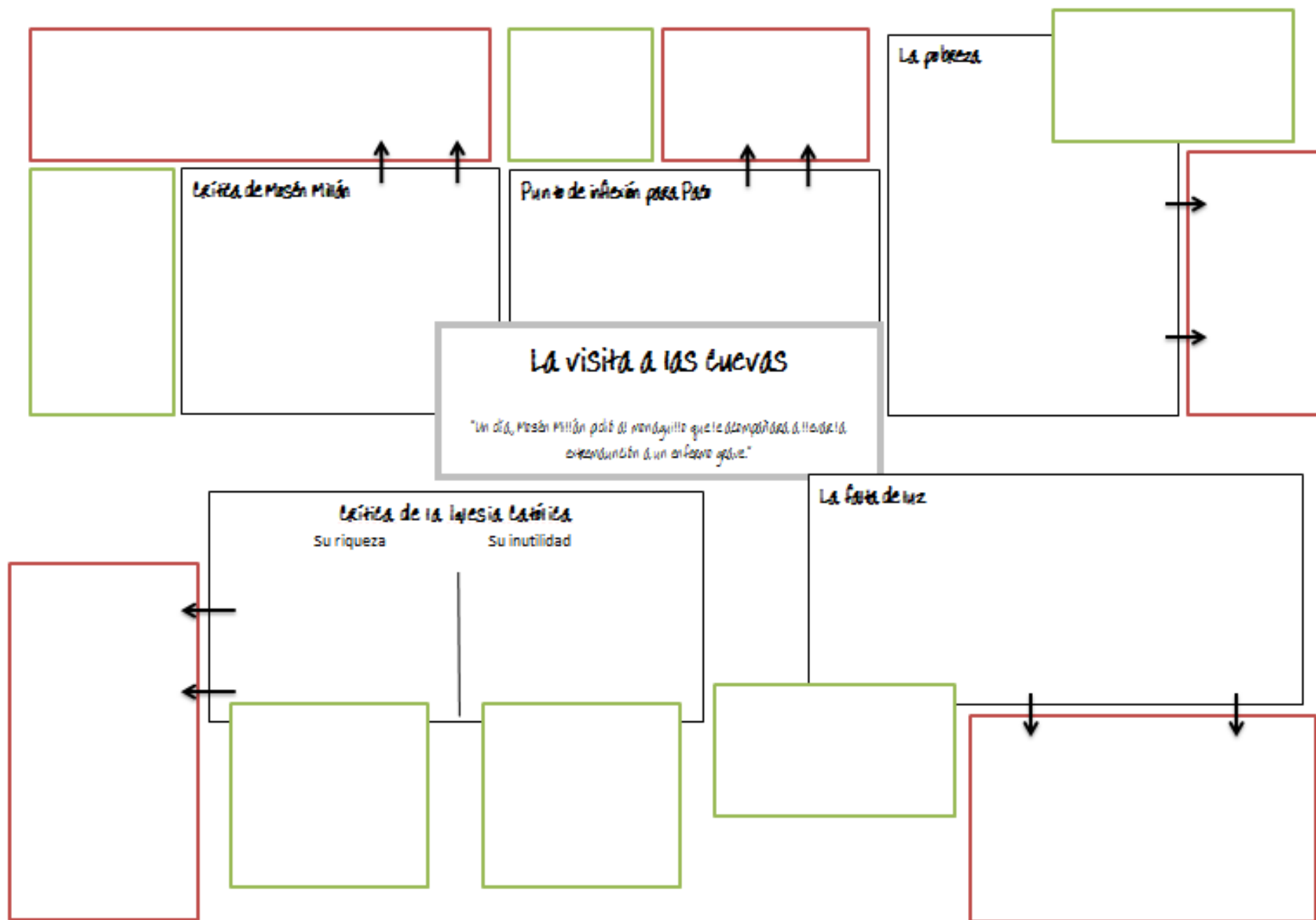
Capítulos 1 y 2 – Réquiem

*Author's messages*

*Author's stylistic techniques*

## Vocabulario importante

*Important vocabulary*



Links to other parts of the novel  
(before or after the caves)

Paco remembers the caves on his wedding day!  
When working for the council it becomes his life's work to champion this cause.

What message is the author trying to tell us?

- Visit to the caves turned him into a man
- Sparked a passion for social justice and fighting to help the poor
- Clear link between wealth and evil.

### Punto de inflexión para Paco

- “Paco seguía mirando alrededor”
- “La silueta del enfermo [...] se proyectaba en el muro.”
- “Su hijo no debe ser malo. Si fuera malo, sus padres tendrían dinero. Robaría.”
- “Habló dos o tres veces más del agonizante [con sus padres].”
- “MM pensaba que aquella visita de Paco a las cuevas influyó mucho en todo lo que había de sucederle después.”

# Opportunities for personal reflection

- IB Spanish / French / German B course

*Imagine you are Alice. Write a diary entry describing what happened to you today when you went to the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. Try to use vocabulary items from the text wherever you can and make sure that your style and tone is appropriate for Alice. Ponder what will happen to you next...*



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TphCz4xSX1A>



la casa de bernarda alba project



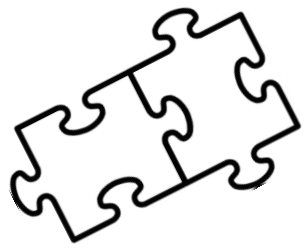
LisandraWeasley

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# Putting the pieces together

Activities that enable pupils to show a flowing understanding of the full text

- Simple factual description answers (in TL or English) moving through each chapter.
- 100 word summary in TL / English
- Tweet it?
- Emoji story
- Chapter summary in pictures – one card per chapter and put chapters in correct order.

Juliet is the 🌞

Jules, will u marry me? 💍

Ya!!

Cool, I know this priest 🏪

Today 4:42 PM

Sorry about your cousin.  
Now I'm banished.

I must hear from thee  
every day in the hour!!

Delivered

K I'll text you later 😴

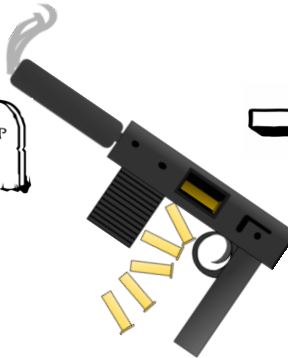
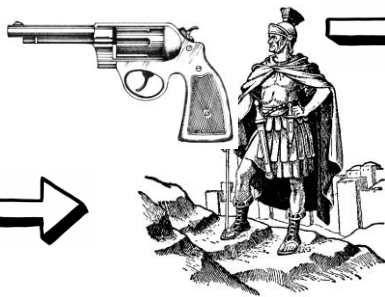
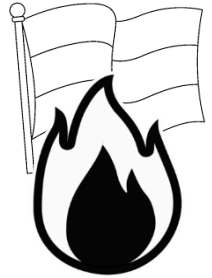
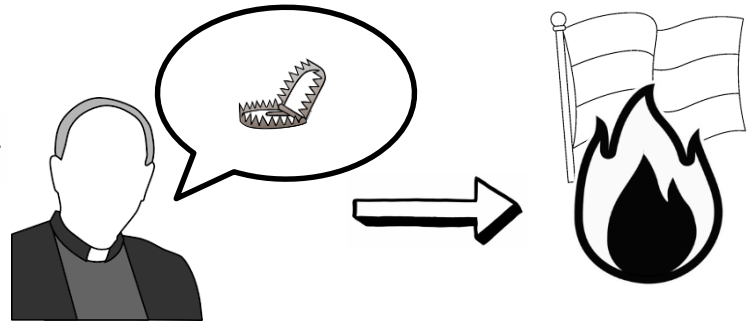
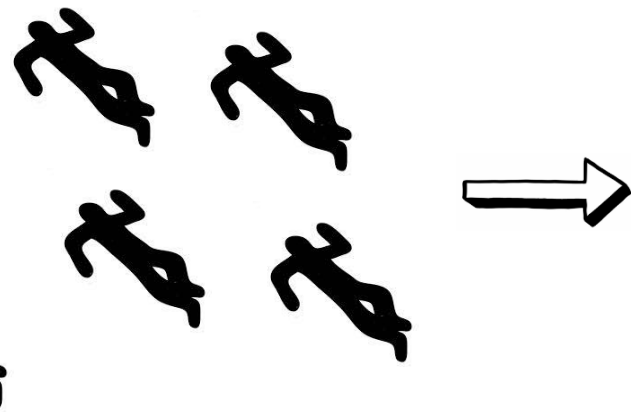
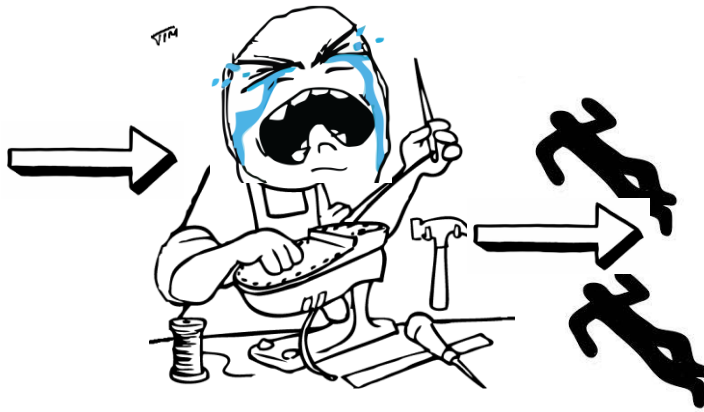
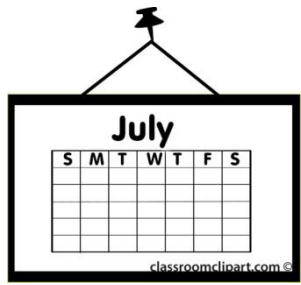
Text Message

I'm faking my death to run  
away with you! Wake me  
up when you get here.



Not Delivered





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfI9h1Gmqrk>



La Casa de Bernarda Alba



Zana sej



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# Once the reading is over, the real analysis can begin...

- Analyse a key theme and why the author tackles it? Is it relevant for today?
- Analyse a main character and their development. What do they represent?
- What stylistic techniques does the author use and what is their effect?
- Is it necessary to understand the socio-cultural background of this novel to fully appreciate it?

Discute uno de los temas más importantes de la novela que has estudiado. ¿Qué quiere decir el autor a través de este tema? ¿Tiene alguna importancia para la sociedad actual?: El tema de CULPA Y TRAICIÓN en *Réquiem por un campesino español*

Why is GUILT & BETRAYAL a key theme?

Guilt in contrast to INNOCENCE of Republicans

Judas betrayed Christ

GUILTY priest = part of Sender's wider criticism of The Church

What is the author trying to say? / Relevance for today?

# Preparing our learners for literature study in MFL

- Introducing some literary texts at IGCSE and KS3.
- Using authentic materials to boost confidence
- Children's stories to reinforce grammar points.



## Le Petit Chaperon rouge

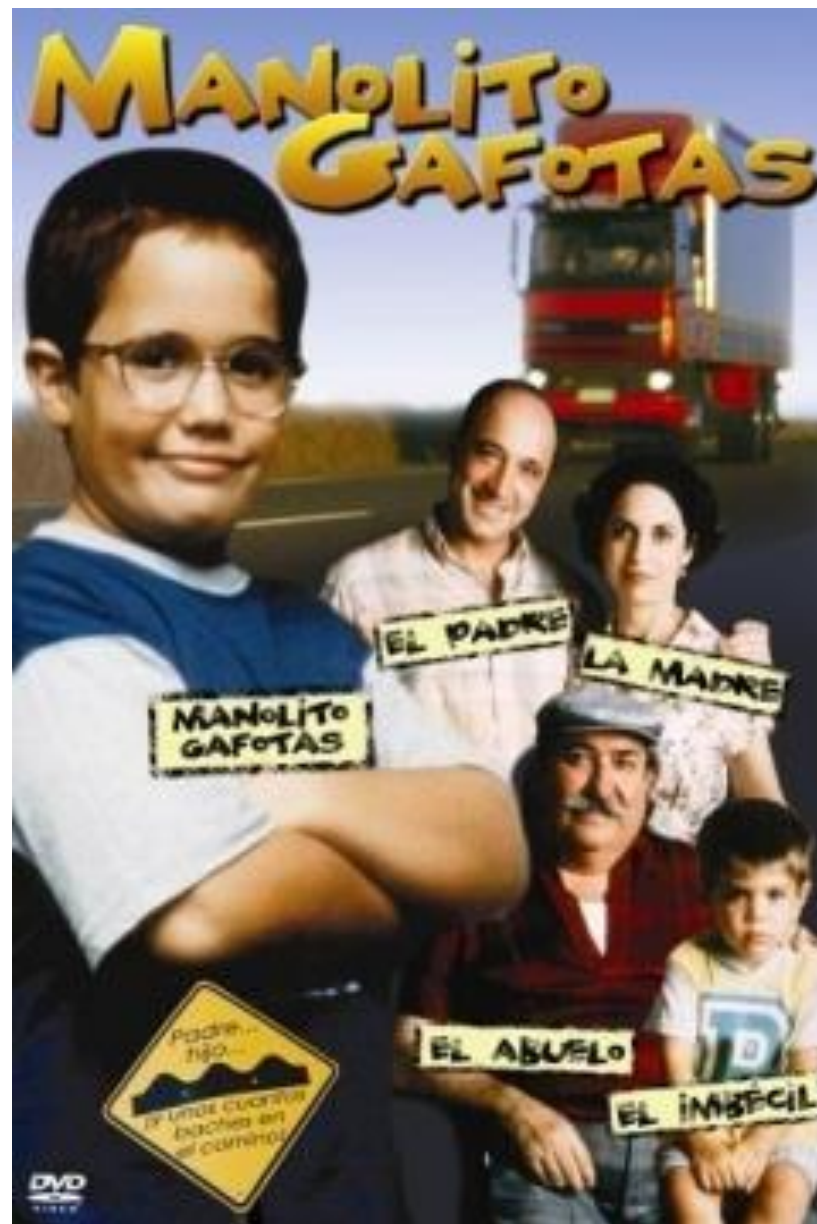
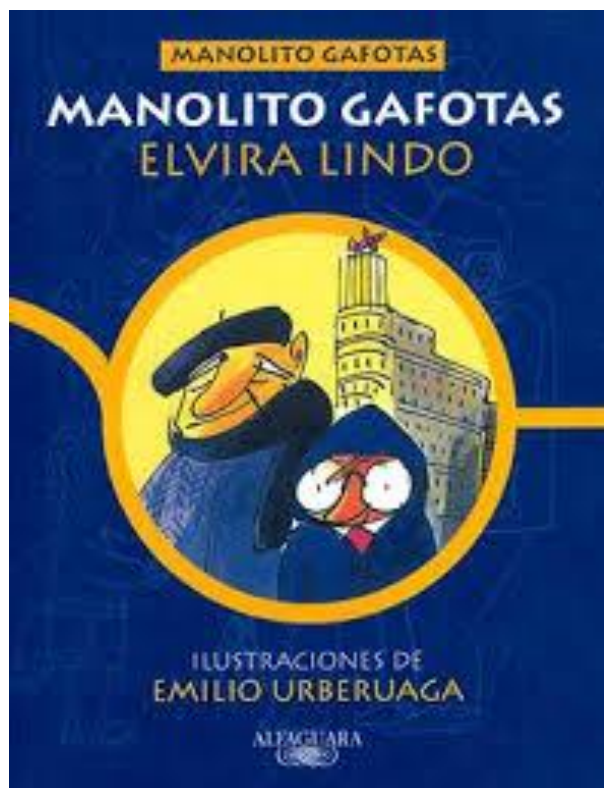
Il était une fois, il y a très longtemps, une petite fille qui vivait dans un village. Sa mère et sa grand-mère l'aimaient beaucoup. Un jour, sa grand-mère lui a donné un petit chaperon de couleur rouge. Le chaperon lui allait si bien que tout le monde appelait la petite fille le Petit Chaperon rouge. Un beau matin de printemps, sa mère a fait une galette et lui a dit :

- Grand-mère est malade. Apporte-lui cette galette et ce petit pot de beurre. Alors le Petit Chaperon rouge est partie chez sa grand-mère qui habitait un peu loin. Pour aller chez sa grand-mère, le Petit Chaperon rouge devait traverser la forêt et le Petit Chaperon rouge a rencontré Monsieur le Loup. Le loup était tout noir. Il avait les yeux jaunes et il avait l'air très méchant. Le loup voulait manger la petite fille mais, comme il y avait des bûcherons, le loup avait peur. Il lui a demandé où elle allait. La petite fille ne savait pas que c'est dangereux de parler à un loup. Elle lui a répondu :

- Je vais voir ma grand-mère. Je lui apporte une galette et un petit pot de beurre.
- Est-ce que ta grand-mère habite loin d'ici ?
- Oui, c'est très loin.







Sempé / Goscinny

# Le Petit Nicolas

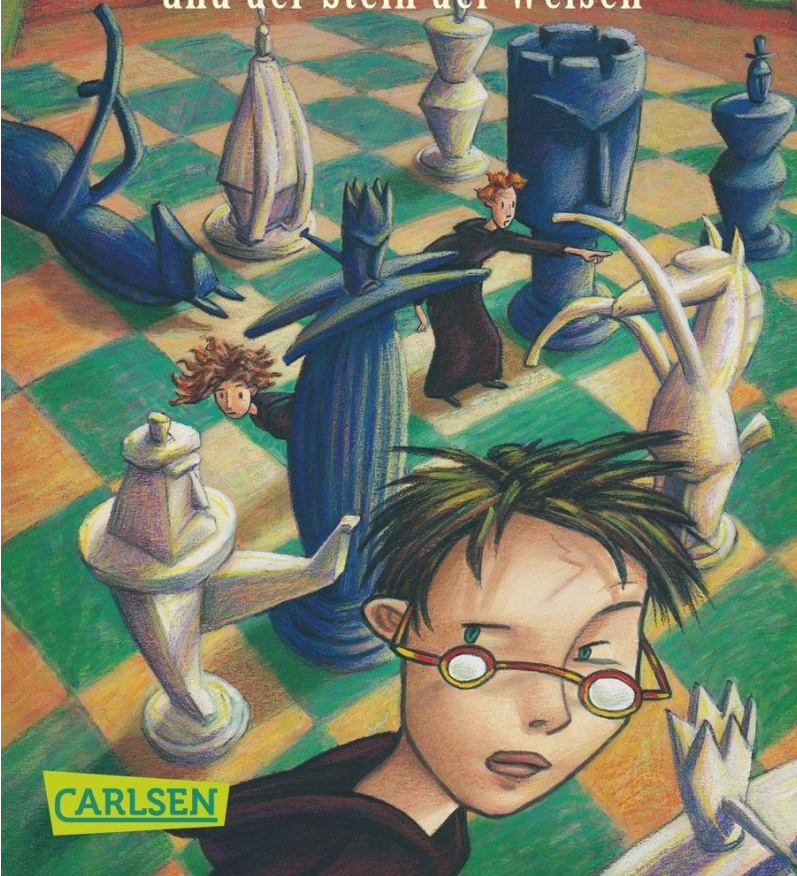


folio  
junior

Joanne K. Rowling

# Harry Potter

und der Stein der Weisen



CARLSEN

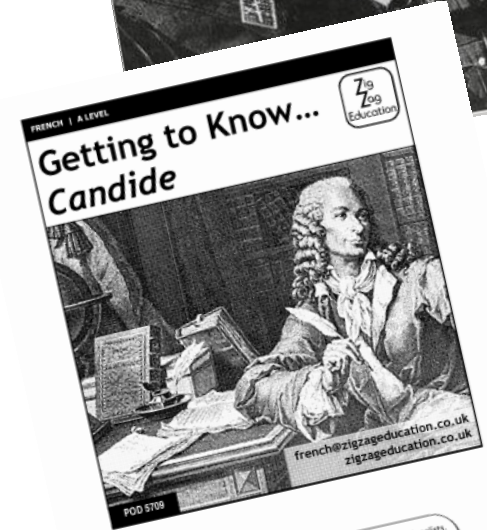
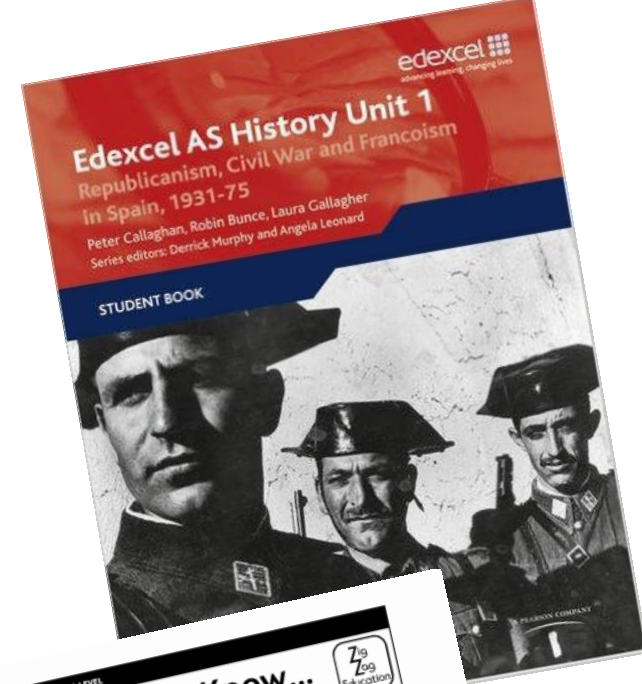
# How to prepare yourself to teach literature in MFL

- Choose your text carefully.
- Re-read the text, thinking about your learners as you read.
- Choose a few key themes to explore. Assign each one a colour and take a highlighter to your copy of the text.
- Think about sectioning the text off into teachable chunks. They may not be *even* chunks.
- Prepare analysis ideas (organised by theme) in advance for yourself.



# Resources

- Awaiting accreditation on reformed MFL A-Levels.
- Textbooks have been promised...
- Think about using GCSE / AS / A2 History textbooks for socio-historical background.
- Introduction sections
- Spark notes, gradesaver.com
- JSTOR, Google books
- Zig Zag “Getting to know...”



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# Questions?



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