



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
INST FÖR SPRÅK OCH LITTERATURER

ENGELSKA

TEACHING *THE HUNGER GAMES*

Read

Write

Speak

Listen

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ABSTRACT

This essay explores how the best-seller *The Hunger Games* can be applied in the classroom. In the curriculum for the English courses in Upper Secondary School the students should develop an all-round communicative competence including receptive, productive and interactive language skills. The aim of the essay is to find methods that provide a variety of activities which give the students opportunities to develop all language competences: reading, writing, speaking and listening along with grammar and vocabulary, within the same book project. This essay presents pedagogical methods regarding the structure of a book project, with activities challenging all language skills, and is designed from a socio-cultural perspective with the focus on the students' needs and interest.

Today, there is a resistance among many teenagers to read books and many teachers find it time-consuming to work with literature. For these two reasons, I have designed a book project which contains activities that correspond to much of the content of the curriculum, and I believe the book I have chosen may appeal to a great number of students. Suzanne Collins, the author of the book, has received a number of prizes for writing a different as well as a very exhilarating book that one cannot stop reading. I have also chosen this book because it contains several different and interesting topics, such as societal issues, politics, future scenarios, ethical dilemmas, love, relationships, gender issues, survival strategies, TV and media, and violence. These topics can be related to the students' own experiences, the society of today, and the future.

I would like to see more books in the classrooms, and students that enjoy reading. I think the genre of popular literature can be very useful when introducing literature, which is what the following chapters will try to demonstrate.

Table of content

1 INTRODUCTION	4
1.1 Method and material	6
2 TEACHING POPULAR LITERATURE AND <i>THE HUNGER GAMES</i>	8
2.1 Summary of <i>The Hunger Games</i> and a short analysis.....	10
2.2 Meaningful input creates motivation.....	14
2.3 Pedagogic aspects of <i>The Hunger Games</i>	15
3 IN THE CLASSROOM	18
3.1 Introduction of <i>The Hunger Games</i>	19
3.2 Developing writing competence.....	22
3.3 Developing speaking competence.....	25
3.4 Developing reading competence	27
3.5 Conclusion of book project	29
4 CONCLUSION	30
5 APPENDIX	34
5.1 Appendix 1	34
5.2 Appendix 2	36
6 LIST OF REFERENCES	38

1 INTRODUCTION

Today, teenagers spend a large amount of time watching television and playing on the computer rather than reading a book. Web-based text, text messaging, and subtitles do not provide intensive reading, which is the type of reading contributing to good reading comprehension (Josefsson, GP, 2012-03-30). Good reading competence is crucial for school-results regardless of theoretical subject. With this essay, I would like to propose ideas on how to make students willing to read and enjoy books, at least in the classroom and hopefully outside as well.

I believe it is important that the books used in the classroom appeal to the students, otherwise they will not find it fun to read. For that reason, I have chosen to focus on the genre of popular literature and the best-seller *The Hunger Games*. The story line of the book is about the annual Hunger Games, broadcast on national TV in a futuristic North America. It is a live TV-show where twenty-four contestants, all teenagers, fight for survival by killing each other. The winner is the one who does not die. This book has gained a great deal of attention, and won a number of prizes for being a different as well as a very exhilarating book that one cannot stop reading. Some teachers think that books like this do not belong in the classroom; however, I think this genre can be very useful when introducing literature. Furthermore, my opinion is that through literature one can attain more than improved reading proficiency. Therefore, this study examines pedagogical methods which I have suggested to use in order to develop a diverse range of language skills.

This study explores how the book *The Hunger Games* can be used to develop students' language competence in accordance with the curriculum. The aim of the study is to find methods using literature in a varied way where students are given the opportunity not only to read a book, but

instead work with it in a productive way which helps them develop their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills along with vocabulary and grammar. Many teachers think that reading books is time-consuming, and therefore they try to achieve the aims concerning developing reading skills in the curriculum by short novels, text books or extracts (Collie & Slater, 2009). I want my students to truly enjoy a whole book and at the same time achieve more than reading competence by taking advantage of the book, incorporating activities, discussions, and reflection. I believe using literature in a stimulating way, with focus on the students' perspective, can be a good way to create motivation for learning. Literature is something they can involve themselves with outside the classroom, and in that way continue to develop their language skills while enjoying books.

I think this book can be suitable in all courses in Upper Secondary School; however, I have chosen to focus on the first course, *English 5*, when designing tasks in accordance to the curriculum. The Swedish National Agency for Education (2012) describes that the subject's overall aim is to develop a comprehensive communicative proficiency where receptive, productive, and interactive skills are included. According to the curriculum teaching in the subject of English should give students opportunities to develop the following:

- 1) Understanding of spoken and written English, and also the ability to interpret content.
- 2) The ability to express oneself and communicate in English in speech and writing.
- 3) The ability to use different language strategies in different contexts.
- 4) The ability to adapt language to different purposes, recipients and situations.
- 5) The ability to discuss and reflect on living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012).

1.1 Method and material

My method is to find appropriate exercises which will be useful for developing writing, listening, reading and speaking competences when working with literature. The tasks will be designed from a socio-cultural point of view where Lev Vygotski was one of the front figures. According to the socio-cultural approach children's development takes place when interacting with other people, and the social context matters. Rosamond Mitchell and Florence Myles (2004) contend that "higher forms of human mental activity are *mediated*" (194) and this mediation is done socially and is dependent on face-to-face interaction. One example of this social mediation, as a part of the learning process, is when students together solve a problem through discussion. Fundamental to this theory is Vygotski's concept about "the zone of proximal development": "The unskilled individual learns by carrying out tasks and activities under the guidance of other more skilled individuals" (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, 196). In a school context, the unskilled can be a student who develops with the help of a teacher's guidance, or more skilled peers; afterwards the pupil can learn and develop independently (Ibid).

As a teacher, it is essential to know how a second language is learned, and I will briefly present some facts about the process of language-reading and methods used in developing language skills, which my lesson plans are based on. However, in chapter three the pedagogical methods will be explained in more details. Tricia Hedge (2000) describes the process of reading a text in a second language with the word "interactive". Reading a text one does not fully understand requires a great effort in making it comprehensible. It is an active process where six types of knowledge are used in order to understand it: syntactic, morphological, sociocultural, topic, genre, and general world knowledge. The two mentioned first have to do with language itself and

are called linguistic knowledge, and the remaining are together referred to as schematic knowledge. In the process of reading, everything interacts, and second language pedagogy assumes that students need help with both linguistic and schematic knowledge. Schematic knowledge makes it easier to understand a text; however, a certain level of language competence is necessary beforehand. It is thus important that teachers are aware of their students' abilities and their needs when designing projects (Hedge, 2000).

The material chosen is the book *The Hunger Games* because I think that it will be appealing to students in Upper Secondary School, as I further develop later in chapter two. Hedge (2000) points out that relevance and interest together with appropriate tasks can make difficult texts available. Moreover, she maintains the importance of variety in input, both in methods and material which will enable the learner to work in their own style and with their own strategies. Every class, and every student is unique, and that has to be taken into consideration when choosing material and activities. This, however, will not be further developed in this essay since it is not a case study, but a theoretical inquiry that considers examining how *The Hunger Games* can be applied in the classroom. The following chapter will focus on the reasons for teaching popular literature and *The Hunger Games*, explain how to create motivation, and present pedagogic aspects of the book.

2 TEACHING POPULAR LITERATURE AND *THE HUNGER GAMES*

This chapter will give a brief presentation of the genre of popular literature and teaching experiences in the classroom. Bengt Brodow and Kristina Rininsland (2005) have written the book *Att arbeta med skönlitteratur i skolan – praktik och teori*, which is about literature in the classroom. They claim that there is a distinction between "good literature" and "popular literature", and this is accompanied by a discussion among language teachers about which one to teach. However, according to the curriculum a variety of literature should be offered to the students. Brodow and Rininsland interviewed teachers, who are teaching Swedish, about what types of books they work with in the classroom. They consider themselves choosing all categories of books. Some of the teachers in the study answered that they are focusing on modern literature, giving the reason that it is important to know what is new. According to Brodow and Rininsland, it is necessary that teachers are knowledgeable about what type of literature that appeals to teenagers' interest, both in terms of genres, as well as the approximate level of difficulty. Categories of books they suggest to address teenagers, which they consider appropriate literature to begin with are: science fiction, thrillers, and romantic stories. These categories belong to the genre of popular literature, which is described as an access door to other literature, possibly more advance, i.e.: psychological, social criticism and classic books. In this context, Brodow and Rininsland (2005) refer to Vygotski's thesis about the zone of proximal development; with the help of the teacher, a wider range of literature will be available if the teacher offers suitable literature regarding interest and level of linguistic skill, and gives support through the reading process. Thereafter, when reading skills are developed, any literature can be selected.

The Hunger Games has its place in popular literature, and Ken Gelder (2004) describes popular fiction with two keywords: industry and entertainment. Many authors writing popular literature produce a large number of books, and sequels are common, which is referred to as an industry by Gelder (2004). These entertaining works within this genre are very popular and usually read by numerous people. Describing this genre is very difficult because it contains such diversity, and therefore, there is no consensus about a definition. Within popular literature there are several genres, and speculative literature would probably be the most appropriate category to describe this versatile novel. The book's setting is in an alternative world, in another time containing elements of science fiction, fantasy and horror. It is also a dystopian novel, which is a type of book describing a futuristic society controlled by an oppressive power. It illustrates a worst-case scenario which can be a disguised critique of political systems, norms or current trends.

Brodow and Rininsland (2005) claim that students appreciate texts which are exciting and melodramatic, which signifies popular literature. The conclusion of their study is that more and more popular literature is used in the classroom and the boundary between "good literature" and "popular literature" is on the way to disappear. Analyses of popular literature show that this genre includes elements associated with "good literature" such as psychology, social criticism, and existential questions which are elements I find in *The Hunger Games*. There is a psychological game taking place among the contestants, and the reader can observe how Katniss evaluates different situations. The book is a dystopian novel, and this could be seen as a critique of social, cultural and political structures in the world. Suzanne Collins portrays the living conditions of District Twelve and the imagined future as very dark, where starvation, poverty, and misery are keywords. She writes that Katniss does not want to bring children into a world like this, and choices of life and survival, including different dilemmas raise many existential questions.

Furthermore, popular literature is suggested to be used for discussing ethical questions about responsibility, empathy, and to reflect about the future of humanity. The authors suggest using this genre as a basis for discussion without devaluing neither the reader nor the literature. Today the focus, when choosing books, seems to be more about the students' interest, which might be one of the reasons why more popular literature is used in the classroom (Ibid).

2.1 Summary of *The Hunger Games* and a short analysis

The Hunger Games is written by Suzanne Collins and it was published in 2008. It has won several book awards, and has been on numerous bestsellers' lists. This is the first book in the trilogy, and the movie premier was in the end of March 2012.

The setting of the book is in the future lands of North America called Panem, which is divided in twelve districts isolated from each other. The book is about Katniss, a sixteen year old girl living in District Twelve. All districts, and the inhabitants, are controlled by the Capitol, a fascistic dictatorship. Each year, one boy and one girl, in the age 12-18 years old, are randomly selected in a lottery to participate in the Hunger Games. This annual contest is a reminder of the war, and also a demonstration of who is in charge, both in the game and outside. It is a live TV-show, and everyone is obliged to watch the children suffer and die. The winner is the one who does not die.

When Primrose, Katniss little sister, is selected to the Hunger Games, Katniss takes her place without hesitation. Ever since their father died she has taken care of the family because her mother was unable to. She has illegally hunted in the woods, putting food on the table and selling parts of it for money. She did everything she could to avoid her sister being sent to the

orphanage. Having this responsibility forced her to grow up very quickly.

Peeta is the boy from District Twelve whose name is drawn in the lottery. They do not really know each other; however, Katniss once had a loaf of bread from Peeta which meant a great deal to her and her family being on the edge of starvation. Because of this Katniss feels gratitude towards him. She truly hopes that someone else in the game will kill him so she does not have to. This is one of the first troublesome dilemmas and ethical problems she struggles with during The Hunger Games.

They are first sent to the Capitol for preparations, and thereafter to the arena. From the start this game is filled with action, everyone is fighting each other trying to survive and at the same time searching for water, food and shelter. The contestants are becoming fewer and fewer, and when there are only a few left new rules are made by the Capitol: if both of the pair from the same district survive, both get to live. So, Katniss decides to find Peeta, who she first thought was part of a pact against her, but later he saves her life, showing that he is on her side. When she finds him, he is very ill, suffering from blood poisoning. She has to take care of him, and the love story begins. However, from the beginning, it is more of a strategy from Katniss' point of view because this gives them resources from the sponsors. However, Peeta's feelings are true, and when he finds out it was a part of the game he is hurt.

Eventually Katniss and Peeta are the only ones left, and in the same second the rules are changed – now there can only be one winner. Katniss refuses to play along with the Capitol's new rule, and outwits the rulers by staging their suicide. This becomes their rescue; both survive and win the game. The book has a satisfying end, and also a cliffhanger to the next book.

The main theme I would say is survival, both in terms of physical and psychological strengths, and what it takes to survive in an inconceivable environment which becomes a living nightmare. Another theme is the war between good and evil, where the Capitol is the evil force, sacrificing innocent children and Katniss is portraying the good. She stands up against the social order, and Panem, so she fights evil both in the Games and outside. Her anger against the Capitol, and the Games is very clearly displayed when Rue, her ally, dies: "I want to do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can't own. That Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I" (236-237). Rue's death makes Katniss determined to win: "I really think I stand a chance of doing it now. Winning. It's not just having the arrows or outsmarting the Careers a few times, although those things help. Something happened when I was holding Rue's hand, watching the life drain out of her. Now I am determined to avenge her, to make her loss unforgettable, and I can only do that by winning and thereby making myself unforgettable" (242). Suzanne Collins portrays Katniss very personally, and the reader can follow her thoughts and emotions carefully. It almost feels like she is telling the story directly to the reader. The reader gets to know Katniss, and also her past when she thinks about home and the loss of her father, family responsibility, hunting, sisterhood and friendships. Her thoughts and actions about how to survive, solving problems and moral dilemmas are constant elements during the games. And, of course, there is a complicated love story. Suzanne Collins has managed to write the novel in a very exciting way, with many surprising elements and different secrets, which keeps the storyline exhilarating. Moreover, the chapters always end in a thrilling fashion, which makes the reader avidly anticipate the next chapter. There are so many layers in this book, and different types of

characters with different stories to tell, together with a fight for life or death which makes the reader keep on turning the pages.

There is also a societal perspective in the book. The reader is given an insight about the living conditions in a controlled society like Panem, where one has no freedom. Panem is a portrayal of how welfare is sustained by impotency and threats, which creates misery in a society where the people become underdogs. This can be a critique by the author of the order of the world today, where the powerful and rich countries decide the rules which the poor countries have to follow. There is an imbalance in the power structure which creates unfairness. In Panem there are twelve districts with different resources and consequently different positions. There is food for everyone, however, scarcity of food is one way of maintaining the power imbalance: "Starvation's not an uncommon fate in District 12. Who hasn't seen the victims? Older people who can't work. Children from a family with too many to feed. Those injured in the mines. Straggling through the streets. And one day, you come upon them sitting motionless against a wall or lying in the Meadow, you hear the wails from a house, and the Peacekeepers are called in to retrieve the body. Starvation is never the cause of death officially. It's always the flu, or exposure, or pneumonia. But that fools no one." (28). Another statement from the author might also be that the concept of "reality shows" has been taken too far, and if we continue in the same way, The Hunger Games might become reality in the future. Of course, this is to go to the extremes; however, exaggeration is a good way to send a clear message.

I think the excitement in the story will keep the students reading, and this book raises many interesting topics for discussion. I think this book will give the students a positive reading experience, and hopefully encourage them to read more books in the future.

2.2 Meaningful input creates motivation

I believe *The Hunger Games* is a versatile story which should be appealing to many students. Motivation is crucial for the learning process. This is something teachers can influence when choosing material and methods, and shed enthusiasm when presenting a project. The challenge for teachers is how to create this motivation, and there is no given recipe. According to Hedge (2000), meaningful input can create motivation among learners. Meaningful is a word that can be interpreted differently; in this context however, she defines it as relevant and interesting for the learner. Research verifies that meaningful input together with appropriate tasks will engage learners in working with language at a level somewhat above their own competence. When it comes to which book to choose, Collie and Slater (2009) point out that relevance to life experiences and emotions, together with provoking reactions are important factors to stimulate the learner's interest.

Books can be very helpful in the language learning process if personal involvement occurs. If the reader is caught up in the book, understanding difficult words becomes less important compared to finding out what happens next. The student will become involved in the book, and motivated to keep on reading. This will have beneficial effects on the language learning process (Collie & Slater, 2009). To work with literature beneficially, Hedge (2000) suggests working with a balanced selection of activities at the same time as reading. This will maintain interest among the students and enable the teacher to work with students' weaknesses in particular competence areas.

2.3 Pedagogic aspects of *The Hunger Games*

Based on my own reading of *The Hunger Games*, my opinion is that this book corresponds to most of the descriptions of what is described in the previous section about meaningful input. It is new and up-to-date popular literature, thrilling and filled with excitement right from the beginning. Despite the fact that the main character is a girl, I think it appeals to both genders since she is a strong character with qualities that both male and female students can relate to. She is a hunter who becomes a fighter and a hero. The main characters are in the same age as the students who will be reading the book. This is about a reality-show, something I understand lies in many teenagers' interest and every-day life. This book is the first in the trilogy, and this offers a possibility to continue reading, if the students wish to.

Furthermore, this book provokes reactions because of its absurdity. The rules of *The Hunger Games* are provocative: children surviving by killing each other. In addition, there are plenty of topics to discuss, reflect on and analyze, such as: *relationships and life experiences* consisting in friendship, relationships among the family, the loss of someone important, love and betrayal. Another topic to discuss may be *societal issues* such as social rights, human rights, power structure, legal systems, security systems, government control, dictatorship, democracy, and transparency; how these elements function in the present day and how the students think the future will look like. *TV and media* may be focused on, discussing different reality-shows, what types of shows should be broadcasted, limitations, TV shows about survival, what we will watch in the future, market demand, internet, media control, and censorship. *Gender* may be analyzed in relation to Katniss as a female hero, other female heroes, identification, and gender issues. The element of violence is apparent during the book, and therefore this book provides a good

opportunity to discuss *violence* and reflect about how it is portrayed in this book, violence on TV, in movies and computer games, violence in the society, non-violence methods as a peacemaker and violence among boys vs. girls.

These are only some examples of ideas that can easily be structured into different tasks that will meet the curriculum's explicit expectation of content:

Subject areas related to students' education, and societal and working life; current issues; events and processes; thoughts, opinions, ideas, experiences and feelings; relationships and ethical issues.

Content and form in different kinds of fiction.

Living conditions, attitudes, values and traditions, as well as social, political and cultural conditions in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used. The spread of English and its position in the world (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012).

I believe the suggested topics give an opportunity to discuss and reflect about ethical issues by using examples from the book. This could be about different choices the characters are forced to do in order to survive, both in *The Game* but also outside, for example how Katniss has to hunt illegally in order to put food on the table. Politics is something that is evident in the book, and this may be analyzed from different perspectives of the world, focusing on English-speaking countries. This includes former colonies where societal structures and living conditions can be identified and compared to the society of Panem. Tasks should be designed to match the students' educational program, and current events as well as what the students find interesting about the book could be included.

One difficulty with the book is that it is rather long, almost 400 pages. Some students will manage easily, and some will need more help and support. Therefore, it is important to identify what difficulties each student has, and give support. Hopefully, the students will manage and appreciate the book. Here is one example from a student in teacher Tracee Orman's class: "I think The Hunger Games is one of the best books I've read because I never wanted to stop reading it. And I really hate to read." (<http://hungergameslessons.com>, 2012-04-20). This is something I would like to accomplish in my classroom.

In the next chapter I will present a book project where I suggest activities that should be done in combination with reading the book. I have chosen to focus on some of the topics mentioned in this chapter: TV and media, and gender and identification. The activities are designed to correspond to the curriculum and include opportunities to develop all language skills.

3 IN THE CLASSROOM

In this chapter I will present ideas of how teachers can apply *The Hunger Games* in the classroom. These suggestions are designed to correspond to the curriculum and the syllabus for *English 5*. I have designed each lesson focusing on one particular skill, and therefore the whole book project provides opportunities to develop all language skills: writing, reading, listening and speaking together with vocabulary and grammar.

Before presenting my book project, I will explain what pedagogical methods that have influenced and founded the project. To begin with, Hedge writes about what types of tasks that help developing reading ability and mentions a three-phase procedure. This includes pre-, while-, and post-reading stages. The pre-reading phase is an introduction of the text. This can be implemented in several ways; however, the goal is that the students become oriented primarily schematically, but also linguistically. Since reading is considered to be an interactive process, learners should be active during their reading. Therefore, it is common to do different exercises while reading. These activities may focus on grammar, vocabulary, understanding the plot, predict the outcome, or character analysis. The teacher should encourage activities, reflection, and response while reading. The post-reading activities' aim is to draw conclusions and to wrap up. During the book project, it is important to do different interactive tasks, as well as individual where the students can focus on what they need to improve (Hedge, 2000).

Most of the ideas are inspired by the book *Literature in the Language Classroom*, which is filled with different ideas and tasks of how to work with literature in a student-centered perspective, which have been tried out in the classroom successfully. They argue that there are advantages of working in smaller groups, explaining that usually members of a group understand different things, and in different ways, and as a result they can help each other with difficulties. If, for instance, no one understands a phrase, this becomes a common problem to solve. In addition, group discussions enable the student to explore one's own reactions and interpretations, and compare it with their peers (Ibid). This is in line with the sociocultural approach and Vygotsky's ideas about how someone learns and develops in a social context when interacting with others. I have tried to design as many student-centered tasks as possible, and I believe this project could be adapted more to the students' needs and interest in a real life situation. Throughout the project, the teacher should work in a supporting way, identifying the needs of each student, and it is important that there is communication between the teacher and the student. The project will be presented in a chronological order, following the plot of the book, and the three phase procedure.

3.1 Introduction of *The Hunger Games*

The introduction of the book is of extreme importance; the book has to be presented so that the students gain interest and feel enthusiasm for the book. Brodow and Rininsland (2005) maintain that a good introduction is a prerequisite for the students to overcome initial difficulties, and enter the book's world with its characters, environments, actions and conflicts. Teachers interviewed by Brodow and Rininsland (2005) gave examples of different methods they used when introducing a book: reading a passage out loud, present information about the author, and determining what the book is about based on its cover. Collie and Slater (2009) also emphasize

the importance of the introduction and give several examples of what they call warm-ups. Bo Lundahl, language teacher, maintains in his article *Att läsa aktivt, kreativt, och kritiskt* (2001) that it is significant that an introduction answers some basic questions such as: *where* does the plot take place, *when* does the plot take place, *whom* is the story about, and *what* is the story about. The sooner these questions are answered, the sooner one is absorbed in the book. By doing this together, everyone will have the opportunity to comprehend the storyline (*Språkboken*, 2001). Therefore, my introduction of *The Hunger Games* will be inspired by Collie and Slater's warm-ups together with the aim to answer Lundahl's questions, and, hopefully in this way it will create a desire to continue reading the book.

The introduction is mainly a listening activity, but, before the reading aloud starts, there will be a presentation of some keywords. This is needed in order to give the students a sense of what it is about, but also to explain some difficult words that are essential to know. After this the students are given a worksheet with questions, in order to listen actively and search for information (cf. appendix 1). The listening is divided into two passages with different questions. The first passage gives the reader indications about main characters, and what the book is about. After listening to the first passage, they are given some time trying to answer the questions individually. Afterwards, the students will be divided into small groups to discuss and compare their answers and together formulate final predictions regarding the content which they will share with the rest of the class. They should be asked to elaborate *why* they think the way they do, and if there were any special words or descriptions that made them think in a certain way.

Subsequently, the rest of the chapter will be read, and, thereafter, the teacher together with the students will answer all questions correctly, making sure that everyone is on board. I think there

will be a variation in what the students think. During the first pages it is a bit unclear if the main character is a boy or a girl; however, towards the end of the chapter it becomes pretty clear. The first passage reveals that the main character is an illegal hunter who lives in a poor and controlled district somewhere, she is also a family provider, whose dad lost his life in a mine explosion. She cares about her little sister but is not very close to her mother and she hunts with her best friend Gale and a reaping is held later that day. This is what the students are acquainted with when they try to answer the first questions. The teacher should let the students guess, thereafter continue the reading without revealing anything. The aim with the division is to keep the interest and increase the excitement. The second passage narrates Panem's dark history and the purpose of the Hunger Games "Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you. Just as we did in District Thirteen." (Collins, 2008, 19). The setting of District Twelve, where Katniss lives, is described in a sense that it is part of the past; they live in poverty, eat what nature offers, trade, and lack freedom. However, it is an imagined future, which is very dark, where death and starvation are a result of the controlling Panem which is a part of these teenagers' daily life: "I could be shot on a daily basis for hunting, but the appetites of those in charge protect me [...] anyway, Gale and I agree that if we have to choose between dying of hunger and a bullet in the head, the bullet would be much quicker" (Ibid, 17).

This first chapter opens up to several topics to discuss, and I think the teacher should be responsive to the students' interest. In the worksheet, the students are asked to describe Katniss and Gale. This can be followed by a discussion about male/female characteristics, and by looking at words and phrases that describe those. Another aspect to focus on may be different societies. Panem is a society described as a dictatorship controlling everyone and everything where poverty

and starvation are common. It can be discussed and related to the problems of today's world, and what the students might think the future will look like. Another topic to discuss may be the rules of The Hunger Games and unfair stipulations of the drawing of participants, afflicting the ones that already are vulnerable. The rules, says Kaniss, are: "[j]ust another tool to cause misery in our district" (Ibid.14). This can be connected to human and social rights. The curriculum's description of core content is something that the teacher should try to have in mind during discussions. It is easy to find angles in this chapter, and throughout the book, which is in accordance with the curriculum. This introduction also corresponds to other parts of the curriculum regarding receptive skills: exposure of spoken language, understand spoken English, literature, and strategies for listening. Parts of the productive skills are also used in the discussion. This introduction is preferably done in a longer lesson or possibly divided in two. The first chapter has a very thrilling end and it is important that the teacher tries to get the students interested in the next chapter.

3.2 Developing writing competence

This exercise should be done individually, and gives an opportunity to reflect about the book, and also some introspection. It will be about identity and awareness, which I believe is something that is relatable to adolescent students being in an age experiencing personality development. The aim is to teach strategies for planning, revising and editing, where the teacher's role is to identify the learner's needs and be supportive. Therefore, they should produce several drafts. The teacher will give feedback on content, grammar, vocabulary and structure. After this the students should revise, become aware of the texts weaknesses, and in this way improve the text and language competence. If there is a good climate in the classroom, this can be followed by peer response,

otherwise the second draft is handed back to the teacher. During the work of the written piece, the teacher should help students gain greater control of the cognitive strategies that are involved in composing by helping students to generate ideas, providing practice in planning, encouraging students in revision strategies, helping to identify writing needs and providing exercises and activities for language improvements (Hedge 2000). How many drafts they should produce is determined by the teacher and the time available.

This writing assignment is done when the students have read chapter 9. In the chapters 4-9 the reader follows Katniss' and Peetas' preparations for the opening ceremony, the interview, and The Hunger Games. They have their own styling team and Katniss receives a full make-over. It is very important to make a good first impression, and to look good since this gives sponsorship, which is essential in order to survive the game. Their coach is trying to present Katniss and Peeta as appealing to the sponsors and audience as possible. Peeta and Katniss are described closely during these pages with focus on what will favor them in the Games. Peeta is described as kind, however, is he as kind as he seems, or is it his strategy? He has grown up in a bakery and this has not provided him with much physical advantages; however, he comes across as smart. He is also described as handsome and humble. Katniss is questioning everything about him, and tries to decide upon how she should treat him. The psychological game starts here, and it is important to play one's cards right. Since Katniss is the main character even more details are provided about her. Katniss has lived close to nature, knows what is eatable or poisonous, has hunting skills with bow and arrow, is responsible, and a fighter. When it comes to her personality, there are different opinions; according to their coach, she comes across as sullen and hostile, but, on the other hand, their stylists admire her. During this part of the Games, interviews with the contestants are broadcasted. This is of grave importance, and the presentation is crucial. Therefore, Katniss's

self-perception and others' reflections about her are evident in these chapters, together with clothes and outfits, personality, physical strengths, preparations for something unknown and tools for survival.

This will be a relatively open task where the students can focus on one specific thing depending on what they are interested in or what they find easy to write about. I think it is good when presenting a writing task that there are options of what to write about. Writing task: Try to picture yourself in Katniss or Peeta's shoes, how would you present yourself in the interview; what characteristics would you highlight, what would you conceal? What would you wear that mirrors your personality? How would you treat your contesters, and how would you play the game? This exercise can be related to how to present oneself in different situations, for example a job interview. This chapter contains words that describe appearance and personality. Collins writes in a vivid language using symbolism and metaphors. This is something the teacher should challenge the students to develop in their own writing. This also relates to the introduction where Katniss and Gale are described and where the focus was on descriptive language.

One overall aim of the English course is to express oneself in written English. In this exercise they are asked to produce a written piece where they narrate, explain and assess, which corresponds to the curriculum considering productive skills (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012). This exercise also corresponds to an additional aim to achieve in terms of "[p]rocessing of their own and others' oral and written communications in order to vary, clarify and specify, as well as to create structure and adapt these to their purpose and situation. This covers the use of words and phrases that clarify causal connections and time aspects" (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012).

3.3 Developing speaking competence

To practice speaking competence I suggest discussion in small groups. This activity gives the opportunity to discuss the book, and given topics. It is claimed that interaction enables learning, and that reading is a social activity; for that reason, students need to listen to their classmates' reactions about the book and discuss. It will give them another perspective and enrich their thoughts, and, to truly understand a text, discussion is necessary (Brodow & Rininsland, 2005).

Dividing the class in small groups for interaction gives students an opportunity to practice speaking and use strategies for conversation management such as opening, closing, maintaining, turn taking, and responding. Moreover, topic management, and evaluate how well oneself is understood and how one understands. Moreover the students will practice linguistic features such as grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation. Nonetheless, the most important aim is to build a confidence in speaking English. Speaking activities can be difficult; many students might feel anxiety and insecurity about speaking in another language in front of other people. However, this is something they need to manage, and therefore practice. It is important that the teacher tries to create a good climate in the classroom which enables risk taking and experimenting with the language. This demands respect among the students (Hedge, 2000).

This exercise should be done when the students have finished the second part of the book which is about The Games. It is filled with action, deaths, and survival strategies. The readers are given an insight in how the Gamemakers intervene to create good TV: "No deaths, perhaps no fights at all. The audience in the Capitol will be getting bored, claiming that these Games are verging on

dullness. This is the one thing the Games must not do” (Collins, 2008, 173). If the participants do not create enough excitement the Gamemakers will compose different components, e.g. fires, dangerous animals or scarcity of water. The aim is to create face-to-face situations among the contestants, which will result in deadly action.

I have suggested two different topics with questions to spark a discussion (cf. appendix 2). They can choose to focus on one topic or alternate between the two. The first topic is about TV and media which I think is a subject they are quite familiar with. The other one is about survival, and ethical issues. During these chapters the reader can witness how the will of survival takes precedence, and there is not much hesitation towards the use of violence or killing. This is a consequence of *The Hunger Games* since it is a fight for survival. One can quite easily follow this change in Katniss, and I experienced a change as a reader as well. From finding everything very questionable, I start to cheer Katniss when she kills and destroys the others. This is an example of one of these moments, when a boy has attacked Rue: “The boy from District 1 dies before he can pull out the spear. My arrow drives deeply into the center of his neck. He falls to his knees and halves the brief remainder of his life by yanking out the arrow and drowning in his own blood. I’m reloaded, shifting my aim from side to side, while I shout at Rue, “Are there more? Are there more?”” (Ibid, 233). Another central feature in the second part of the book is the issue of trust. They are all each other’s enemies. Peeta has chosen to be a part of a pact against Katniss, however, he saves her life later on. Katniss has found a girl named Rue, reminding her of her little sister, she decides to trust after negotiating with herself: “But I want her. Because she’s a survivor, and I trust her, and why not admit it? She reminds me of Prim. [...] Of course, this kind of deal can only be temporary, but neither of us mentions that.” (Ibid, 201). Nevertheless, one cannot trust anyone, which has to be very stressful and demands that one sleep with one eye

open. This can be discussed in relation to how psychological games and pacts are constant features in different reality shows.

Some groups might go through all the questions, and some might discuss a fewer number but more in depth. This is not of importance; what is, however, is that the students are speaking. It is important that everyone participates, which is one of the instructions. To express opinions and thoughts is something Hedge (2000) refers to as “personalizing language” (274). Personalizing the language is stated to make it more memorable. This sort of practice must allow students to freely choose their topic. This is also a reason why there are numerous questions to choose from in the worksheet. To make sure that they will discuss, they are asked to do a small presentation of what they have talked about. If there is time during the book project it would be beneficial for the students’ development of their speaking ability to have more discussions. There is an array of interesting topics to discuss, as mentioned in chapter two.

In this exercise, they are practicing and developing oral production and interaction, giving reasons for their opinion, discussing and arguing which corresponds to the demands stated in the curriculum. The activity also offers “[s]trategies for contributing to and actively participating in discussions related to societal and working life” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012).

3.4 Developing reading competence

In terms of reading competence, the students are reading continuously, and I will not give any specific lesson ideas, however I will formulate the aims of the reading. Since the book is quite long the students will have to read at home. One aim with the book project is to encourage

students to read, and to feel empowered by their own ability to read a novel on their own, and hopefully enjoy it. The passages read at home can sometimes be followed up with work sheets, however, it is important that there is not too many tasks. These assignments can be done during class, or as homework, and can focus on different things. Developing reading competence includes extending vocabulary and improving grammar skills. The text is a good way of exemplifying and practicing grammar. Except from practicing grammar and vocabulary, there may be exercises focusing on different reading strategies, but also checking their reading and comprehension of the book. This can be executed in various ways, e.g.: writing a summary of a chapter, a character analysis, using unfamiliar words in sentences, making a quiz and practicing vocabulary (Collie & Slater, 2009). These exercises can also encourage the students to continue reading if they find parts of the book too ponderous. It is a relatively long book, and Part One is quite descriptive and expository. During these chapters, it would be helpful for the students to do different tasks, whereas in Part Two, when The Games begin, the students will not be able to put the book down, and a good idea may be to simply let them read. These exercises should be focusing on the students' needs.

Grammar and vocabulary are not explicitly expressed in the curriculum; however, they are necessary skills required in order to understand and use the language in a comprehensible way. Regarding reading competence, the curriculum states that *English 5* should include literature and other fiction, reading strategies, and also teach “how words and phrases in oral and written communications create structure and context by clarifying introduction, causal connection, time aspects, and conclusions” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012).

3.5 Conclusion of book project

As a conclusion, a final discussion about their opinions will end this book project. This task is tried out and argued for by Collie and Slater (2009). The teacher starts the lesson by showing a sealed envelope. This contains the teacher's lists of three highlights of the book. The teacher then asks the students to do the same, explaining that a highlight can be a character, an episode, an action or something the students think had an impact on the plot, or on them as readers.

Afterwards, they are divided into smaller groups where they discuss and justify what is on their lists. Then, they compile a new list which represents their agreement on the three highlights.

"Having to explain their own views and argue for or against those of others can make students bring out their own thoughts and range more freely in expressing their reaction to the book than they might do if they were responding to more straightforward questions about it" (Collie & Slater, 2009, 86). After this, a student is asked to open up the teacher's envelope and read it out loud. The teacher explains the choices and asks for comments on similarities or differences of opinion (Ibid 2009, 85-86).

The aim of a final lesson is to wrap up and draw conclusions. This offers a opportunity to share experiences. A good way to evaluate a project is to ask for the students' feedback, which should be done anonymously, because then they tell their opinions truthfully. In the next and final chapter, I will evaluate whether this project corresponds to the aim of the essay, and give some final comments.

4 CONCLUSION

This essay contains ideas of how to work with the book *The Hunger Games* in the classroom. A book project has been suggested where receptive, productive, and interactive language skills are included. The aim of the study was to find methods using literature in a varied way where students are given the opportunity not only to read a book but instead work with it in a productive way which helps them develop their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills along with vocabulary and grammar. The proposed study includes all language skills corresponding to the curriculum and including parts of the core content for English 5. I have clarified which parts by quotations and extracts from the curriculum in chapter three. This book project would only be one of many assignments during the English course, and the remaining parts of the core content in curriculum could be covered later on.

The pedagogical methods I have examined, and used, are above all Tricia Hedge's and Joanne Collie and Stephen Slater's methods. I have chosen these because they are in line with the sociocultural approach and student-centered perspective. The activities presented include interaction, which is essential to the sociocultural perspective. Communication with the teacher or other students is provided in discussion, assessment, support, feedback, argumentation, negotiation and the sharing of thoughts and opinions about the book. I have also chosen to focus on student-centered activities due to a resistance to read books found among many students. The book I selected is an up-to-date novel within the genre of popular literature. This book, like many others in the same genre, is written in a very exciting and entertaining way. I believe that these types of books may be appealing to the students who are reluctant to read. The teachers' challenge is to motivate these students in particular. Using this genre in the classroom may create

a motivation to read, and, by reading, the students will learn a language and improve their reading competence.

One purpose of the essay was to explore how to use literature in a beneficial way, and in this way encourage using more books in the classroom in order to make students read more, and, hopefully, enjoy reading possibly even outside the classroom. Incorporating a variation of activities gives an opportunity to develop all language skills within the same project. This can be compared to a traditional way of reading books in the classroom where students are asked to read a book and finish it with a book report. This would only develop their reading competence and perhaps one additional competence depending on how the book report is implemented. Following the suggestions of this essay suggests could hopefully result in a change of opinion regarding the fact that books are time-consuming, and realizing in fact that, through literature, one can attain more than improved reading proficiency. The essay has focused on *The Hunger Games*; however, the methods used could be applied to other books. I am convinced that the three-phase procedure is a good way to structure a book project. There is, furthermore, a variation of methods, which is beneficial since all students learn differently. There has to be activities that spark the students' interest to analyze and reflect, and then discuss the content with their peers which ensure that the reading is interactive.

The activities chosen for the book project are aimed to deepen the students' comprehension of the book by providing activities that will make them analyze and critically reflect. In the writing task they have to imagine themselves in Katniss' and Peetas' shoes. By asking them to do that, I believe it will enable them to identify themselves more with the characters of the book, and the study questions will make them analyze and question their own identity. In the speaking activity,

the aim is to make them speak in order to build a confidence in speaking English. I have several questions that will spark a conversation about TV and media, survival strategies or ethical dilemmas. There are questions about the book where they have to analyze different characters survival strategies, or discuss their thoughts about why Suzanne Collins wrote a book about a reality show where children are killing children, or simply discuss something they watch on TV. This book offers many topics to discuss, analyze and reflect on, and which is why I believe the students will not be able to stop reading, and why teachers should work with it in the classroom.

Regarding the fact that the students will be reading the same book, I think there are both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that they read a common book where they can discuss it and compare opinions. The teacher can quite easily discover if a student does not comprehend since there will be common activities pertaining to the book. One disadvantage, however, is that the book may not appeal to everyone. Furthermore, some students might have read it, or it might be too long for others. An alternative way to organize a book project is to have a theme where there would be five books to choose from covering the same theme. In this way, they will have options, and the students can pick the book they find the most interesting. In the first course of English, I believe it is good if the teacher has read the books the students read. The teacher can thus give more support, and also be able to check if they comprehend and manage the text. Later on, they can choose more freely.

I hope this essay will inspire teachers to design book projects where all language competences are included leading to, more books being read in the classroom. I think the genre of popular literature is a good way to introduce literature. *The Hunger Games* can be used in different ways since it contains several topics that one can focus on, as this essay demonstrates. There could

easily be a co-operation with other subjects, e.g. Arts, Geography, Social Science and Physical Education. There are no limits, only the imagination.

5 APPENDIX

5.1 Appendix 1

Worksheet “ Introduction to *The Hunger Games*”

Instructions:

- Read the questions below “Passage 1”, listen to the reading. Make some notes while listening.
- Answer the questions, this first passage will not give you the answer to all the questions, you have to guess and use your imagination. Write down your answers and discuss it with your friends, share your guesses with the rest of the class.
- Read the questions below “Passage 2”, listen to the reading. Make some notes while reading.
- Discussion in class, and answer question 8-10 together.

Passage 1

1. Describe Katniss, her appearance, life situation, and age.
2. Describe Gale, his appearance, life situation, and age.
3. Why do they hunt?
4. What is their relationship?
5. Describe the setting, what sort of society do they live in?
6. During what time-period do you think this story takes place, past/present/future?
7. What do you think the book is about?

Passage 2

8. Where does the plot take place? What is the name of the country?
9. When does it take place?
10. What are the Hunger Games?

5.2 Appendix 2

Worksheet “Speaking activity”

Instructions:

Choose one topic, if you have the time you can discuss both. Choose freely between the questions, and feel free to add questions.

This is a speaking activity where you should practice speaking English, avoid Swedish. It is also important that everyone in the group participate. Prepare a presentation of what you have discussed, focus on the highlights.

Topic 1 “TV and media”

- What is a reality show?
- Do you watch any reality shows? Likes and dislikes, explain why.
- What are the gamemakers’ strategies to produce good, and exciting TV? How is this done in the reality shows you watch?
- What types of reality shows do you think we will see in the future? Market demand? What would you like to see? What would you not like to see? Reality shows on the internet? Limitations? Media control and censorship?
- What do you think made Suzanne Collins write a book about a reality show where children are killing children for their own survival?
- Would you like to participate in one, which one? And why?

Topic 2 “Strategies of survival and ethical issues”

- What is the most important characteristic that ensures survival in the Hunger Games do you think? Psychological strengths or physical strengths?

- The importance of pacts? Discuss trust issues; can you trust anyone? How can you test someone's trust?
- Peeta's strategies?
- Katniss strategies?
- The other tributes strategies?
- Ethical issues: what dilemmas are Katniss and Peeta struggling with?
- What the environment can do to you: Katniss: *"The weapons give me an entirely new perspective on the Games. I know I have tough opponents left to face. But I am no longer merely prey that runs and hides or takes desperate measures. If Cato broke through the trees right now, I wouldn't flee, I'd shoot. I find I'm actually anticipating the moment with pleasure."* (197). What makes her feel like this? Have you noticed any difference about your own opinions regarding death, violence etc. during reading part two?

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