

## A WALK ON THE DAWN OF MANKIND

The writing exercises proposed were based on the contents of the novel “The Evolution man” by Roy Lewis, that the students had read in the previous reading teaching unit.

The exercises dealt with four different types of writing strategies: text analysis, summarizing, creative writing, critical/persuasive writing.

The first set of exercises was made of 5 open questions dealing with the main topics of the novel, the significant characters and the description of their appearance and personality, the description of the setting, the role of the environment for the development of the story, the time of the story and the sequence of the events, the linguistic register used by the author.

The second set of writing exercises was based on the summarizing of one chapter of the novel.

The third set of exercises was based on the possibility given to the students, to change the title of the novel, basing on the known and analyzed contents, to write dialogues between the characters, based on a specific topic and to write an alternative ending to the novel. The last set of exercises was based on the knowledge and the deep analysis of both the contents and the style of the novel, to write informal letters or book reviews.

The first block of exercises introduced requests which were familiar to the students such as analysis of the topics, the characters, the setting or the style of the novel. Actually they usually practice analyzing, summarizing and commenting a short text or a novel when they study literature.

The results of this kind of exercises were adequate, substantially correct but not brilliant. A recurring difficulty was the ability in connecting the story to the scientifically knowledge acquired before; this operation required a help from the teacher who provided a wizard through a previous reflection.

The results obtained with the second block of exercises were more interesting probably because they leveraged and fostered student's imagination.

Especially good were the works regarding two exercises:

- the creation of an alternative ending for the novel
- the letter to convince a friend reading the novel.

In both cases the creativity of the students emerged also in an oral debate in which each of them justified and defended his/her own interpretation and ideas.

In these written works, as well as in the debate, the students turned out very motivated as that issue had become a “personal matter”.

## WRITING EXERCISES

### Text analysis

Exercise n° 1 (Max 15 lines)

What are the main topics emerging from the novel?

Exercise n° 2 (Max 15 lines)

Choose a significant character of the story and provide a description of his/her features both external (physical) and internal (temper, mood, emotions, social role....).

Think about ...

a- Is he/she the protagonist, the antagonist or an helper ?

b- Is he/she a static or a dynamic character ?

Exercise n° 3 (Max 10 lines)

Analyze the setting in which the novel takes place. Is it carefully described? Is it a real or an imaginary location? What is the role of this environment for the development of the story?

Exercise n° 4 (Max 15 lines)

What is the span of time in which the story takes place? Have all the events been told as a chronological sequence? Does the novel time overlap to the time of the phase of mankind evolution described in the story?

Exercise n° 5 (Max 10 lines)

Which linguistic register is used in the novel? Do you think it is casual, formal or both? Can you provide some examples of code- switching?

### **Summarizing**

Exercise n° 1 (Max 15 lines)

Choose a chapter of the novel and report it briefly.

### **Creative writing**

Exercise n° 1 (Max 15 lines)

Imagine that Ernest does not agree with his brothers regarding the elimination of their father Edward. Write down an alternative ending for the novel.

Exercise n° 2 (Max 15 lines)

Imagine and write down a dialogue between Edward and Uncle Vanya. The topic is the possibility of domesticating animals.

Exercise n° 3

This novel was published several times with three different titles: "*The Evolution man*", "*Once Upon an Ice Age*" and "*What We Did to Father*". Find another title which, in your opinion, could better represent the story.

### **Critical/Persuasive writing**

Exercise n° 1 (Max 10 lines)

According to your knowledge about the mechanisms of evolution, what is the meaning of fostering crossed mating with individuals coming from different clans?

Exercise n° 2 (Max 15 lines)

Write down a review of the novel for the school newspaper. Underline what are, from your point of view, its strengths and weaknesses.

### Exercise n° 3 (Max 10 lines)

Write down a letter to convince your best friend reading this novel.

#### **Writing a cover letter (letter of application) for a CV (English, class III E)**

- The objective of the writing activity was to develop writing skills for authentic reasons, to foster formal writing and grammar/vocabulary accuracy.
- The needed pre-requisites were basic reading skills (skimming, scanning, reading for gist) and basics for formal writing.
- The time allotted for the writing activities were 2 lessons modules of 55 minutes each, about half an hour for homework and one module of 55 minutes for testing.

#### **Speaking walls and speaking stones. A dive into Latin epigraphy in order to discover daily life in Imperial Rome (Latin and History class II I)**

- This was the last lesson, which concluded the virtual journey in Pompeii: after they had seen images, analyzed the texts both in guided reading and independent reading, students had to reconnect and to revise what they had learned, and to put it into writing.
- The paper handed out to the students presented some pictures of Pompeii, relating to situations analyzed in previous lessons; every student had to be able to recognize environments and typical objects and to describe them in writing. This final activity tested the knowledge and the skills acquired in the previous steps: it required to select the information from the proposed pictures, to connect them, to do inferences and to write a description with the necessary clearness and correctness.

#### **Writing a formal letter of complaint (English, class III I)**

- The objectives of the proposed activities were improving the students' writing skills for authentic reasons, the formal writing and the grammar/vocabulary accuracy.
- The involved Target group was a mixed ability class of 22 students aged 15-16 mostly girls (2 boys only).
- **The needed pre-requisites were:** basic reading skills (skimming, scanning, reading for gist) , basics for formal writing; Use of presents, pasts, futures and conditionals.
- **Method:** Classmates at work, peer-to-peer education, cooperative learning.
- **Materials:** English Textbook, Dictionary (the on-line one is allowed), the web, the MWB/blackboard.
- **Time allotted: 255 minute lesson modules + homework (half an hour or so)+ testing.**