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## **UNIT 3 TEACHING LITERARY TEXTS-I**

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### **3.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this unit, our aim is to understand how we may approach the teaching of literature, as it is an important element in the teaching of language. We will consider the different kinds of literary texts and see if we can adopt ways of teaching them effectively. Prose, fiction and drama may require different approaches; therefore our aim is to explore the means of reading and appreciating each type of literary text.

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### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Whenever a Syllabus for teaching language is made, literary texts are generally included in it. For many centuries, literature has been regarded as the best or highest form of language, and has great prestige. For instance, in the history of English language teaching in India, English literature was taken as the very basis of education in English, and remains quite important.

We need to ask the question: Why is literature considered to be such an important aspect of teaching and learning a language? Firstly, we recognize that it provides interest and motivation for learning. Telling a story, reading a story or poem, which has actions, characters and dialogues, is very interesting for learners and they become involved in the process of learning a language without having to pay constant attention to its rules, or doing dull grammar exercises.

Literature also provides many examples of the use of language in different situations, and various patterns of sounds, words and sentences. Indirectly, these offer items of new vocabulary and new structures of sentences and phrases which, as they are used in context, give the learners valuable knowledge of the use of these words and sentences. Further, literature provides a context for communicative activities like discussion, speaking, role-playing and other types of interaction between learners. The literary text becomes the basis for many such activities and exercises. Most importantly, it is the practice of reading skills in the reading of literature that leads to the achievement of better levels of reading comprehension. This in turn enables learners to read many other kinds of texts and acquire knowledge of other subjects. We know that reading a literary text is

also a cognitive challenge – a kind of problem solving activity. A reader has to decode its meanings, which involves thinking critically to choose some possibilities and eliminate others. Moreover, if this is linked with practice in writing, it further develops writing skills, which are necessary in all kinds of situations. Apart from all the above purposes, literature is a part of our cultural awareness and develops our aesthetic sense, our enjoyment of that which is beautiful, pleasing as well as that which helps us to understand life, human beings and society. As Collie and Slater (1987) put it: ‘Literature provides a rich context in which individual lexical or syntactic forms are made more memorable. In reading a contextualized body of text, students gain familiarity with many features of written language – the formation and function of sentences, the variety of possible structures, and the different ways of connecting ideas – which broaden and enrich their own writing skills. The extensive reading of a play or novel develops the students’ ability to make inference from linguistic clues, and to deduce meaning from context...a literary text can serve as an excellent prompt for oral work...’

To sum up, the following are the benefits of teaching literature as part of language teaching, as given by Collie and Slater (1987):

- It provides valuable authentic material
- It contributes to language enrichment
- It contributes to cultural enrichment
- It fosters personal involvement and motivation in learning.

It is clear, therefore, that the teaching of literature is a concern for the language teacher and its purposes should be well understood by English teachers. However, many of these purposes will not be fulfilled if the appropriate teaching methodology is not used. Our methodology of teaching must include ways of making the learners read the literature, talk about it and share their ideas, write about it, and participate in the learning and enjoyment of it. Literature is a form of communication, and also a part of our shared culture and this is why we study it in the curriculum. For example, if a teacher spends most of the time explaining the text, then the time for the other activities, such as discussion, reading independently and finding out the meaning, etc., will be reduced and this would not serve the various purposes we have in mind when we put literature in the curriculum.

In addition to adopting the kinds of methodologies which are best suited to our purpose, we also need to take great care in the selection of the *kind* of literature we choose to include in our curriculum. The level of the learners in terms of the stage of language development that they are in, is the most crucial consideration. If we try to teach a very complex literary text, and the learners do not yet have the language ability to the level required by the text, they will neither enjoy it, nor will they find it interesting to explore it further or discuss it. Therefore, the choice of the right kinds of literature is essential for the teaching of literature. In making this choice, we have to consider various kinds of difficulty: the language may be difficult, or the themes or structures may be complex and learners may not be able to deal with them. In this regard, we cannot say that ancient texts are necessarily difficult and modern ones are easier, because there is often a lot of complexity in modern writing. At the same time, literature from an older time has language which is not used in the present day, and may be difficult for young

learners to understand. The length of a piece – whether a poem, short story or prose writing – is another factor to be considered, as longer texts may become tedious for young children and may not hold their attention. These points emphasise the need to take great care of the choice of texts for children, particularly at the primary school level. There is also a strong case for introducing writing tasks as part of the reading of literature so that students can learn to express their own responses, articulate their feelings and opinions and share their perceptions, which is a crucial outcome of the study of literature.

In the next section, we will consider different types of texts in order to understand the differences and the challenges involved in teaching each type of text.

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## 3.2 TYPES OF TEXTS: PROSE, FICTION AND DRAMA

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Each type of text has its own unique features. The teacher needs to understand the nature of each kind of text as a first step towards the construction of certain useful activities and approaches to be used in the class. In this unit, we will look at types of texts usually written in prose – for instance, essays, stories and plays. In the case of prose (non-fiction), there are some facts, ideas or information being presented. Stories have a structure of events and characters. Drama has dialogues between characters and actions. Since these are all different types of literature, they offer different kinds of challenge and reading experience for the language learner, at linguistic, communicative, and cognitive levels. The different genres can be taught separately, or concurrently. It may be useful to organize literature according to themes, and present a unit on each theme e.g. ‘Friendship’, ‘War’, ‘Journeys’ etc., and each unit may include a poem, a story and a prose passage on that theme. This will sensitise readers to reading different kinds of texts and how a particular topic can be looked at – how a ‘poetical’ treatment is unique in its own way, how a story reveals so many dimensions, and how, in prose, a writer tries to explain or analyse the subject. All these perspectives are enriching for the learners.

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## 3.3 TEACHING PROSE

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Often, prose writing is considered to be less interesting than poems or stories. So teachers are faced with the task of motivating the children to read prose, which usually has some information or facts in it. While poetry may have more delight, prose is useful in learning about facts and opinions as it is more message-oriented. Reading prose is a good exercise in understanding how sentences of different kinds are constructed, and how they are organized to convey ideas. In addition, prose also has its own pleasures – there is ‘prose rhythm’ which we can appreciate when we read a piece of prose aloud.

For effective teaching of prose, a well-structured and short piece of prose writing should be chosen. Let us consider the following example:

The Olympic Games are among the most prominent international sporting events. They are a highly respected event in which nations put their best talents forward, in a spirit of friendliness and healthy competition. The word ‘Olympic’ comes from the word ‘Olympia’ – a place in Greece. Centuries ago, festivals and religious ceremonies were held there in honour of the Greek god Zeus. The ceremonies

included games, held every four years, in the summer, around mid-July. Today, the Games are held in different cities of the world every four years, and bring together athletes from all over the world. They are held to promote the development of physical and moral qualities through amateur sports.

The above passage is a little over 100 words, and similar passages up to 200 words can be chosen at the elementary level, while the length of a passage can be longer for higher classes. This reduces the linguistic challenge, as the text does not appear as formidable as to deter or demotivate the learner.

The first part of the lesson can be that of giving instructions to the children:

- **Underline** keywords – or **most important** words in the passage.
- **Underline** the words in the passage which are **new** to you.

The first benefit of this preliminary exercise is that it encourages children to read through the passage and scan it for important words, and unfamiliar words. This also has two other benefits: the teacher does not explain the words in the beginning. This allows the children a chance to read on their own, and the teacher can assess their level of vocabulary. Then the teacher can give the meaning or the gloss of the words which the children themselves pointed out, instead of assuming that each and every word has to be explained. We must remember that even if a lot of words in the passage are not clear or known to a child, at least a few are known, and the child can **fit in the unknown into the known**, if encouraged to do so. A few words e.g. ‘amateur’ can be explained.

The keywords lead us to the topic of the passage. What is it about? A title can be discussed, with inputs from both the teacher and students. The teacher can ask some more questions e.g. ‘What is Olympia?’, ‘What are the Olympics?’, ‘Who takes part in the Olympics?’, ‘Why are Olympic games held?’ etc. and ask the students to search the text for the answers. Exercises such as completing the sentence, filling blanks e.g. ‘friendly and \_\_\_\_\_’, ‘physical and \_\_\_\_\_’, etc can also be used. The benefit of this, apart from language practice is that the learner will have to search the passage for the information, and will read it again and again. This is our main aim, as the more they read, the more they will appreciate the qualities of the text.

Next, there can be a discussion on sports – favourite sports, last Olympics, great sportspersons etc. There can also be a G.K. quiz about sports. After this, the learners can turn to the passage again to study some of the language e.g. how the past and present is described (the use of *was held*, *were held* as opposed to *are held*); the sentences which are active or passive, (e.g. *are held* is passive, while *bring together* is active, but both occur in the same sentence!) etc. The students become familiar with different types of sentences and the way in which the writer may combine them. For instance, the teacher must draw attention to the connections between sentences which signal the links in the ideas e.g. ‘As a result...’ ‘First of all’, ‘Secondly’, ‘At the same time...’, ‘However’, ‘The chief aim is to show’, ‘On the contrary’ etc. These show whether the ideas are being added together, or some opposite ideas are being given. It tells us a lot about how our thoughts and ideas can be composed. So it is clear that the teaching of prose can serve several aims.

The teacher must have knowledge of different types of prose writing. Prose is of

several types: **expository** (it explains, as in certain scientific and informative topics), **argumentative** (it gives opinions, on different issues or problems), **descriptive** (it gives descriptions), narrative (narrates events). The writer's personality and **point of view** is often clearly evident in prose writing, and this makes up the style of a particular prose work. Particularly, a prose passage in which the first person 'I' is used shows the writer's point of view more directly. A prose writer may also address the reader directly, using second person. In some cases a writer may use 'we' in a general sense while explaining something, thus making the reader share his/her point of view. Sometimes, a prose writer may treat a subject very seriously, or may use satire or humour. He/she may also make use of images and comparisons. It is usual for prose writers to explain a general point and then give examples, but in some cases writers start with presenting particular examples, and then give a general conclusion.

Let us look at some examples of prose sentences which illustrate the use of different prose styles:

Long, complex sentence, which may need to be broken up into parts e.g. 'I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and coffee houses.' (Joseph Addison)

Short, epigrammatic sentences: 'Reading maketh a full man, writing an exact man and conference a ready man' (Bacon).

Repetitive, or Biblical style: 'Love suffreth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things'.

Use of similes and metaphors: 'his voice rose like a gale', 'the hand of death pressed on his eyelids' etc.

Humorous style: 'I am, I confess, a devotee of pockets. When I go to a tailor, and he asks me what pockets I want, I tell him: all of them. If you have enough pockets, you seldom lose anything...' (Robert Lynd)

Similarly, teachers can take up examples from some quotations from other great prose writers, such as Charles Lamb, Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw. In the twenty first century we have non-fiction prose writers like Bill Bryson, Siddharth Mukerjee and Yuval Noah Harari. These are interesting, witty, and thought-provoking. Even the tradition of 'thought for the day' which is often used in our schools can be used to take up more such examples and discussed in the classroom. It develops both the capacity for thought as well as sensitivity towards language. Perhaps children may not be told explicitly about all these different styles, but the teachers need to be aware of such variations and gradually make the learners familiar with them.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) List the reasons for teaching of literature as part of the language teaching curriculum.

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- 2) Consider the following prose passage and write some activities for use in teaching this passage:

The Ganga, especially, is the river of India, beloved of her people, of triumph, her victories and her defeats. She has been a symbol of India's age long culture and civilization, ever-changing, ever flowing, and yet ever the same Ganga.

She reminds me of the snow covered peaks and the deep valleys of the Himalayas, which I have loved so much, and of the rich and vast plains, where my life and work has been cast. Smiling and dancing in the morning sunlight, and dark and gloomy and full of mystery as the evening shadows fall, a slow and graceful stream in winter, and a vast roaring thing during the monsoon, broad-bosomed as the sea, and with something of the sea's power to destroy, the Ganga has been to me a symbol and a memory of the part of India, running into the present, and flowing on to the great ocean of the future.

Jawaharlal Nehru, *My Last Will and Testament*

**Activity 1**

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**Activity 2**

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### 3.4 TEACHING FICTION

Stories are fascinating for children, and they don't need much encouragement to be involved in reading stories. However, in India, we have strong traditions of oral story-telling, and children may like to listen rather than read. Today, we also have visual media, such as television. Therefore, there is a real concern regarding the development of reading habits. It is often only in the environment of the classroom that children's interest in reading can be developed. Therefore, the first objective in teaching fiction may be that of encouraging the children to read. Teachers often mistake the teaching of fiction as explaining or recounting the story to children, but this is a re-telling, which is bound to be different from the story itself. The teacher may re-tell the story, or ask the children to tell it in their own words, but this can happen only after they have read it, therefore developing their motivation for reading and reading skills is the first priority.

The correct choice of stories is important as regards their length and their themes. Stories read by children in elementary school are usually short narratives of various kinds. While some stories, like fables, have a clear moral in them, other stories may be purely about adventure, or everyday life. Some stories have a surprise element in the end, a 'sting in the tail'. For teachers, it is important to appreciate these variations in story-telling. The Russian theorists of narrative make a distinction between the story itself i.e. the bare **plot** of the events, and **the way it is told**. The first one is called **fabula (story)** and the second one is called **sjuzet (discourse)**. We can understand this as follows:

Story: Events are described in sequence: event A – event B – event C – event D.... etc.

Discourse: The sequence of events can be rearranged when narrating them, as for example: event C – event B – event A – event D, or any other combination. It may be noticed that the narrator puts in some information that does not occur in everyday speech, e.g. 'he said, *looking a little ashamed*', 'she spoke *with some hesitation*' adds something extra - some additional language and meaning to the character's speech (which indicates the discourse, or the particular manner of telling). We need to be alert to such indications in a fictional text as they tell us a lot about the point of view from which the story is told.

Accordingly, a teacher may decide what method is to be adopted for teaching. The discourse in some stories may focus more on description of characters, or a scene, or build an atmosphere. In this case, the language is worth more attention - there may be some striking vocabulary or phrases, some vivid description that can be a pretext for introducing more words to the students. On the other hand, some stories may be very simple as far as the use of language is concerned, but may have some thought, or puzzle, in them, which is a challenge for learners to comprehend. For example, the stories of Mulla Nasruddin, or Akbar-Birbal stories are short, but have some insight or knowledge that the child reader will enjoy discovering by himself or herself, rather than the teacher explain it. Another example is the 'Stone Soup' story. This is a short version of the story:

One day, a traveler reached a house, tired from walking for many hours. He was very hungry. He knocked on the door and asked the lady of the house for some food. She refused, saying she did not have any food in the house. The traveler

took a stone out of his bag and said: 'I have this stone. If you will put some water to boil, I will make soup with this stone.' The lady put some water to boil in a pot.

He put the stone in the pot, and when the water began to boil, he said: 'Ah, now it only needs some salt'. The lady gave him some salt. He stirred the water and said, 'it's tasty. It will be better if some pieces of carrots and onions are put in. Do you have some spare?' She brought some pieces of carrots, potatoes and onions and he added them to the water. Then he said, 'perhaps you have some scraps of meat?' She had some odd scraps which she gave him. He put those too into the pot. Soon the soup was ready, and he tasted it. 'It's perfect!' And he ate the stone soup and satisfied his hunger.

A story like this can be read aloud and the students can be asked: 'What have you understood from this story?' This may encourage them to make inferences about the story, and they may discuss it more. Therefore, different techniques for teaching fiction are to be used depending upon the degree of language complexity, or cognitive challenge. At one level, reading and comprehending the facts of the story, at another level, the making of inferences regarding the events and characters, fitting these into a framework of understanding, are to be given attention. This is discussed below:

i) **Focus on language of description of character and place:**

The students may be directed to skim through the story and see which character is most prominent. They may then read the sentence in which that character is first mentioned. Sometimes the name of the character is not given initially, but there may be a description or some account of the character's background. Are there any particular adjectives, or similes used for that character? Can we see from these facts if the story-teller has a particular attitude towards the character – for example, sympathy, dislike, etc?

Let us take the example of Khushwant Singh's well known story 'Portrait of a Lady'. The story begins with the following description:

She had always been short and fat and slightly bent. Her face was a criss-cross of wrinkles from everywhere to everywhere. No, we were certain she had always been as we had known her. Old, so terribly old that she could not have grown older. She could never have been pretty, but she was always beautiful. She hobbled about the house in spotless white with one hand resting on her waist to balance her stoop and the other telling the beads of her rosary. Her silver locks were scattered untidily over her pale, puckered face, and her lips moved constantly in inaudible prayer. Yes, she was beautiful. She was like the winter landscape in the mountains, an expanse of pure white serenity, breathing peace and contentment.

The description of character in the story can be classified under the following heads: what the character is compared to, what the character does in daily life, what the character looks like, etc. The activities on this could be:

- a) Underline the adjectives (e.g. short, fat, slightly bent, old, not pretty, and beautiful). Which of these are positive? Which adjective is *the most important* in the description?



- b) What did she do? The activities she did most often were \_\_\_\_\_. Read the story further to see what are the other actions of the grandmother and what these tell us about her.
- c) What is she compared to? Why? (Further questions: are the mountains young or old? What is the colour of mountains in winter? These questions will lead to students understanding the basis of the comparison of the old lady to the mountains)
- d) Let us find synonyms for these words: stoop, puckered, inaudible, serenity
- e) Which sentence(s) indicate the presence of a narrator?

Students can then be asked to put these facts together. They may even discuss which feature of the character description is the most vital and significant in its relevance for the story – is it the character’s physical appearance or other qualities which are most crucial for the story?

Similarly, the teacher can ask the students to read a story and notice the description of a house, village or city, or landscape. What is important in this description? Is it some detail, such as that of a marketplace, or decoration of a room, that may be important for the meaning of the story? It may also be useful to look at repetition – which items in the landscape are mentioned again and again – for instance, the description of a river may recur, thus making it significant. Names of places or people are particularly important as they may indicate some mythological or cultural aspects hidden in the story.

ii) **Focus on theme:**

The beginning and ending of a story is always worth considering very carefully. Some stories may start right from the birth of a character, or from a historical event, and even mention the dates. Some stories may start in the middle of an event, e.g. a war, or a journey, and then go back to where it began. Why does a story-teller start a story at a particular point? The students can treat this as a puzzle which they have to uncover – and different students will give different reasons. The teacher must allow this kind of questioning and sharing of possible answers, as this is an important mental exercise.

The endings of stories can also be discussed – why does the story end at a particular point? The class can be divided into readers who are satisfied with the ending and readers who are not satisfied. Each of them can explain the reasons for their response. Students may be asked to give their own ending to the story. This may be done orally, so it can be part of the discussion, where other children can ask each other why they chose a particular ending. Or students can be asked to write an ending, and the teacher can help them with some of the language they need for this purpose. One story which can be mentioned in this regard is Mulk Raj Anand’s ‘The Lost Child’. In the end of the story, we do not know whether the child finds its parents or not – would children see this as a satisfactory ending?

‘Sting in the Tale’ stories will have a sharp shock or surprise at the end, or a sudden revelation, which may bring in some realization for the reader, e.g. Guy De Maupassant’s ‘The Diamond Necklace’, O.Henry’s ‘The Gift of the Magi’ etc.

Some other activities that can be done in teaching fiction in the class are:

**Suggestion** consists of the teacher planting some thought, suggesting some idea (even if it seems wrong) and asking the students to read the story to check if the suggestion is correct or not.

**Prediction** can be made, after reading the first paragraph or section of a story, to encourage readers to predict what happens next, or to predict something about the character, and to read further to see if this prediction will come true. We know that literature defeats our expectations, so the game of prediction will lead to some surprises, and will become interesting, while it also encourages the exploring of creative possibilities.

**Visualization** or the making of pictures, either word pictures, or diagrams/sketches about a place, or a person, will be useful in making the situation real for the students.

**Rewriting the story**, giving a jumbled order of events to be rearranged or gap-filling, rewriting the end of the story, or imagining and giving some more details about a particular character can all be helpful pretexts for using more language, such as activating the use of more vocabulary.

**Summary writing, making thought bubbles**, as if making a comic strip, or a 'mini saga' (in which the students are required to sum up the whole story in 50 words), can be challenging activities.

Finally, the challenge of teaching fiction is that all the aims are to be fulfilled without destroying the enjoyment of a good story. Our aim is to make literature more interesting and enriching for our students.

### Check Your Progress 2

Here is a short story. What kind of activities can be done in the teaching of this story?

Stan Murch, in a uniform-like blue jacket, stood on the sidewalk in front of the Hilton and watched cab after cab make the loop into the main entrance. Doesn't anybody drive their own car anymore? Then at last a Chrysler Imperial came hesitantly up the avenue, turned into the driveway and stopped at the entrance. As a woman and several children got out of the right of the car, the driver climbed heavily out on the left. He was a big man with a cigar and a camel hair coat.

Murch was at the door before it was half way open, pulling it the rest of the way and saying, 'Just leave the keys in, sir'.

'Right', said the man with the cigar. He got out, and, just as Murch was about to get behind the wheel, he said: 'Wait'.

Murch looked at him, 'Sir?'

'Here you go, boy' the man said and pulled a folded dollar bill from his pants pocket and handed it across.

'Thank you, sir.' Murch said. He saluted with the hand holding the dollar, climbed behind the wheel, and drove away. He was smiling as he made the right turn out on the street. It wasn't everyday a man gave you a tip for stealing his car.

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### 3.5 TEACHING DRAMA

The teaching of drama in the classroom is most challenging, as drama is primarily action, speech in action, or dialogue. It can be treated as a story in some ways, but the manner of the unfolding of the action is different. There is no narrative voice, but the characters speak and interact. The study of how characters think and behave is central to drama. Conflict of some kind or another is central to drama. There is a plot, and as it unfolds, the situation brings some conflict and change in the characters.

Drama is also closest to human communicative interaction. It can be of use in language teaching to show how dialogues are spoken and how communication takes place.

Activities in the teaching of drama can be:

a) Written

Filling in blanks in dialogues, or writing more dialogues to add to the existing ones can be activities that students at a slightly more advanced level can do.

Making tables with different points of view on each side, however, can be done by students who have less language proficiency – they can read each character’s speech and assign a position for each character on one or the other side of the table, to show that they belong to opposing sides in a conflict.

Prediction: Could the conversation exchange or dialogue go otherwise?

Exploring relationships between characters: Who are the friends? Who are opposites, who are similar to each other? Comparisons and contrasts between characters can be made. For example, take the following exchange:

- Cratchit : Er, pardon me, Mr. Scrooge, but there’s a gentleman to see you.
- Scrooge : What about, Cratchit?
- Cratchit : He didn’t say, sir.
- Gentleman : Ah, good afternoon, sir. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?
- Scrooge : Mr. Marley, my former partner, has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago this very night.
- Gentleman : Then I have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner.

- Scrooge : What do you want?
- Gentleman : At this festive season, Mr. Scrooge, we try to make some slight provision for the poor and destitute. Many thousands are in want of common necessities.
- Scrooge : Are there no prisons?
- Gentleman : Oh, plenty of prisons.
- Scrooge : And the workhouses? Are they still in operation?
- Gentleman : I wish I could say they were not. How much shall I put you down for, Mr. Scrooge?
- Scrooge : Nothing.
- Gentleman : Nothing?
- Scrooge : Exactly. Let these deserving people of yours go to the establishments I have mentioned.
- Gentleman : Most of them would rather die than do that.
- Scrooge : Then let them do that and help decrease the surplus population. I'm busy. Good afternoon to you.
- Gentleman : Very good, Mr. Scrooge. A very Merry Christmas to you!  
Goes out.
- Scrooge : Charity! Pah! Humbug!

(adapted from Charles Dickens' novel *A Christmas Carol*, extracted from CBSE *Interact in English*, Literature Reader)

Even in such a short extract, there are several possibilities for writing activities. The students can be asked to define Scrooge's character, or write about the situation- what is the occasion, what happens on such an occasion, and whether the expected response is given or not, and the reason why it is not. Since Scrooge refuses to give charity on Christmas, this is a sign of his character. From this we see simply that character and action are linked in. Once the students become aware of this, they can write a good summary or description of the plot or character.

Themes: The movement of the plot can be traced by making a diagram of the plot. This can be put up in the form of a chart, as a summary. Some of the activities used in teaching fiction could also be useful in drama, as drama has a narrative aspect. Endings, for instance, are important in drama, as in stories. The activities can be based on recreation of some scenes or dialogues in a play, which may change the direction of the plot.

There is also opportunity for vocabulary practice in drama e.g. in the above extract, we can find out the opposites of words as: 'the opposite of *liberality* is \_\_\_\_\_', 'the opposite of *destitute* is \_\_\_\_\_' etc. Using more vocabulary, the students can attempt to write a piece on the condition of poor people, or what should be done for the poor and needy especially, on festivals.

b) Oral

Oral activities such as loud reading of extracts, with gestures, will be of use in practice of spoken language at different levels: emphasis, tone and pronunciation.

Conversations can be developed from the play, as in the extract above, the students can enact another imaginary conversation with Scrooge. One student would speak as Scrooge, and another would persuade him to donate something for poor people.

We can build on other kinds of opportunities that this extract provides. Normally, we exchange greetings on meeting someone and say something when we take leave at the end of a conversation. We also have ways of greeting people on festive occasions. Students can make a list of different kinds of greetings and leave-takings for different occasions, formal and informal. They can also discuss whether this is a modern way of speaking, and how our spoken interaction today can be very different.

It would be useful for students to enact a play, or prepare and present a play in order to understand the kind of interaction which takes place in drama.

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### 3.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, we have tried to understand the importance of teaching literature and the manner in which we can approach the teaching of different forms of literature in the classroom. Each type of writing poses a challenge and we have to be quite creative in thinking about ways to make literature both interesting and a useful context for language learning. Prose texts can be used for studying ways in which information and arguments are presented, fiction can be used for studying how stories are told and how they are understood, how characters are presented, and drama combines character and action in a constant play of the language of dialogue. In all these instances, the choice of words and arrangement of sentences and the building of connections in the text are aspects of language use that learners can benefit from studying. The literary text is a vast and enriching field for the language learner.

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### 3.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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It will be useful to introduce students to the short stories of many great writers, both Indian and those from other countries, such as Rabindranath Tagore, Anton Chekhov, Leo Tolstoy, Rudyard Kipling and many others. Many other useful collections and anthologies are suggested in Collie and Slater, referred to below.

Brumfit, Christopher and Carter, Ronald, ed. *Language and Literature Teaching*, Oxford, Oxford University Press. 1986

Collie, Joanne and Slater, Stephen. *Literature in the Language Classroom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Grellet, F. *Developing Reading Skills*, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Moody, H.L. *The Teaching of Literature*, Longman, 1971.

Sanger, Keith *The Language of Fiction* London, Routledge, 1998.

Simpson, Paul, *Language Through Literature*, London, Routledge, 1997.

Widdowson, H. *Stylistics and the Teaching of literature*, Longman, 1975.

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## 3.8 ANSWERS

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### Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Read the relevant section for answering this question.
- 2) Some suggestions for activities are:

You could start with a question about the length of the sentences. Students can count the words in each sentence (they like to do that) and see how long they are. Then we can discuss why a particular sentence is long – what bits of information does it contain? Does it repeat something? Can we cut it down to make it shorter? If we cut it, what important meaning will be lost?

Other activities can be thought of: on the images in which the river is portrayed; or open-ended such as ‘the Ganga stands for \_\_\_\_\_’. Students can be asked to describe some other place (river, mountain, sea, forest) with the help of vocabulary from the passage. Feel free to make as many exercises as you can.

### Check your Progress 2

Some suggestions for activities are:

Key questions for the story can be asked, for example: Who is Murch?

Why does he succeed in stealing the man’s car?

You can think about a prediction activity too: will the students be able to predict what happens? Or is this a case of reading *backwards*, in order to comprehend.

The descriptions of the characters can also be the basis of activity e.g. what is the meaning of the jacket Murch is wearing? Is he pretending to be someone else? What do you judge by the appearance of the man who owns the car?

This story builds on background knowledge (of big hotels, of the practice of giving the keys of one’s car to an attendant for parking it, etc). You may think of ways in which students can guess what happens in such situations.

You can also make exercises on some aspect of language, or suggest some writing exercise e.g. describing the man’s reaction when he comes out and finds his car has been stolen.