

How to deal with different types of texts - Characteristics of prose, drama, poetry, non-fiction and visuals

by Rita Reinheimer-Wolf



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Textsorten sind durch spezifische Merkmale definiert. Die gründliche Kenntnis dieser Merkmale ist die Voraussetzung für den kompetenten Umgang mit Textsorten. Die Einheit *How to deal with different types of texts* präsentiert den Schülerinnen und Schülern in knapper Form eine Definition von *prose, drama, poetry, non-fictional texts* und *visuals*. An anschließenden Textbeispielen wird die Arbeit mit den spezifischen Merkmalen geübt.

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Competences and skills:

The unit contains texts and tasks that can be classified as level B2/C1 (*Europäischer Referenzrahmen*). By working with various materials, students enhance their general **reading skills**. Furthermore, they practice their competences in explaining and **analysing** texts while engaging closely with the extracts of prose, poems, texts and visuals. Students' **speaking and presentation skills** are improved by giving short talks and presentations in small groups or in front of the class. A number of tasks focus on the **writing** competence and the **thematic vocabulary knowledge** of the students.

Overview:

List of abbreviations:

A Analysis

D Discussion/debate

P Working with a picture/cartoon

RC Reading comprehension

W Writing

C Comment

G Group work

PR Presentation

S Summary

CT Creative task

L Language

R Research




T Working with a text

Topic	Material	Methods/Skills
1: How to deal with prose	M1–M4	D, G, P, T
2: How to deal with drama	M5–M7	C, CT, G, L, PR, R, RC, T, W
3: How to deal with poetry	M8–M10	A, CT, G, L, T
4: How to deal with non-fictional texts	M11–M16	A, D, G, L, RC, S, T
5: How to deal with pictures and cartoons	M17–M21	A, P, W

Topic 1: How to deal with prose

Questionnaire: How to deal with selected tasks and types of texts – My personal challenges M1

Pre-reading activities

1. Look at the questionnaire about tasks and text types. Respond to the tasks and tick the answers that are relevant for you. 
2. Then, exchange your questionnaire with a partner and read through his/her responses on his/her questionnaire.
3. **Card survey:** With your partner, agree on three major challenges when dealing with different text types. Specify these challenges and make notes. 
4. In class, discuss the challenges one is confronted with when dealing with texts. 



Questionnaire

1. Which of the following text types do you consider most difficult to work with? Tick your answer.
 novels plays poems non-fictional texts pictures, cartoons
2. Name your main problems when dealing with your most difficult text type.
3. What are the reasons for your specific problems?
4. Name the strategies that you use when dealing with different text types.

Worksheet – *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro (extract)

M4


Working with the text

1. Read the extract from *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro once. Prepare a two-minute talk about your immediate reaction to the text. Present your talk to a small group of students and listen to the talks of the others in your group. 
2. After having read the extract one more time, answer the following questions. Write the answers in keywords in a table like the one below. 
 - a) What is the most striking feature of this text?
 - b) Where do you find hints about the topic of the novel? Underline the passages that include possible hints. What could the topic be?
 - c) What can you say about the narrator?

Quotation	Interpretation

3. How does the choice of words influence the atmosphere created by the narrator? 

Quotation	Function/effect	Description of atmosphere

4. Use all your notes and keywords to write an analysis of the narrator's character and the atmosphere. 

Topic 2: How to deal with drama

M5 Info text on drama



A drama or play is written to be performed by actors in a theatre, in a film, on television or on the radio. Traditionally, a play's components are the acts and scenes. The acts are units reflecting main stages in the development of the action. Scenes, on the other hand, represent a further subdivision of the play and can be called sequences of continuous action. Usually, the action of a play is based on conflict of either opposing characters (protagonist/antagonist) or diametrically opposed ideas, attitudes and interests. Logically, conflict results in tension for the theatregoer or viewer, and this conflict also represents the basis of dramatic action. The action on stage is carried forward by what the characters say (in dialogues and/or monologues). The dialogues and monologues illustrate the characters' personalities, their social classes, their attitudes, thoughts and emotions. Stage directions indicate what the characters do and what motivates them. They are intended for the readers of the play and support the interpretation of the action. Such stage directions are mostly quite short and, thus, do not necessarily limit the reader's interpretation. Stage directions, however, can also be very detailed and indicate the exact design and arrangement of the setting, scenery, props, the characters' appearances, movements, gestures, ways of speaking, or sound and lighting to be used by the director.

Drama can be classified into the following kinds of plays:

- A **tragedy** is a very serious play depicting the dilemma and suffering of a character having admirable qualities and who fails due to a fault in his/her character. The protagonist is referred to as the tragic hero/heroine. This subclass of drama develops dramatic action in the following way: exposition – rising action – climax/turning point – falling action – catastrophe – resolution/dénouement.

A **comedy** is a play with a happy ending that cannot be compared with the seriousness in tone of a tragedy. It is intended to provide entertainment. This second subclass of drama develops action in the following way: exposition – rising action – climax/turning point – falling action – happy/tragicomic ending/resolution.

Glossary for the analysis of stylistic/rhetorical devices and language M15

register	slang, colloquial, everyday English, formal English, sophisticated, technical terms, scientific terms, metaphorical
choice of words	literal, figurative meaning of words, negative connotation of words, abstractions, synonyms, euphemisms, denotations, connotations
style	clear, precise, natural, sober, passionate, stilted, clumsy, lengthy, matter-of-fact, vigorous, concise
tone	aggressive, satirical, serious, ironical, humorous
rhetorical devices	alliteration, allusion, antithesis, irony, metaphor, understatement, exaggeration, employment of leitmotifs, repetition, rhetorical question, quotation, comparison, digressions from the main topic, illustration, symbol



Glossary of rhetorical devices M16

Expression	Definition, explanation
alliteration	the repetition of a sound, usually a consonant, at the beginning of neighbouring words
allusion	indirect reference to a famous event, person etc.
antithesis	contrast, opposing words, phrases, views, characters etc.
employment of leitmotifs	the use of a theme, expression or object recurring throughout a text; the leitmotif refers to a certain person, situation or atmosphere
metaphor	a poetic comparison without using <i>like</i> or <i>as</i>
repetitions	deliberately using a word / phrase more than once in a text



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