

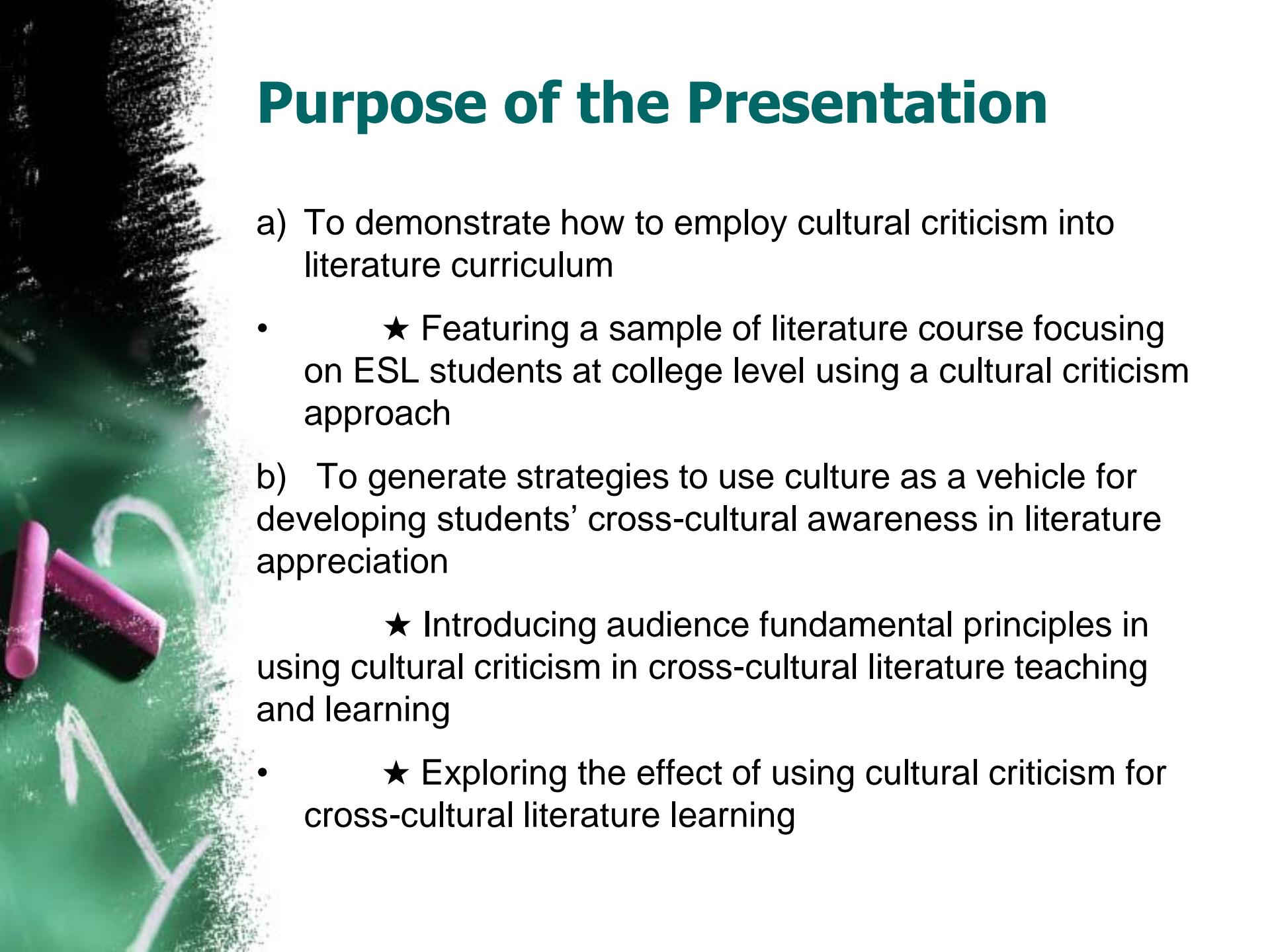
Employing Cultural Criticism to the Teaching of Cross-cultural literature for English as a Second Language Learners

**2019 Faculty Lectureship Award Presentation
Henry Ford College**

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Overview of Presentation

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Purpose of the Presentation

- a) To demonstrate how to employ cultural criticism into literature curriculum
 - ★ Featuring a sample of literature course focusing on ESL students at college level using a cultural criticism approach
- b) To generate strategies to use culture as a vehicle for developing students' cross-cultural awareness in literature appreciation
 - ★ Introducing audience fundamental principles in using cultural criticism in cross-cultural literature teaching and learning
 - ★ Exploring the effect of using cultural criticism for cross-cultural literature learning

Motivation

In the Context of Globalization

- More cross-cultural exchanges
- Cross-cultural communication issues arise
- My cross-cultural teaching & learning experience
- ***Reflection: What teaching approach helps ESL college-level students understand the cross-cultural literary texts ?***
 - a) facilitate cross-cultural understandings
 - b) improve literature comprehension abilities.

Problems in Literature Teaching

- Traditional English Literature Teaching: the formalist and biographical criticism approach
(Christenbury, 2000; Karolides, 2000)

- Predetermined text meaning**
 - a) acquisition of linguistic knowledge
 - b) the systematic analysis of theme, style and structure
- Seldom pinpoints cultural elements within the text**



- Lack of literature engagement in class**
- Neglect students' cultural identity**



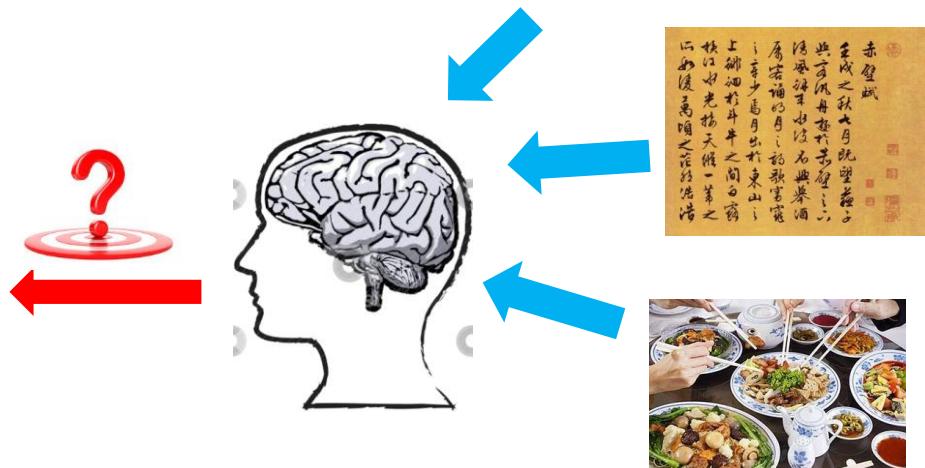
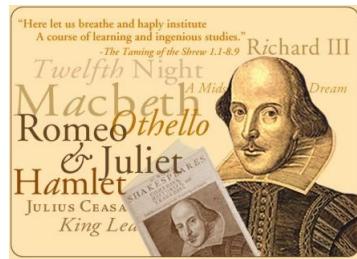
Theoretical Underpinnings

- *Rosenblatt's (1938) Reader-Response (RR) theory*: reader plays an active role in reading process.
- *Cultural schemata (CS) theory (Bartlett, 1932)*: one's cultural knowledge influences the interpretations of literary texts.
- *Interpretative Community Theory (Fish, 1980)*: Learners bring their diverse perspectives to interpret literature in a learning community

Challenges in Cross-cultural Literature learning

What are the meaning making process during cross-cultural literature learning?

- Cultural Schemata Theory
 - politics, militaries, economics, food, customs ...
- Reader Response Theory
- Interpretative Community Theory

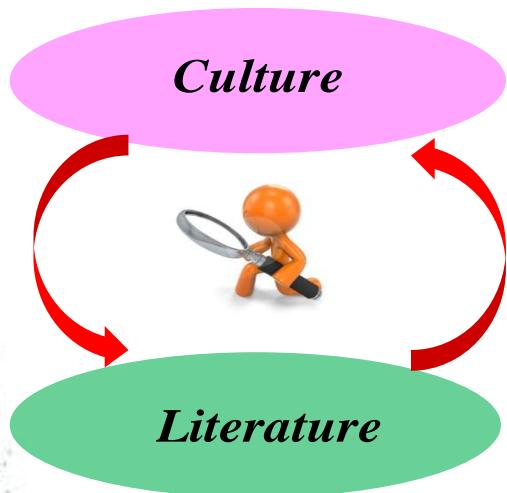
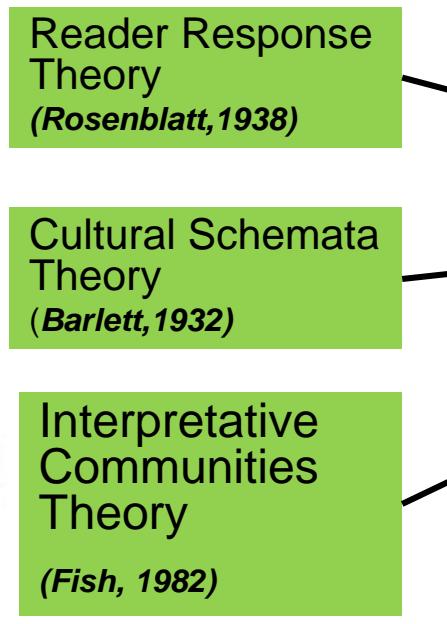




Introduction to Cultural Criticism

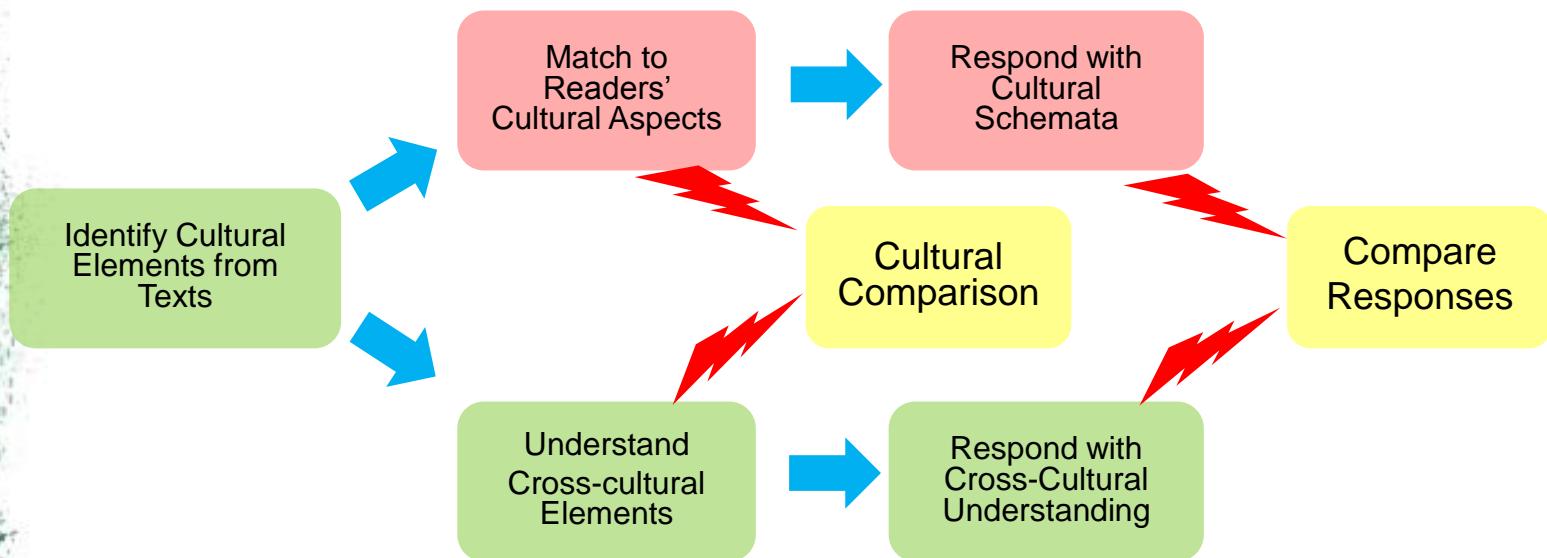
- *Cultural Criticism (Gunn, 1987)*
 - Focus on the elements of culture and how they affect one's perceptions and understanding of texts;
 - Examines how different religions, ethnicities, class identifications, political beliefs, and views affect the ways in which texts are created and interpreted.

Theoretical Framework



- *invited students' responses for literary texts*
- *explored how students' pre-existing knowledge impedes their understandings of the texts*
- *encouraged students to share their diverse perspectives*
- *helped students identify cultural elements in literature texts*
- *facilitate cross-cultural understandings*

Teaching Procedure



Cultural Criticism Class Implementation



Select Literary Texts

- Reading texts;
- Select discussion topics;
- Put forward essential questions;
- Engage in class discussion

Feedback from Instructor

Cultural elements in the texts

Cultural elements from cultural schemata

Response

Response

Compare & Correction



Leading Discussion Group's Responsibility

- Select the literary pieces that are aligned with a common discussion topic
- Prepare big questions connecting with the social cultural influence on the preselected themes
- Facilitate Class Discussion

Research Snapshot

Purpose of Study: examine the effect of utilizing a cultural criticism approach to the teaching of cross-cultural literature for ESL learners

Research questions: (a) Do participants instructed by a cultural criticism approach can achieve higher scores in terms of analysis of the cultural aspects within the literary texts? (b) Do participants instructed by a cultural criticism approach can achieve higher scores in literature comprehension than participants instructed by a formalist/biographical criticism approach?

Methods: use a quasi-experimental design & a repeated measure mixed design

Participants: A total number of 109 Chinese English majors registering British literature course at Department of English, a public funded comprehensive University located in the eastern part of China

Instruments: Two essay tests concerning the cultural analysis of Britain in *Pride and Prejudice*. The other two texts are literary-comprehension oriented, examining students' overall capability of literature text apprehension

Data Collection Period: 2016/08/26-2016/01/04/

Data Collection:

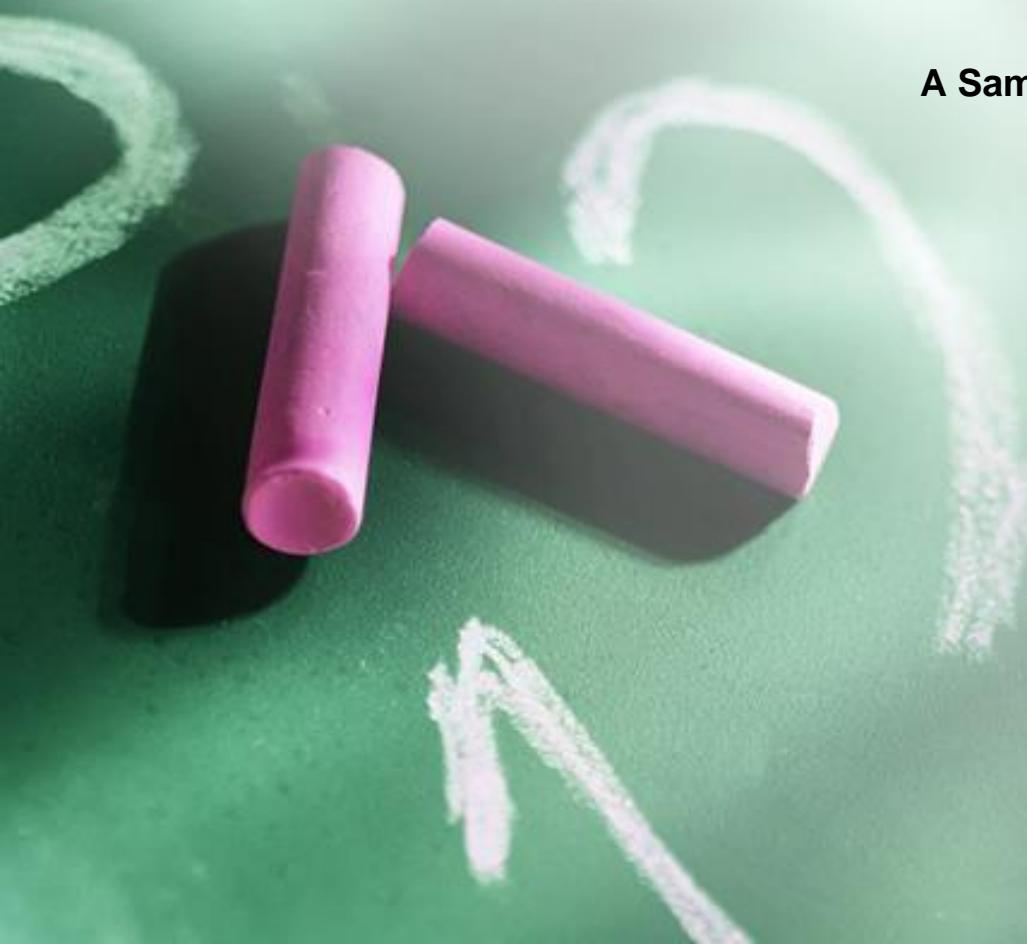
- Students' performance scores in the two cultural analysis tests (CulTests)
- Students' performance scores in the three literature comprehension tests (CompTests)
- Students' Test for English Majors, Band 4 (TEM-4) scores

Data Analysis: Various statistical Models (ANOVA, ANOCOVA, MANOVA, MANCOVA)

Results: the cultural criticism approach resulted in better cultural understandings of literary texts and better literature comprehension than the traditional formalist and biographical approach

Cultural Criticism Units of Instruction

A Sample Lesson Using a Cultural Criticism Approach



Selecting the Literary Pieces

- Theme/Topics (Politics, Economic, Social, Customs and belief...)
 - A wide range of topics in each literary work
 - Tentative discussion topics for a British Literature Course:
 - tribal culture in *Beowulf* (custom)
 - humanism in *Hamlet* (politics)
 - religious perspectives in *Paradise Lost* (Religion)
 - imperialism in *Gulliver's Travel*, (economic)
 - marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*, (social)
 - poverty and criminality in *Oliver Twist* (social)
 - feminism in *Mrs. Dalloway* (social & politics)



A Sample Lesson: Romeo and Juliet

- **Cultural understandings of literature**
 - ★ Understandings of the cultural influences in literary texts from perspectives of the general concept of the culture (Zhen, 2012).
- Cultural elements: custom, politics, religion, economy, society, etc.. (Zhang, 2021)
 - *i.e. Romeo and Juliet (List the discussion topics, and then select one that interests you most)*
 - *Tentative Topics that student may choose*
 - *Love (social)*
 - *Aristocracy's choice of marriage (social, economic)*
 - *Feud between families (custom and belief)*
 - *Family's authority (social)*
 - *Human rights (politics)*



Proposed Discussion Topic in *Romeo and Juliet*

- Discussion Topic: Betrayal of arranged marriage in beloved people
- **Selected literary texts:**
 - Act 2, Scene 2, Capulet's Garden.
 - Act 3, Scene 5, Capulet's orchard.
 - Act 5, Scene 3, A churchyard;
- **How does the discussion topic reflect in the assigned literary texts? Why do you think the selected texts are aligned with the discussion topic?**

Rationale to Select the Three Literary Texts

- Act 2, Scene 2: intense passion in beloved persons

Emotional Love-
Acknowledgement of Love with
Each Other

- Is it a date arranged by their parents?
- What factors might prevent Juliet from loving Romeo? What lines can you see from them?

Rationale to Select the Three Literary Texts

- Act 3 Scene 5:

Arranged
marriage from
Juliet's father

Juliet's
disobedience
to her family's
arrangement

Conflict
arises

How to solve the conflict between the Capulet and Juliet?

Betrayal

obedience

Rationale to Select the Three Literary Texts

- Act 5, Scene 5: Personal choice

Consummate
love

Betrayal of
Arranged Marriage

Tragedy in the world,
Conflict solved



Rules to Five Essential Questions

- Pay more attention about “Why” and “How”.
- Open-ended, interesting questions, rather than a fact question
 - *Concerning about the characters' actions, decisions and choice.*
 - *Focus on explaining characters' actions/decision/choice and the underlying reasons influenced by the social culture*
 - *Value diverse perspectives*
- Be relevant to the selected literary pieces
- Be connected to the social culture influence

Examples as Essential Questions

- What is Juliet's dad, Lord Capulet's attitude towards his daughter's marriage? How would you characterize the Capulets' marriage? Why does he hold such an attitude? Please justify your answer based on the British social culture in 16th Century.
 - *Attitude analysis*
 - *What is the underlying reason that causes his attitude?*
 - *Support your opinion based on the literature*

Examples as Essential Questions

- Why do Romeo and Juliet marry in secret?
What are the consequences of such secrecy?
 - *Social context*
 - Distinguish between love and marriage
 - Is it acknowledged?
 - Why secretly?

Other Essential Questions

- How does the social culture (i.e. parental authority, relationship between two families, class consciousness) influences on the choice of marriage for the characters in the texts? Please choose at least one character in the novel to answer this question.
- What are Romeo and Juliet's attitudes/values towards marriage? How does it conflict with their parents? What might account for the different cultural values towards marriage between Romeo and Juliet and Juliet's parents?
- Compare & Research Question: What were the people's attitude towards marriage in 16th century in your country? Compare it with the values on marriage in *Romeo and Juliet*'s story.
- Open-ended Question: In terms of sacrificing lives to fight for the arranged marriage, would Romeo and Juliet be considered a respectable couple in the modern society? Why? Please justify your answer.



Highlights in Using a Cultural Criticism Approach

- ★ Learners' actively constructing a sense of others' culture
- ★ Learners' engagement in cross-cultural literature inquiry
- Influences
 - *Challenges students to consistently examine their taken-for granted assumptions*
 - *Develop ways to think about, study, research, and discuss about the diversity of literature and culture*



Students' Feedback

- More open-minded
- More opportunities to express their own opinions
- Understand a particular aspect of culture at the literary work's written time
- Critical thinking
- Deep thoughts
- Discussion-based classroom culture



Practical Suggestions: Cross-Cultural Literature and Literacy Teaching

- a) consider students' cultural context
- b) provide students with opportunities to observe and experience characters' life experience influenced by the social cultural context at that time
- c) provide access to the first-hand resources that could reflect the authentic culture in the text
- (d) orient students to exploring a particular cultural issue or theme after a close reading of one or more literary works;
- (e) support students' inquiry towards a particular culture and facilitate cross-cultural communication in the learning process.



Implications for the HFCC Teaching and Learning Community

- **Context**
 - A large *ESL student populations from other languages and cultures*
- **Benefits for HFCC Learning Community**
 - ***From a practice perspective***
 - a possible literature appreciation approach for cross-cultural literacy and literature learners
 - be more efficient in language learning and literature appreciation
 - gaining a deeper appreciation of both the language and the cultural values within the text
 - ***From a broader perspective***
 - Keep an open mind towards another culture
 - Better get involved in our culturally diverse learning community
 - Further enhance cross-culture communication and exchanges

Conclusion

Global Perspective of Cross-Cultural Literature Teaching

- ★ To explore a multiplicity of perspectives among different culture in different countries;
- ★ To help students to develop a more positive attitude towards other cultures and nations.

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Any Comment and Question?

**Thank you for your
Wonderful Support
ON THIS JOURNEY !**