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Análisis de Textos Literarios Ingleses

Grado en Estudios Ingleses

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Setting as a tool for characterisation

Esta actividad está dirigida al alumnado de la asignatura *Análisis de Textos Literarios Ingleses*, que se imparte a estudiantes de primer año del Grado de Estudios Ingleses y de segundo año del Doble Grado en Educación Primaria y Estudios Ingleses. El objetivo es demostrar que el uso del espacio en los textos literarios constituye una herramienta fundamental para su análisis. En concreto, con esta actividad se pretende que el alumnado perciba cómo, a menudo, el espacio funciona como un mecanismo de caracterización de los personajes, creando enlaces entre un escenario y el personaje que lo ocupa.

Esta actividad está dividida en cuatro partes que combinan trabajo en asamblea, trabajo individual y trabajo en grupos. La primera parte consiste en el análisis de un fragmento literario, la segunda parte consiste en la elaboración de un perfil de un personaje a partir de unos espacios, la tercera parte es una puesta en común en pequeños grupos de los perfiles de personaje que han creado y la última parte vuelve a ser una puesta en común en asamblea para compartir impresiones, reflexiones y algunos ejemplos.

Por ello, la actividad fomenta la comprensión lectora, la capacidad de análisis, la creatividad, la discusión y la expresión en inglés tanto de forma escrita como oral.

A continuación se presentan las instrucciones para la actividad en inglés y los materiales empleados.

Setting as a tool for characterisation

PART 1:

The lecturer shows the following passage from *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003) by J.K. Rowling. A volunteer reads it aloud for all the group:

“He had known this office under three of its previous occupants. In the days when Gilderoy Lockhart had lived here it had been plastered in beaming portraits of himself. When Lupin had occupied it, it was likely you would meet



some fascinating Dark creature in a cage or tank if you came to call. In the impostor Moody's days it had been packed with various instruments and artefacts for the detection of wrongdoing and concealment.

Now, however, it looked totally unrecognisable. The surfaces had all been draped in lacy covers and cloths. There were several vases full of dried flowers, each one residing on its own doily, and on one of the walls was a collection of ornamental plates, each decorated with a large technicolour kitten wearing a different bow around its neck. These were so foul that Harry stared at them, transfixed, until Professor Umbridge spoke again” (238-239)

The lecturer asks the following questions. Volunteers answer them:

- 1) What space is being described in this passage? How do we know it is the same place despite the changes?

Expected answer: The space described is the Defence Against the Dark Arts classroom/office at Hogwarts. We know it is the same place because Harry recognises it from having known it under three previous occupants, even though its appearance has changed drastically with each new professor.

- 2) How is the office described under each of its previous occupants (Lockhart, Lupin, and Moody)?
- 3) What objects or visual details are associated with each of them?

Expected answers (2 and 3): Under Lockhart, the office was filled with portraits of himself, suggesting vanity. Under Lupin, it contained Dark creatures in cages or tanks, reflecting academic curiosity and knowledge. Under Moody, it was crowded with instruments for detecting danger and deception, showing vigilance and paranoia. Under Dolores Umbridge, the office becomes decorated with cloths, dried flowers, doilies, and ornamental plates featuring technicolour kittens. This overly decorative, childish, and artificial space contrasts sharply with the office's previous academic uses and suggests an attempt to impose control and false sweetness, revealing Umbridge's disturbing blend of cuteness and cruelty.

- 4) How does Harry's reaction to the setting influence the reader's perception of Umbridge?

5)

Expected answer: Words such as “unrecognisable”, “foul” and “transfixed” together with his reaction encourage distrust and dislike.

- 6) How does Rowling use space to communicate information about characters without explicit description?

Expected answer: Rowling uses the arrangement and objects within the office to reflect each character's personality, values, and approach to

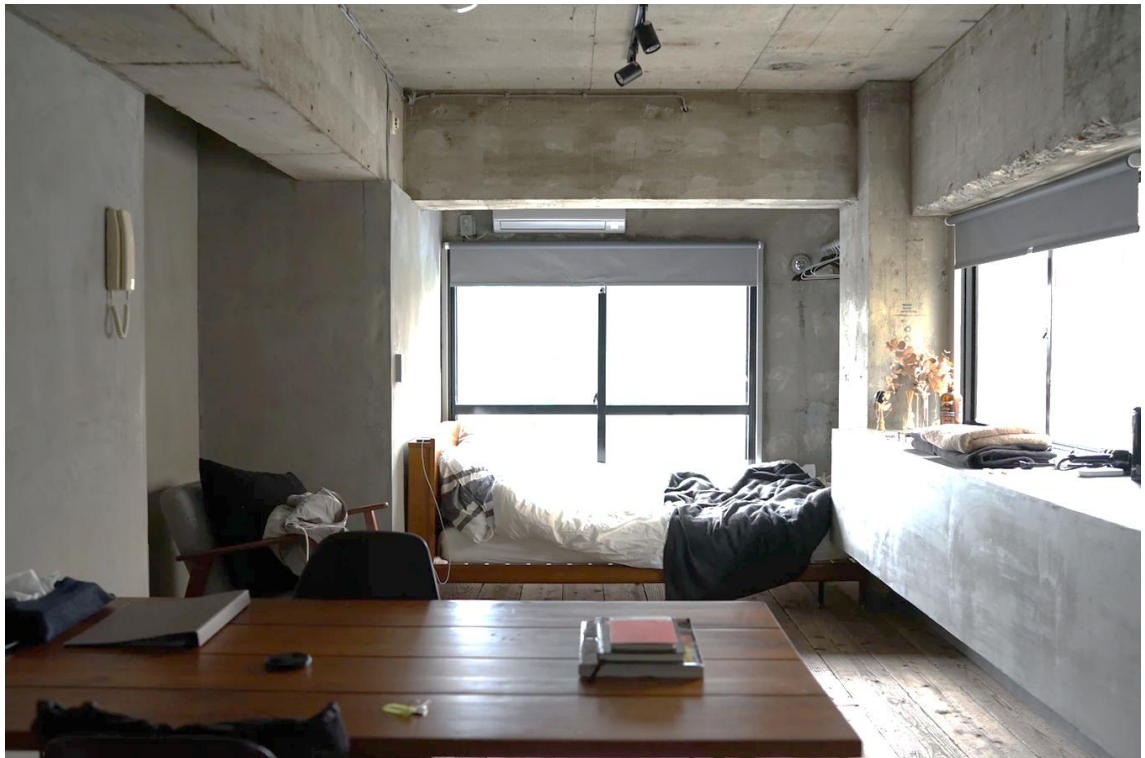
teaching. Rather than directly describing the professors, the space they inhabit acts as an extension of their character, allowing readers to infer traits through setting.

PART 2:

The lecturer shows a picture of a setting (preferably a bedroom) and asks students to create a profile of the character who would live in it. They must include as many details as possible: (i.e. nationality, sex, age, occupation, hobbies, traits of their personality, routines, relationships, etc.).

Students work individually, by writing their character's profile in their notebooks.

The following images, taken from a free stock image servers, can serve as an example:



When they have finished (after 5-10 minutes), the lecturer now shows a very different image from the previous one and asks students to think whether it would make sense for a literary work to have the character they have created living in the following setting:



Expected answer: It would make no sense, or it would be due to a dramatic change in the plot.

PART 3:

In groups of 3-4 students, they discuss their creations and explain their reflections about the previous questions.

PART 4:

The entire group now discusses the main conclusions from each of their groups. Volunteers from each group share some of the ideas discussed, suggested characters and main conclusions.

The lecturer finishes the activity with a final reflection on the importance of the setting for our understanding of the characters in literary works.