

Book title

Lives of Girls and Women

Author

Alice Munro



Bibliographic information

Author: Alice Munro

Lives of Girls and Women

Publisher: McGraw-Hill Ryerson

Publication date: 1971

Pages: 254 pp.

ISBN 978-0-07-092932-6

OCLC 517102

Alice Munro (1931) was born in Wingham, Ontario, Canada. She started publishing short stories in magazines when she was a student, and in 1968 she received her first Governor Award - the most prestigious Canadian literary prize - for the collection of short stories *The Dance of the Happy Shades*. In 1978 she was awarded the Guverner Prize for the *Who Do You Think You Are?* collection and also in 1986 for *The Progress of Love*.

She is a double winner of the important Giller Prize – in 1998 for *The Love of a Good Woman* and in 2004 for *Runaway*, a collection that also received the Commonwealth Writers Prize (2005).

In 2009, Alice Munro received the Man Booker International Award for lifetime achievement.

In 2013 she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature as "a master of contemporary short story".

She has published more than 14 collections of short stories and a novel (*Lives of Girls and Women*) and is considered one of the best Canadian and even world women writers.



Links (adaptations, reviews, full texts etc.)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_Munro

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lives_of_Girls_and_Women

<https://www.facebook.com/alicemunroauthor>

<https://www.biography.com/people/alice-munro-9418218>

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110370/>

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110370/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/24/lives-of-girls-and-women-by-alice-munro-review>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2015/aug/12/dance-of-the-happy-shades-by-alice-munro-a-place-familiar-but-out-of-reach>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/jun/15/lying-under-the-apple-tree-alice-munro-review-astonishing-tales>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/mar/25/books-alice-munro-canadian-currency>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2015/oct/22/reading-cities-books-about-vancouver>

<https://www.amazon.com/Alice-Munro/e/B000APECX6>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/11/books/alice-munro-wins-nobel-prize-in-literature.html?mcubz=1>

<http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~ecampbel/munro/frame.htm>

Theme

The short story cycle develops into the authentic Bildungsroman in which the author has meticulously linked autobiographical elements and a detailed description of growing up and living in the Canadian province of the 1950s. It deals with the drama of female emancipation, with different ways to live life – in marriage, family, relationship, or beyond, in work, progress, creation; or distorted, in an attempt to reconcile the internal / private and external / public world.

Growth and maturation; the penetration of a new way of life and ideas into the poor patriarchal provincial milieu; adaptation, not fitting into the local culture; the coexistence of the multi-confessional community; male-female relations, sexuality; gender stereotypes; relationship between young people and their parents; marriage, marriage and love problems; emotional, mental and physical abuse of the young people; fear of bondage, love and marriage; questions of life and death, religiosity and agnosticism, God and eternal life ...



Short summary

Most of the plot takes place in the Canadian town Jubilee. The stories come from the perspective of the main character Del Jordan and we follow her upbringing and development, from her childhood to leaving home for university. As a little girl she lived with her family on her father's fox-breeding farm near a town in Ontario. Del lives everyday life with her energetic mother Ada, introvert father Tom and younger brother Owen. While Del's father has completely adapted to the life in the province, her emancipated mother is struggling with a sleepy town seeking intellectual comfort in selling encyclopedias. Del moves to a nearby town with her mother, to continue her education. There she meets her best friend Naomi and goes along with all that is related to the growing up of a young girl. Munro naturally and easily detects the complex layers that make up the world of girls, from youthful love, relationships with parents and friends, school, intellectual interests, books, entertainment, interest in sexuality, first love experiences as well as unpleasant experiences, losing friendship, disappointment, maturity temptations ...

Del's mother believes in knowledge, despises self-righteousness, writes letters to local newspapers, and is emancipated in a certain way: she is separated from her husband, she is open in some matters, but in sexuality she is pretty much . It condemns surface, fun, ignores body, all that attracts girls. Del explores herself and seeks answers by visiting various ecclesiastical communities. Del's friend Naomi goes through a typical female transformation, from an independent high school student to a socially desirable female role, terminating her studies and marrying because of pregnancy before she reaches twenty. In the background, Munro creates a wide gallery of male characters - Del's father, her brother, an educated and witty friend, manly but primitive and violent fiancée, corrupted lover of her mom's friend and others. With her nonconformist mother, who advises her to uncompromisingly enter into life, Del refuses the protective relationship trying to find her own way.

Why is the story appropriate for the targeted groups of RSP readers?

The novel is suitable for the target group of readers, slightly more for older ones. The chosen text reflects the interests of the target group because it is closely related to the issue of growing up, self-centered conflict and adaptation attempts, the themes like female-male relationships, love, the relationship between children and parents, students and teachers, religiousness and agnosticism, particular fanaticism and exclusivity in both cases . Although the novel is set in the 1950's, it reflects the current political and historical moment in Europe and in the world when rigid and dangerous ideas and ideologies that confuse young people, disorient them and add confusion to their ideology are being revived. It also promotes the idea of understanding cultural diversity, the idea



of ecumenism in the multiconfessional community. From the conducted survey it is evident that students usually choose the topics dealing with growing up and maturing, relationships with friends and parents, and choosing the way of life.

The text is also suitable for its form: short stories united in the romanesque unity. It is available in English original and in excellent Croatian translation. It is also adapted as TV drama and feature film.

What are the distinguished readers interests reflected by this book/story?

Young readers will develop critical attitude towards different social challenges and issues, understanding the needs and attitudes of others, they will recognize themselves in close and timely issues contemplating personal intellectual and emotional experiences. They will critically reflect on gender stereotypes that, according to scientific studies, can increase the risk of developing depression or suicide and violence in adolescents. Gender stereotypes about women's passivity may encourage harassment. It is a great risk for young girls who may drop out of school, suffer bodily or sexual violence, get married too early and have a baby, get infected by HIV, etc. Young boys are encouraged to spend more time outside their home without supervision in order to explore the world. Boys are exposed to stereotypes that they must be physically powerful and independent, and this can lead them to become violent and consume drugs. Equally in open and conservative societies, children and young people quickly adopt the myths that girls are vulnerable, and the boys are powerful and independent.

Why is this story motivational for the pupils?

Students can recognize themselves in familiar situations, think about their maturity, positive and negative experiences in their own environment, differences and similarities, how to personally solve the doubts of the main heroine and her peers, and the questions of personal emancipation. They are also offered additional motivation to watch the movie or TV adaptation. The story can also be motivational for parents if they are involved in the teaching process and co-operation with the school.

Is there a historical, political, multi/inter cultural, migrant or similar context recognized in this book/story?

The novel clearly recognizes the ever-present socio-historical context of the problem of multiconfessionalism and the sharp and persistent conflict of religious, ideological nature, nowadays very popular on the national and world level. It is also about social, historical-political and cultural differences. There is also a topic of great migration of



small-town population to cities in the 20th century for employment, education and promotion.

Is there a principle of inclusion reflected in this book/story and does it promotes understanding of cultural diversities and heritage?

The novel promotes understanding of cultural and confessional differences and heritage, appreciation and support of social, generational, national and other differences.

METHODOLOGY

Title of Activity

LITERARY WORKSHOP FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Description of educational activity

Duration: 90 minutes

Pupils' age: 16-18

Organization of the class of pupils: two moderators, six groups of 3 to 4 students, group work (students and parents), individual (discussion), discussion groups, work in a larger classroom or school hall, circular seating.

The aim of the lesson: The aim is to involve parents in the teaching process, improve student literacy and ability to understand texts, ability to reflect, critical thinking and empathy, key competencies, and transversal skills. Also, cultivating reading culture by creating a reading motivating environment, developing interpretative, analysis and evaluation skills. The aim of the workshop is to develop students' verbal and written expressive skills, the ability to debate, the quality of preparation of theses / antithesis and arguments. The aim is to observe the importance of harmonized educational activities and encourage the co-operation between parents and schools and to foster dialogue among the participants of the educational process

Support materials: The text of the story.

Activities:

A. Before the workshop

One week before the workshop with the students and their class teacher and the pedagogue, arrange a joint lesson with parents (time and place, theme). Participation is



optional, but it is desirable to include many parents as possible. Distribute two copies of the novel to students (for them and their parents), which will be a template for common work and they need read them. Each student, based on the motifs from the excerpt, should prepare five arguments for and against the thesis (sentence statement!), Eg: Del Jordan acted right when she opposed her mother. Men are stronger sex. / Girls are vulnerable and passive, and young men are strong and independent. Sexual harassment and violence should not be acknowledged or reported. / Life without marriage makes no sense. / Some books or newspapers should be banned. / The time of books has passed.

Choose two moderator students and introduce and explain the plan and order of the workshop activities and the rules of the debate.

B. First Lesson: Motivation

The workshop leader (teacher) and the students greet the parents and lead them to the gym or a larger classroom. The tables are placed in a circle. One of them is the facilitator's table. They sit alternately and without breaking into the older and younger or pairs of the child - the parent.

At the beginning of the first lesson the moderators briefly explain the course and objectives of the workshop. The facilitator gives basic information about the novel (theme, time, space) and the author, shows the video of the two-minute section of the interview and interpretatively reads the selected shorter sections of the excerpt.

The teacher organizes students into smaller groups (6 groups of 3 to 5 students) by random selection in the register. Moderators hand in a piece of paper to their parents for notes and marks. Students work in small groups according to the principle of collaborative learning, each student reads their arguments for and against. The order of presentation: hot pencil method (on the facilitator's table, pencil is spinned, and the top of the pencil decides the first speaker). Parents participate individually, they listen and make notes as needed. Exercising listening, talking and managing time, the students keep notes and then, together with their parents, ask questions and make comments.

In the end, they choose successful theses / arguments that confirm or reject the defined thesis and support them with evidence from the text (quotes, paraphrases, retelling the part of the excerpt) as they were set, and reject badly articulated or inaccurate claims.

Students select two groups of three debates and representatives of judges (2 parents and 3 students).

C. Second Lesson: Debate and Self-Evaluation

Moderators explain the rules of the debate to the parents and students. Debate is a skill of discussion in which participants use pre-prepared arguments. Two opposing sides discuss the thesis. A well-formed thesis should be said with an affirmative sentence. The participants do not know whether they will be in affirmative or negative group, until then they have prepared arguments for both sides. When debaters find out which opinion they will represent, which can be determined by throwing dice, coins, drawing paper from hoods, etc., they have to represent their group regardless of whether it is their personal opinion. One group tries to convince the other in the truth of their arguments and persuade them to accept them. The judges monitor the time and finally, after the discussion and the closing words, evaluate the group's persuasiveness (scale 1 - 10) and determine the winner. The debate lasts exactly 18 minutes.

Affirmative and negation groups are selected. The negative argument debater starts (60 seconds) – and the opposing group replicates (the affirmative debater argues the negative arguments, asking questions that are trying to contradict him and weaken or break his arguments, time for questions and answers 90 seconds), followed by the first debater of the other group, and the first group replicates. This is how all three debates are developed.

After their performance, a large group discussion (plenum) follows according to the general discussion rules (respect of the interlocutor, lack of speech interruption, respect for time, etc.).

Each group eventually sums up the final word. In the final speech, each debater repeats or sums up his main arguments and supplements them by challenging opponents' arguments. It is not allowed to enter new arguments.

At the end of the debate, the judges preside over which group was more successful in evaluating the following: the talkative skills of the debates, the clarity of the arguments put forward, the persuasiveness of the speaker in defending his arguments, the ability of the debaters to find weakness in the opponent's arguments, respect of the set time.

Self-evaluation and evaluation

Students are asked to briefly write what they think they know after the workshop, what they can do better, what skills they have practiced or acquired, which attitudes they have built up. Students read their notes (shorten if repeated too often, find time for all the students to make everyone aware of what they have learned - learning outcomes). The parents orally comment on their participation in the workshop and present their



impressions and judgment on the usefulness and the need for such cooperation with the school.

The facilitator focuses on the goals that have been achieved, summarizes his knowledge of the novel and the ideas and values it offers, and recommends that students and parents read the work as a whole.

Working material: leaflets with a excerpt from the novel, notes and ratings papers, a computer and a projector, lists for evaluation and self-evaluation

A fragment from the novel "The Life of Girls and Women" (pages 178 - 184)

"It was a farewell performance for Mr. Chamberlain ..." - "Without thinking a bit, I decided to do the same."

Motivation: reading and reflecting on the subject of an elective reading list based on the selected excerpt (together with the parents); presenting evidence and arguing for and against the set of theses with questions and comments

Evaluation and assessment method:

- Students confirm and fully argue their attitudes and results at the end of their workshop. Parents also value the lesson and self-evaluate their contribution.

Effect of the activity on RSP reading:

The impact of RSP reading activities: practices that support and encourage students' choice, thinking and attitude. The idea and the choice are personal and there are none which are wrong, and the positive understanding and thinking itself affects the students' confidence and they lose previous reading resistance and gradually gain reading competence.

Connection to curriculum

Grade: 3rd to 4th year of secondary school

General Grammar School: Curriculum of the Study of World Literature and History, Geography, Citizenship and Ethics

Collaboration with parents with educational and educative purpose.

Students should independently notice, differentiate, explain, demonstrate and give examples of the features of the text offered, and express their views on the influence of culture, art and society on the development of young people's personality in an argumentative way.



Knowledge:

- Autonomously access text from different perspectives.
- Learn to initiate a discussion and ask questions.
- Develop ease and readiness of reading.
- Enhance the skill of reading comprehension.
- Organize and suspend different types of information.

Skills:

- Observe, counteract, distinguish, and comment on the similarities and differences in appearance in the text.
- Develop the prediction skills and ability to imagine possible situational solutions.
- Develop and enrich communication skills, arguing skills, discussion and debate.
- Construct, conclude and evaluate.
- Learn to work effectively, independently and equally in the group.

Competences:

- Establish links between the world in text and real life or personal experience.
- Be able to visualize, combine, intervene in material.
- Follow the instructions and tasks to be able to evaluate the results.
- Evaluate evidence and arguments, support and justify choices.
- Develop a sense of belonging, identify and connect with each other, share the same goals and values and respect differences.

Relationship with the curriculum - related goals.

- One of the key determinants of a pedagogically effective school is enhanced co-operation with parents. The partnership emphasizes the importance of cooperation in education and socialization of children, the respect for cultural differences and the importance of different perspectives for creating a positive climate for learning. The complexity of the society sends confusing messages. Parents sometimes become hostile to the school and the teacher when they are under the impression that they are taught and promoted in the school the moral or religious attitudes they disagree with. Starting from the thesis that a student and a child are one and the same person developing in school and family, the co-operation between parents and schools is a social and pedagogical inevitability. If school and family are in crisis, then their co-operation is even more important. Children whose parents in different ways contribute to school life are more



motivated to learn and achieve better success. This way of working is very effective in bringing together parents and their own children and getting to know each other's parents, teachers, and students within a certain class.

Bibliographic reference to be used during the activity

Author: Alice Munro

Lives of Girls and Women

Publisher: McGraw-Hill Ryerson

Publication date: 1971

Pages: 254 pp.

ISBN 978-0-07-092932-6

Short description of digital sources (applications, games, webpages, FB pages etc.)

Author: Alice Munro

Lives of Girls and Women

Publisher: McGraw-Hill Ryerson

Publication date: 1971

Pages: 254 pp.

ISBN 978-0-07-092932-6

OCLC 517102

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_Munro

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lives_of_Girls_and_Women

<https://www.facebook.com/alicemunroauthor>

<https://www.biography.com/people/alice-munro-9418218>

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110370/>

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110370/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/24/lives-of-girls-and-women-by-alice-munro-review>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2015/aug/12/dance-of-the-happy-shades-by-alice-munro-a-place-familiar-but-out-of-reach>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/jun/15/lying-under-the-apple-tree-alice-munro-review-astonishing-tales>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/mar/25/books-alice-munro-canadian-currency>



<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2015/oct/22/reading-cities-books-about-vancouver>

<https://www.amazon.com/Alice-Munro/e/B000APECX6>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/11/books/alice-munro-wins-nobel-prize-in-literature.html?mcubz=1>

<http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~ecampbel/munro/frame.htm>

Results

Expected outcomes:

- students acquire the lifelong ability to read, interpret and evaluate the literary text; the ability to develop an understanding of literal and implicit meaning, relevant contexts, and deeper issues and attitudes expressed in literary works;
- a competent personal response to the subject of the literary work they have studied;
- solving a generously diverse group of different tasks from different perspectives; the research of broader and universal questions suggested through the literary work;
- a conscious grasp of contemporary artistic and social themes; developed empathy and a better understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Recommendations

Choosing a method of teaching and a suitable text affects the students' interest in reading, studying, and interpreting.

Activities to support active inclusion of parents in the education of their children.

Independence in work, effective co-operation, involvement in discussion and appraisal encourage interests and develop analytical and synthetic skills.

The volume of texts can be tailored to the opportunities and interests of the group as needed, according to the RSP readership profile.

The more active approach and the smaller text fragments offer a more interesting, dynamic way of reading and studying a literary work.