

What are the Goals of Teaching Literature in L1? Examining European Models of Essays in the Upper Secondary School-leaving Exam

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The comparative analysis of ten different European models of essays in the upper secondary school-leaving external examination in a mother tongue shows that different models of essays anticipate different types of goals and show different approaches to literature teaching. We show that students in some countries can avoid educational and emotional goals of literature teaching in the upper secondary school-leaving essays and that for the models of essays in other countries the functional goals (writing and reading skills) seem to be more important. We argue that the model which would effectively check the achievement of the educational goals of teaching literature, should include both literary-theoretical and literary-historical knowledge and the emotional goals of teaching literature that are often neglected or oversimplified in essay assignments.

Keywords: didactics of literature, L1 language, literature teaching, upper secondary school-leaving exam, essay

Introduction

In different European countries, an essay assignment on a literary topic is a part of the mother language section of the general upper secondary school-leaving external examination. It is important how it looks as this is the final external exam which checks the fulfilment of the objectives of teaching literature that express what we want students to learn as a result of our teaching (Anderson and Kratwohl 2001, pp. 21–22, Bloom 1984). In addition, the secondary school-leaving exam and its contents have a reciprocal effect on teaching in school (Cheng and Curtis 2012, Xerri 2016).

As a model of a school-leaving essay, school-leaving essay assignments with accompanying assessment forms are used - taking them both into account contributes to a more detailed insight into the characteristics and goals of each essay part of the high-school leaving examination. The models don't change suddenly but gradually so we focused our analysis on the essays used in the examination period from 2015 to 2020. The types of models of essays show a general orientation in what is emphasized when teaching literature in a particular environment. This article presents the results of a comparative analysis of ten different models of essays in the general upper secondary school-leaving exam and examines the differences between them in terms of achieving three basic types

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of goals of teaching literature: functional, educational, and emotional. We explore whether an individual essay model anticipates these types of goals and in what way are they included. Furthermore, the role of the possibility of choosing between different types of essay in terms of achieving the above mentioned types of goals is also discussed. On the basis of our findings we propose some ideas how to effectively include functional, educational, and emotional goals of literature teaching in the essay assignments.

The Basis of Comparative Analysis of Essay Models

We examine various models of the essay in the school-leaving exam using the method of comparative analysis. We analyzed the essay models in the period from 2014 to 2020 when the essay models in each country were unchanged. All included models are comparable because they are written assignments on a literary topic and are all a part of the secondary school-leaving exam in different countries. They belong to the standardized state school-leaving exam, they determine the completion of upper secondary education and they apply to the entire country. In those countries where students can choose between different assignments, we examined only assignments on a literary topic excluding other topics. Ten different models in the comparative analysis are included:

- English graduation essay assignments within the literature module,
- elective Italian assignments on a literary topic (so-called type A and B assignments),
- French assignments, called commentary and an issue response,
- a Russian essay on a literary topic within the mother tongue part of the exam,
- an elective assignment on a literary topic in the Swiss model of a school essay,
- Slovenian essay at the secondary school-leaving exam,
- Croatian essay assignments, called the comparative analysis of two or more texts, interpretive, and argumentative school essay,
- Hungarian essay assignment which features the analysis of literary texts,
- an elective Austrian essay assignment on a literary topic,
- an essay model at the Slovenian international general upper secondary school-leaving exam in Slovenian as language A (mother tongue).

Types of Aims of Literature Teaching

The general secondary school-leaving exam in a mother tongue assesses the goals of the corresponding school subject in grammar school. The acquisition of literature in school consists of three equally important parts: functional abilities, knowledge about literature, and emotional components. Other goals also appear in the classroom, e.g., cross-curricular. Different aims may not be achieved individually but are interlinked and linked with different other goals of language

teaching, for example the use of grammar. In this article we focus on the goals that are connected with the teaching of literature. Functional goals include various activity aspects, educational goals anticipate the acquisition of literary knowledge, while emotional goals refer to the experience and evaluation of literary works.

Comparative Analysis of Essay Models in the Upper Secondary School-Leaving Exam in Terms of Educational Goals

Literary knowledge is related to educational or cognitive learning objectives (Bloom 1984) and is divided into literary-theoretical, and literary-historical knowledge (cf. Mailloux 1990, Reising 1991, Pilkington 1994), both are connected with general knowledge. Some upper secondary school-leaving exams do not include topics in literature so they anticipate that the students will base their writing on their general knowledge. On the other hand we analyse how knowledge about literature is included in the essays on a literary topic and what kind of literary knowledge is included in the models of essays.

The Austrian essay assignment requires the student to show mostly general knowledge, while literary knowledge is not as important. When it does appear, it refers mainly to the candidate's knowledge of themes and motifs of the discussed literary work, to the aspect of fictional events in the literary text and the appearance of their linguistic form (cf. "Standardisierte kompetenzorientierte" 2017). The model often focuses on the topicality of the literary work in relation to contemporary social phenomena. In doing so, the student uses only the knowledge of fictional events in the literary text and the general knowledge, not literary-historical or literary-theoretical knowledge.

The interpretive essay in the Slovenian secondary school-leaving exam demands literary-theoretical knowledge, which is connected to the analysis of the meaning of the given literary works and to the reflection of the effects of the text on the reader. For example, the instructions encourage the candidate to identify how stylistic and linguistic means express feelings, experiences, and moods (Slovenščina 2015, 2016) or characterize the characters (Slovenščina 2018). Literary-historical knowledge is not required in the current essay model in Slovenia.

An essay in the secondary school-leaving exam in Hungary occasionally effectively requires the use of literary-theoretical and/or literary-historical knowledge, e.g. knowledge about types, forms and genres (Magyar nyelv 2014); polysemy in literary texts (Magyar nyelv 2015); and the relationship between literary history and history (Magyar nyelv 2017). A student must ground their claims by showing examples from other literary works. However, the second type of essay occasionally demands merely discussing general cultural phenomena without the inclusion of specific literary knowledge. Even in the Hungarian school essay of the first type, literary-historical knowledge is mostly neglected. Textual analysis and the content of a literary work in question are the most important while literary-theoretical knowledge is rarely highlighted.

In Italy, the educational goals connected with literary knowledge are not systematically present in the secondary school-leaving exam type A essay assignment. Literary theoretical knowledge is primarily a tool of analysis, as the

essay assignments encourage the candidate to explore the author's stylistic choices and find examples of stylistic means in the text (Esami di Stato 2017) or peculiarities of structure, style, and vocabulary (Esami di Stato 2015). The use of literary-historical knowledge is not required, except for the last of the three points of the type A assignment, which states that the student should establish a connection between a literary text and other literary works from the same author or works from the same period. (Esami di Stato 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017). The task of type B secondary school-leaving essay in mother tongue in Italy supports educational goals to a lesser extent, as the instructions are not specific to the literary and artistic field and guide the candidate to find arbitrary but established connections between different (non)literary texts and visual material mainly based on their general knowledge.

The school-leaving essay in mother tongue in Croatia often asks students to compare given texts and to place the excerpt into the whole literary work and in the literary-historical context (cf. Hrvatski 2014, 2015, 2017). The interpretive type of essay also includes the literary-historical placement of given literary texts, and in addition, the candidate is often expected to know their authors and similar works. The essay in secondary school-leaving exam therefore examines the achievement of the educational goals of teaching literature, having more focus on literary-historical knowledge, and less on literary-theoretical knowledge.

In the French secondary school-leaving essay, called a commentary, the candidate demonstrates knowledge of the considered literary works within the framework of an individual topic. In the essay work of the Matura in France, the student chooses a topic in advance while preparing to write the Matura, e.g., intertextuality from the 17th century to the present day (Les épreuves). The assessment form, which refers to a task called response to a problem, explicitly focuses on literary-historical knowledge. For the highest grade, for example, the student is expected to present and comment on several examples of literary texts from a predetermined corpus of literary works or outside it, develop argumentation, and show a broad reading and artistic culture. Literary-historical knowledge is also required in the commentary, but it is not as important as in the response to the problem, because it is mentioned only in the criteria of knowing the read texts (Bac français 2016, 2017). Although the paper emphasizes the analysis of literary work and the search for examples, literary-theoretical knowledge is not the top priority, as the emphasis is primarily on the precise semantic analysis of the given and various other literary works. The commentary therefore focuses on the educational goals of teaching literature, namely the comparative knowledge of their content, while literary-theoretical knowledge as well as more complex literary-historical knowledge are not relevant.

The English model of the essay in the secondary school-leaving exam tests the candidate's knowledge of different contexts of production of given texts and their later interpretations within the category of knowledge in the assessment form for the highest grade. In addition, it states that literary-theoretical knowledge also helps to understand the textual meaning. Understanding how the author's choices affect the meaning of the text are the most important. The candidate proves this by effectively analysing the literary means, the context, as well as genres and

conventions that are used (Mark scheme 2017). Effective use of literary knowledge, especially literary-historical knowledge of the context, and in some places also literary-theoretical knowledge, is characteristic of the highest rated essay assignments (Mark scheme 2017). Candidates write several essays from various areas of content (drama, poetry, prose, opus by William Shakespeare, other older authors, etc.) or from different literary-historical periods (for example, before and after 1800 (GCE English)) and have to compare different literary works (A Level 2014, 2017). Assessment instructions for example demands a student to understand that contemporaries of the literary text at the time of its creation understood it through specific, socially conditioned codes. Another instruction encourages the candidate to be aware of the past social differences and different British responses to the events in Germany when interpreting literary works from the 1930s (Mark Scheme 2017, p. 9). Some elective essay assignments focus exclusively on the content of literary works.

The essay model in the secondary school-leaving exam in Switzerland places a strong emphasis on literary-theoretical knowledge, as students must find and describe rhetorical figures in relation to their content in an unknown literary text (Esame svizzero 2017). They must also understand fictional events.

Educational goals in the model of an essay in the general upper secondary school-leaving exam in Russia focus on understanding the content of the text, namely the views that the literary work represents or defends (ЕДИНЬИЙ 2017). The student identifies and comments on them, looking for examples in a given text. When doing so, they must include at least one argument from the artistic, journalistic, or scientific literature if it is to be rated high. Literary-historical knowledge is also evaluated with only 1 out of a total of 24 points (Русский 2016). The essay model at the school-leaving exam does not require the literary-theoretical knowledge.

The essay part of the international school-leaving exam in Slovenian as a mother tongue requires the student to form conclusions that they independently discuss. In the first type of essay, they must show the understanding of the connections between the formal and semantic level of a literary text and evaluate them. In an unknown passage they are required to independently identify the formal properties of the text and connect its meaning to them. They recognize the author's choices (Paper 1 HL 2018), which, in addition to the writer's personality and life, are also influenced by broad social and cultural aspects. The second type of essay in the international Slovenian secondary school-leaving exam encourages the student to recognize, understand, and evaluate the literary conventions of the genre of a given text. It is apparent that the essay part of the international school-leaving exam, especially the second type of essay, requires the students to use their literary knowledge, primarily literary-theoretical. In the assessment forms, the emphasis is on understanding, as the candidate must include in his argumentation his own examples from other relevant literary works (Slovene A 2017). They must also connect different formal aspects of the text with its meaning and in their argumentation include learning that supports their thesis. There is slightly less emphasis on the inclusion of knowledge about literary history or the context of the creation of a literary work. Other dimensions of literary knowledge are at more

important: the student discusses the artistic language, structure, technique, and style that influence the meaning, as well as literary conventions (Paper 1 HL 2018, Paper 2 HL 2018).

Comparative Analysis of Essay Models at the General Upper Secondary School-Leaving Exam in Terms of Emotional Goals

Emotional goals of literature lessons refer to the student's emotions when coming in touch with literary works or to his or her experience with them. According to Bloom's taxonomy, this is affective or emotional-motivational area which includes educational goals. In the literature area, the reader's emotional-empathic responses are the starting point for the value dimensions of reading literary works, and thus for the value goals of teaching literature. A sovereign reader with a highly developed literary ability is able to recognize and reflect the emotions triggered by contact with a literary work. They directly connect the formal aspects of literary works with their semantic dimension or with the affect they have on him or her (cf. Appleyard 1994, p. 120).

Maria Nikolajeva (2010, p. 154) argues that an individual's literary ability develops when the reader goes beyond complete identification with fictional literary characters. In her opinion, the belief that readers must fully assume the aspect of one of the characters in a literary text hinders the development of literary ability (cf. Tatar 2009, p. 19–23 as cited in Nikolajeva 2010, p. 154). Readers need to free themselves to some extent from the subjectivity of the characters in order to judge them clearly - this significantly accelerates the ideological and aesthetic perception of the text, and crucially influences the reader's empathic response (Nikolajeva 2010, p. 154, Coplan 2004, p. 144). An empathic reader stands up for a certain character in an unfavorable situation, even though he does not fully share his beliefs, desires and values with him (Beecher 2016, p. 269).

The emotional goals in the Slovenian model of an essay in the secondary school-leaving exam are included in the evaluation form of an interpretive, but not of a discussion essay. The essay assignments test the candidate's ability of empathy, as they are supposed to empathize with the literary person. The aspect of recognizing the ethical dimension of a literary text is emphasized to a lesser extent compared to some other secondary school-leaving exam models. Emotional goals are especially present in the discussive school essay assignments that directly refer emotional effects to textual structures and encourage the candidate to justify and reflect on their experience and list specific elements of the text that trigger emotional responses (cf. Slovenščina 2015). Thus, the candidate reflects their emotions in relation to fictional events in the literary work, to the findings of linguistic and stylistic analysis of a given text, and to useful literary-theoretical knowledge.

The essay assignment on a literary topic of the secondary school-leaving exam in the mother tongue in Austria does not have consistent goals in connection with the student's emotions and experiences. When they are present, they mainly refer to the candidate's ability to empathize with literary characters. For example, a task that requires the writer to describe how the lyrical subject experiences the situation in which they find themselves (Standardisierte kompetenzorientierte

2017). The assignment does not require the candidate to analyse the ethical aspects of a literary text.

The Hungarian model of essay in the secondary school-leaving exam is similar to these types of goals. The assessment form lists the student's emotional response mainly in the context of summarizing the content of a literary work, as well as students empathizing with individual characters and thus having a deep understanding of the characters' position. They also discuss how a literary person understands the world around them. This is important because the Hungarian model of the secondary school-leaving exam essay is based mainly on lyrical literary texts that express the emotions and experiences of lyrical subjects (Magyar nyelv 2017). The second type of essay occasionally encourages the students to include their own reading experience.

In the Italian secondary-school leaving exam essay, emotional goals of teaching literature are often neglected or ineffectively included. Goals related to a student's emotions are often completely missing, for example, a type B task does not involve any emotional aspects. In the type A assignment, students can achieve emotional goals when they write about how emotional content develops in the text in connection with the motives or the theme of the literary work (Esami di Stato 2015). In doing so, they empathize with fictional characters and situations. In addition, the thesis contains an otherwise loose instruction that students can include subjective observations in the literary interpretation of given literary works (Esami di Stato 2017). There are no emotional goals in the type B assignment, while in the type A task they appear. For example, when a student reflects a certain contemporary social phenomenon, e.g., discrimination and marginalization, by giving examples from a literary work and with a justification derived from examples of other literary texts (Esami di Stato 2018). The assignment also asks students to express their empathy for literary characters and situations, and at the same time encourages them to reflect on their values and the values of the text. However, the candidate's task is to reflect on non-literary phenomena. This is an example of achieving emotional goals that are not directly related to literary content and thus the individual's literary ability.

The Croatian model of the essay at the general upper secondary school-leaving exam often instructs the students to describe the personality of literary characters, but less often directs them to reflect on the emotional state of literary characters or the narrator (Hrvatski 2014). This kind of reflection of fictitious characters presupposes emotional sensitivity and empathy, while at the same time supports the establishment of distance that prevents direct and uncritical identification. In the criteria of evaluation, the emotional dimension is not very important, as the description of the reading experience is mentioned only in the category that is related to the knowledge and the understanding of a literary text (Ispitni 2018/2019). It is apparent that the essay model does not require a reflection of the influence of linguistic means of expression in literary work on the receiver. The same is true for both types of essay assignment in the French model, where formal analysis of an individual literary text and analysis of the effects of linguistic means on the receiver are not important. This is also reflected in the

evaluation criteria, where the emotional aspects are not included (Bac français 2016, 2017).

The essay model at the English general upper secondary school-leaving exam sometimes includes emotional goals of literature lessons. The assessment criteria include the student's personal response to a literary text, which is highly rated if it shows perceptiveness, is often fresh and personal, and the student approaches to answering the essay questions in an original way (Mark Scheme 2017). The assessment form for the area of poetry 1800-1945, for example, requires that the candidate discusses how they are affected by the language, image and form of the poetic work (GCE English). They thus reflect their own emotional responses to reading and identify which aspects of a literary work trigger them. The candidate should empathize with the more complex emotional dimensions of a literary text and describe the emotional states of the characters (A Level English Literature 2014).

In the Russian model of the essay in the secondary school-leaving exam, the emotional goals of literature lessons connected with the dimension of values are important, as the student must identify, describe, and discuss the views of the narrator or literary author that appear in the text. In the assignment instructions, this goal appears in the requirement that the candidate states the position of the narrator or a literary author. They must give their own opinion and argue by giving examples from a literary text and using what is the basis of their substantive knowledge, their own observations, and their experience of the literary work (Единый 2017). The emphasis on emotional goals is also reflected in the Swiss model of the school-leaving exam essay, as the instructions ask the student to refer to the evaluation of substantive and intra-textual aspects, for example how the main character understands and judges themselves and what his or her attitude is towards other characters in the story (Esame svizzero 2015). Similar to the Russian model, the candidate identifies with a literary character and observes the character's fictitious personality profile from a distance, which presupposes the fact that they respond emphatically to fictitious events.

Comparative Analysis of Essay Models in the General Upper Secondary School-Leaving Exam in Terms of Functional Goals

The transfer activities related to reading and writing as a part of the functional objectives of teaching literature are emphasized for the purposes of the comparative analysis. We find that they are always taken into consideration when designing a secondary school-leaving exam essay. Especially because some essay models focus only on the mentioned components and do not show awareness that the teaching of literature addresses the student from an emotional and cognitive point of view, but only expose his or her reading and writing skills. This is especially evident in the essay models in the secondary school-leaving exam, which allow the candidate to write about a non-literary topic. In addition, functional goals in some models in assessment can be very important, while other types of goals not so much. An example of the predominance of functional goals is the Austrian model of an essay in the school-leaving exam which focuses on the ability to write different texts, e.g., a comment, speech, or a reader's letter

(Standardisierte kompetenzorientierte 2016). Although one of the possible choices is an essay on a literary topic, it is not necessary for the student to opt for it. The assignment on a literary topic asks the candidate to show accurate literary knowledge. The following categories are assessed: content, text structure, style and expression, and normative linguistic correctness. Three categories out of four refer to the functional goals of literature teaching. Assignments on a literary topic also give priority to checking the achievement of functional goals, as students can achieve up to 75% of all points. How many points students can receive for achieving functional goals is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Comparative Analysis of Essay Models in Terms of Functional Objectives*

Essay model in the general upper secondary school-leaving exam	Percentage of grade related to functional objectives
Austrian model	cca. 75%
Italian model	50%
Hungarian model	50%
Croatian model	50%
Russian model	58%
Slovenian model	40%
French model	app. 15%
English model	app. 25%
Swiss model	app. 27%
International general upper secondary school-leaving exam in Slovenia	20%

There are significant differences between the shares that contribute to the overall grade by the functional goals. These can be from a minimum of approx. 15% (French model) up to a maximum of approx. 75% (Austrian model). The differences are also reflected in how individual models of the secondary school-leaving exam understand the achievement of functional goals. They can emphasize either spelling, morphology, style, and other rules (e.g., in Russian, Slovenian, Hungarian, and Croatian models) or the efficiency of presenting the content, comprehensibility for the reader, etc. (e.g., in English, French models, and International general upper secondary school-leaving exam in Slovenia).

Comparative Analysis in Terms of the Possibility of Choosing Between Essay Assignments at General Upper Secondary School-Leaving Exam

The possibility to choose between essay assignments at secondary school-leaving exam allows individualization and adapts to individual interests, which has a motivating role. Nevertheless, electives can also be problematic, especially when the essay part of the secondary school-leaving exam in the mother tongue allows students to avoid the literary topic and thus reach neither educational nor emotional goals of teaching literature. Such an essay requires only the achievement of the functional goals of teaching literature. Table 2 shows whether each model offers a choice between different essay assignments and if, by choosing between different assignments, the candidate can avoid writing about a literary topic.

Table 2. *Selectiveness in the Discussed Essay Models*

Essay model (country / type of school-leaving exam)	Possibility to choose between different tasks		Can the student avoid writing about a literary topic with selectiveness?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Slovenia	X			X
Austria	X		X	
Italy	X		X	
Croatia	X			X
Hungary		X		X
France	X			X
England	X			X
Switzerland	X		X	
Russia		X		X
International general upper secondary school- leaving exam in Slovenia	X			X

It is not possible to choose between different essay assignments in the general upper secondary school-leaving exam in Croatia, Russia, and Hungary. In Slovenia, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, England, and at the international upper secondary school-leaving exam in Slovenia, students can choose different assignments. Models of essays at the school-leaving exam that provide selectiveness are divided into two groups according to whether the candidate can avoid writing about a literary topic. The secondary school-leaving exam in mother tongue in Austria, Italy, France, and Switzerland offers various topics in the essay assignment, including literary, which is optional. In France, one of the possible assignments is focused on creative writing. Although it requires the student to design his or her own literary text, while convincingly following the literary-historical determinants of the style of the source text, the candidate does not write directly about the literary topic. Similarly, the essay model at secondary school-leaving exam in Italy offers a choice of four assignments: in addition to two on the literary topic, there is a socio-economic, historical-political, and technical-scientific topic (Regolamento degli esami). Essay models at the secondary school-graduation exam in Slovenia, Russia, Hungary, Croatia, England, and at the international secondary school-leaving exam in Slovenia, always instruct students to write about literature, either due to no selectiveness or the electiveness that is always on literary topics.

The Hungarian and Russian models of essays at the secondary school-leaving exam do not offer a choice between different essay assignments, thus depriving them of opportunities to motivate candidates and, to some extent, also individualize essay assignments.

Conclusion

Our analysis shows that functional goals (writing and reading skills) rather than educational and emotional goals of literature teaching seem to be more important. All the discussed essay models in the general upper secondary school-leaving exam presuppose that the candidate achieves the functional goals of teaching literature, that include reading and writing. These goals are central in some models, neglecting cognitive and emotional goals. Thus, literary instruction is reduced to a means of acquiring useful, practical skills. We find that the only goals of literature lessons, which students cannot avoid if there is selectiveness in the essay assignments, are functional goals. The Austrian, Italian and Swiss models of the secondary school-leaving exam essay enable students to avoid literary topics, while neglecting to check the educational and emotional goals of literature lessons. Other models offer different choices and thus additionally motivates the student and offers him or her a certain individualization, while at the same time anticipating exclusively literary topics.

The general upper secondary school-leaving essay, which effectively checks the achievement of the educational goals of teaching literature, demands of students both literary-theoretical and literary-historical knowledge. This means that it does not focus only on the content dimensions of literary texts, such as a Russian essay, and not on thematic connections to other literary works, such as an Italian type B essay and a French commentary. This can be reduced to summarizing or in generalized writing on a particular topic and without the inclusion of literary knowledge. By connecting literary texts with contemporary social phenomena, which is characteristic of the Austrian model, only general knowledge is checked and not literary knowledge. It is of key importance that the required literary knowledge is directly intertwined with the semantic analysis of the text and is not a separate unit, unrelated to other parts of the essay paper as in the Croatian model. Literary-theoretical knowledge is anticipated effectively if it is not focused solely on finding examples of linguistic means of expression in a literary text, such as in the Italian essay of type A. It should be concerned with understanding the content, analysing the effects on the reader, and literary-historical knowledge. The English model emphasizes literary-historical knowledge and encourages students to discuss how the context of a given text is reflected in its formal aspects. The French essay connects literary-theoretical knowledge with understanding the content of a given text.

Because literature is directly related to the emotional content that the reader relives, these dimensions are an important part of teaching literature. That is why it is crucial that essay assignments anticipate them. Emotional goals are often neglected in essay assignments (for example, in the Italian type B essay and in the French essay model) or oversimplified, like when they anticipate embracing characters without the critical distancing of the reader. They can be effectively incorporated into an essay assignment in such a way that the candidate recognizes and analyses the values and attitudes of literary subjects, to which they also define themselves, which is characteristic of Russian and Swiss model essays in their secondary school-leaving exams. There is a danger that the writer will fall into

stereotypical divisions of characters into good and evil, so special attention should be paid to the essay's problem, which must be complex enough to avoid. In assignments focusing on the actualization of motive-thematic aspects of a literary work (e.g., in an Italian essay of type A), the emotional content that the student writes about is not related to the literary theme. The candidate writes about their emotional or ethical responses, but not in connection with literature. They are linked to another, non-literary topics, so such tasks do not check the achievement of emotional goals of literature lessons. The Croatian model of an essay at the secondary school-leaving exam is an example of good practice, as it anticipates empathising with the characters. This is not naive, but requires a certain distance from the writer, i.e., by including literary knowledge in the argument.

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