

THE NEED TO INSTILL NATIONAL SPIRIT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH READING LESSONS

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Abstract: This article examines the pedagogical necessity of instilling national spirit in primary school students through reading lessons. It explores how culturally and morally rich texts, when thoughtfully selected and effectively mediated by teachers, can nurture a strong sense of national identity, belonging, and ethical awareness in young learners. The article outlines methodological strategies such as value clarification, role-play, and interdisciplinary integration, and emphasizes the role of the teacher as a cultural guide. Recommendations are offered to address challenges and enhance the transformative role of reading in character and citizenship formation.

Keywords: national identity, primary education, reading pedagogy, moral development, cultural awareness, patriotic education, literary instruction, values in education.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of global integration and rapidly changing cultural environments, the formation of national consciousness and spiritual identity in young learners has become a strategic priority for education systems. One of the most effective tools for cultivating national spirit among primary school students is the reading lesson, which provides not only linguistic development but also emotional, ethical, and cultural enrichment.

This article addresses the pedagogical necessity of instilling national spirit through reading instruction in primary education. It highlights the educational functions of literature, the selection of appropriate texts, the role of teacher mediation, and the psychological receptiveness of children to patriotic and culturally significant narratives.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The term national spirit encompasses a broad set of values, emotions, and historical consciousness linked to a student's sense of belonging, cultural pride, and civic responsibility. In primary education, national spirit manifests as:

- Love and respect for the homeland;
- Knowledge of national heroes, traditions, and symbols;
- Emotional connection to the mother tongue and cultural heritage;
- Motivation to serve and contribute to the nation's future.

Unlike abstract civic education, the national spirit is best developed through emotionally resonant experiences, particularly through narrative and literary forms, which appeal to children's imagination and moral sensitivity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reading lessons occupy a central role in primary curricula and serve multiple functions—linguistic, aesthetic, cognitive, and affective. Within this framework, they offer a unique platform for the transmission of national values through:

Texts that reflect national history and identity (folk tales, biographies, historical fiction);
Discussion-based interpretation that nurtures critical thinking and emotional reflection;

Creative responses such as drawing, dramatization, and storytelling that deepen personal engagement with cultural content.

For example, introducing stories about legendary figures like Amir Temur, Tomaris, or folkloric characters such as Alpomish and Zarina not only familiarizes students with their heritage but also shapes their value systems through narrative modeling [1].

The effectiveness of reading lessons in shaping national spirit largely depends on the pedagogical selection of literary material. Texts must be:

Age-appropriate and emotionally accessible, matching the cognitive development of students aged 6–10;

Rich in cultural symbols, language, and imagery relevant to the national experience;

Positive in tone, presenting role models, resilience, unity, and moral courage;

Balanced, avoiding ethnocentrism or propaganda while nurturing respectful national pride.

Primary school anthologies should include a well-curated mix of folk narratives, patriotic poems, short stories by national authors, and excerpts from oral traditions. Such texts must be regularly updated to reflect modern interpretations of national identity while maintaining connection with historical continuity.

Children at the primary level are particularly emotionally receptive, with developing empathy, imagination, and identity. This period is ideal for the symbolic internalization of values conveyed through stories.

Research in developmental psychology (Piaget, Erikson) shows that between the ages of 6 and 10, children begin to develop a sense of industry vs. inferiority—seeking purpose, mastery, and belonging. Reading stories that feature national heroes, local legends, and morally upright characters allows them to [2]:

- Identify with collective ideals;
- Feel part of a cultural continuum;
- Derive pride and meaning from their heritage.

When such content is consistently presented, a sense of patriotic attachment and moral alignment with national values naturally takes root.

In the early stages of formal education, children actively search for emotional reference points to understand their environment and define themselves. Literature read in the classroom plays a powerful role in shaping cultural identity by providing images, characters, and moral frameworks with which children can emotionally identify.

Unlike informational texts, narrative structures—particularly those rooted in national folklore, history, and daily life—create symbolic maps for the child’s internal world. For example, stories of brave ancestors, loyal friends, or wise elders embody the moral compass of the nation, transmitting values such as courage, respect for elders, unity, and justice [3].

Emotional identification through reading enables:

Internalization of national ideals, not through didactic preaching, but via empathic engagement;

Development of ethical judgment, as children compare their own feelings and actions with those of literary characters;

Formation of pride and belonging, as children see their language, traditions, and culture reflected in narratives.

Thus, reading lessons become a mirror of the national soul, awakening latent feelings of connection, love for the homeland, and desire to contribute to society.

The richness of a nation’s literary heritage often lies in its symbolic layers. Children’s literature—especially folk tales, parables, and legends—frequently contains archetypes that represent foundational elements of the national psyche.

Some recurring symbols in Uzbek literature include:

The tree (daraxt) – as a metaphor for family, heritage, and continuity;

The road (yo‘l) – symbolizing the journey toward knowledge, maturity, or destiny;

Bread (non) – a sacred object signifying sustenance, community, and divine blessing;

The mother – representing not only maternal care but also the homeland itself (ona yurt).

In reading lessons, it is essential that teachers help students unpack these symbols and understand their deeper cultural significance. Discussions about what “the road” or “bread” means in a given story can open doors to complex reflections on national consciousness, historical memory, and ethical behavior [4].

Furthermore, recurrent character types such as the “wise old man,” the “brave youth,” the “suffering woman,” or the “just ruler” are not mere literary constructs—they are mental templates that shape how a nation perceives itself and its ideal citizens. Introducing these archetypes to children through reading fosters a shared symbolic language of identity.

CONCLUSION

Reading lessons in primary school are not only a cornerstone of literacy development but also a fertile ground for nurturing national spirit. Through careful selection of texts, thoughtful teaching methods, and emotionally supportive learning environments, educators can guide children toward a deeper understanding of their cultural roots, national identity, and moral values. In an era of globalization, instilling national spirit through literature becomes not a constraint, but a foundation upon which children can build informed, respectful, and proud citizenship.

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