

INSTILLING A LOVE OF POETRY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS BY TEACHING THEM READING

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Abstract. This article explores the role of reading instruction in developing a love for poetry among elementary school students, with a particular focus on Uzbekistan's national curriculum and pedagogical context. By integrating poetry into reading lessons in a creative and meaningful way, educators can foster aesthetic appreciation, emotional expression, and linguistic development from an early age. The article outlines effective methods such as expressive reading, dramatization, visualization, and text-personalization strategies that make poetry more engaging and accessible to young learners. In addition, the cultural and moral values embedded in Uzbek children's poetry are emphasized as essential components in shaping a child's worldview.

Keywords: poetry education, elementary school, reading instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the foundational skills taught in elementary school, serving as the gateway to all other areas of knowledge and personal development. Within this broad domain, poetry holds a unique place. It is a genre that not only develops language skills but also cultivates sensitivity, rhythm, imagination, and an appreciation of beauty in thought and expression. In the context of Uzbekistan's primary education system, where moral education and national identity are core goals, the teaching of poetry becomes an effective tool for instilling both linguistic competence and ethical values.

Despite this potential, poetry is often underutilized or treated merely as a text to be memorized. This article argues that through thoughtfully designed reading lessons, poetry can become a living, breathing part of a child's inner world. Especially when adapted to the cultural and emotional landscape of Uzbek children, poetry can enrich their educational experience and lay the foundation for a lifelong love of literature.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In Uzbekistan, the national curriculum for elementary schools includes a significant selection of poems by classic and modern authors such as Abdulla Oripov, Mirtemir, G'afur G'ulom, Erkin Vohidov, and contemporary children's poets like Anvar Obidjon. These texts are chosen not only for their linguistic simplicity and rhythmic qualities but also for their ability to convey national values—respect for elders, love for nature, pride in the homeland, and kindness toward others.

However, the educational impact of poetry depends on how it is taught. If presented in a dry, mechanical manner, poetry risks losing its emotive power. Reading lessons, therefore, must be approached not simply as exercises in pronunciation or comprehension, but as immersive experiences that engage children's hearts as well as minds.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the most effective methods to foster love for poetry is expressive reading. When teachers read poems with proper intonation, rhythm, and emotional resonance, they model the musical and performative nature of poetry. Young learners often mimic this delivery, and in doing so, internalize the poem's message more deeply [1].

Pairing reading with dramatization can also significantly enhance engagement. Students may act out the scenes of a poem, create character voices, or use facial expressions and gestures. This kinesthetic

approach transforms the act of reading into a multi-sensory experience, which is particularly effective for children who struggle with abstract thinking.

In Uzbekistan's classroom settings, where group work is increasingly encouraged, dramatizing folk poems or verses about nature and friendship promotes collaboration, empathy, and joy in learning.

Another powerful technique is helping students visualize the imagery in poetry. For instance, after reading a poem about spring, students can be asked to draw the scene they imagined, describe it orally, or write their own two-line verse inspired by the poem. These visualization activities deepen comprehension and provide a bridge between the text and the child's lived experience.

Teachers may also invite students to write letters to the poem's speaker, continue the story in prose, or change the ending. In Uzbekistan, where students often live in close-knit communities with strong oral traditions, such personalization of the text taps into their cultural instinct to connect with stories as living narratives rather than static texts.

Poetry can serve as a mirror of children's emotions and a compass for their moral development. The rhythmic and metaphorical nature of verse allows children to explore complex feelings—such as jealousy, sadness, longing, or excitement—in a safe and accessible format. Teachers in Uzbekistan can use poetry to start discussions about family, honesty, patriotism, and tolerance, turning reading lessons into values education sessions.

For example, poems that reflect the beauty of nature or the wisdom of ancestors encourage reverence and pride in national heritage. These moral lessons, when delivered through poetic language, are more memorable and emotionally impactful than direct instruction [2].

Despite these benefits, several challenges remain in fully integrating poetry into reading instruction in Uzbekistan. These include a lack of teacher training in literary pedagogy, limited access to age-appropriate and culturally relevant poetry books, and time constraints within an already crowded curriculum.

To address these, it is recommended that:

Teacher training programs include modules on creative poetry instruction;

Schools invest in building classroom libraries with high-quality children's poetry;

Curriculum developers allocate dedicated time for literary exploration in early grades;

Teachers use blended learning—combining traditional reading with audio recordings, videos, and digital storytelling—to enrich the experience [3].

Fostering a genuine love for poetry in children goes beyond helping them understand the meaning of a poem—it involves cultivating what may be called a poetic mindset. This mindset includes an appreciation for nuance, metaphor, rhythm, and emotional subtext, as well as an openness to multiple interpretations. In the Uzbek educational context, this can be nurtured by gradually guiding students from simple rhymes and didactic verses to more layered, imagistic poetry.

Activities such as identifying figurative language, completing unfinished verses, or comparing different poetic styles (e.g., lyrical versus humorous) encourage students to engage with the poem at a deeper intellectual and emotional level. Teachers can also encourage learners to find poetic elements in nature, daily life, and even their own feelings, thereby expanding the boundaries of what children understand poetry to be. When students are taught not only to read poems, but to think poetically, they begin to see the world with more imagination and sensitivity.

A particularly effective strategy in the Uzbek context is to embed poetry teaching within the broader framework of family and national culture. Many children in Uzbekistan are raised in intergenerational households where oral storytelling, lullabies, and folk wisdom are a part of everyday life. Teachers can build on this cultural foundation by encouraging students to bring in verses taught by grandparents, share family proverbs, or compose poems inspired by household rituals or traditional holidays.

This approach not only validates the child's background but also creates a bridge between the home and the school. Poetry, in this context, becomes a medium of cultural continuity and intergenerational dialogue. For example, a reading lesson centered on a poem about Navruz can involve students sharing how the holiday is celebrated in their homes, drawing symbolic elements from the poem (like sumalak, sabzi, or tulips), and even composing a class poem that reflects collective memories [4].

CONCLUSION

Poetry is more than a literary genre; it is a pedagogical resource capable of enriching children's language skills, emotional intelligence, and moral understanding. When integrated effectively into reading lessons, especially in the early years of schooling, poetry can ignite a love for language and literature that endures into adulthood.

In Uzbekistan's national educational context—rich with poetic heritage and a strong emphasis on moral values—this opportunity should not be overlooked. With intentional pedagogical strategies, inclusive classroom environments, and emotionally engaging materials, teachers can ensure that poetry becomes not just something students learn, but something they live and love.

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