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# **DIPLOMAMUNKA**

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Osztatlan tanárképzés  
Angol nyelv tanára  
Magyar nyelv- és irodalom tanára

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Bölcészettudományi Kar

# DIPLOMAMUNKA

*Irodalmi művek használata az angolórán a  
szociális és érzelmi tanulás fejlesztésére*

*Using Literature in the EFL Classroom to Foster  
Social and Emotional Learning*

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## Eredetiségi nyilatkozat

Alulírott *Harangozó Lili Eszter* (név) *BGPBG4* (Neptun-kód) ezennel kijelentem és aláírással megerősítem, hogy az ELTE *angol* tanári mesterszakján írt jelen diplomamunkám saját szellemi termékem, melyet korábban más szakon még nem nyújtottam be szakdolgozatként, és amelybe mások munkáját (könyv, tanulmány, kézirat, internetes forrás, személyes közlés stb.) idézőjel és pontos hivatkozások nélkül nem építettem be.

Budapest, 2024. 03. 27.

*Harangozó Lili*

a hallgató aláírása

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## 1 Abstract

The following thesis investigates the idea that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is not only a substantial part of education but also of personality development (Fundamentals of SEL, 2023). In school environments, most people agree that students should be raised to be "knowledgeable, responsible and caring" (Elias et al., 1997, p. 1). What is often forgotten is how SEL can enhance all these components. Through SEL, students can learn to understand and express the social and emotional states of their lives and manage them successfully (Elias et al., 1997). As McKay (1982) suggests, literature has many benefits in ESL classes. It is not only useful for developing linguistic skills, but it also increases students' motivation and cultural sensitivity. Based on this framework, the thesis presents the findings of a classroom study, in which literary works were integrated into secondary school EFL lessons involving the principles of SEL. The overall aim of this research is to provide empirical evidence of the importance of SEL in teaching EFL, but this is to be executed in an unorthodox manner, so it shows how the world of literature incorporated into the classroom can cultivate students' emotions and world views.

In the classroom study conducted in the secondary context, involving eight groups of students, different pieces of literature were discussed, involving a multitude of poems discussing the topic of love, chapters from a book that dealt with autism spectrum disorder and a few extracts from another novel discussing the issue of racism. Students had the chance to deepen their emotional maturity and social responsibility, reflect on the discussed pieces, draw conclusions, and apply their findings to their own lives – including the classroom environment as well as their everyday existence.

The results of the study imply that students did find the implemented methods and pieces of literature beneficial in developing their social responsibility and emotional maturity. These findings suggest that students benefit from the use of literary works in the classroom when these practices are combined with the concepts of SEL.

*Keywords:* SEL, EFL, literature, emotional maturity, social responsibility

## 2 Introduction

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has long been believed to be a useful tool in helping young people thrive, not only in personal matters but in academic ones as well (Fundamentals of SEL, 2023). With the support of SEL, students can develop and possess positive relationships, acquire the skills to become lifelong learners and contribute to an attentive and even-handed world. The most widely accepted definition of SEL was coined by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning), according to which Social and Emotional learning is

the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (Fundamentals of SEL, 2023).

According to CASEL (Fundamentals of SEL, 2023), SEL is viewed as a vital part of education and human development. There are a few elements that are pivotal for SEL to become a reality: authentic relationships between the school, the family, and the community; supportive learning environments; trust-filled and collaborative relationships; a meaningful and thoroughly applied curriculum and continuous evaluation. SEL is particularly useful for addressing various instances of prejudice or injustice, and altogether it can empower students to contribute to the creation of safe and healthy communities.

It can easily be seen that SEL targets many 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and that its primary aim is to help develop students' social skills, empathy, and growth mindset (Jones et al., 2021). The development of these matters and concepts is especially important in today's forever changing and evolving climate. With the help of the internet, even small children can access a vast amount of information, a quantity considerably larger than they were able to access before. With this in mind, a part of the research question and focus of this thesis was conceived: what aspects does SEL foster, and more importantly, what skills does SEL influence in young people? Additionally, there is an abundance of research papers, articles and books that discuss this very topic (CASEL, 2003; Kress & Elias, 2006; Payton et al., 2008; Mahoney et al., 2018; Pirzada, 2018), thus the given thesis intends to put this topic under the microscope, only in an entirely different light and from a completely distinct aspect; the aspect of literary works.

Literature itself is “language in use”, and hence, it can be used for language learning purposes (Carter & McRae, 1996, p. 20). The use of literature in the classroom dates back a considerable number of years; it was the main source of input in the Grammar Translation



method, but it died down eventually, as the rise in popularity communicative approaches emerged (Khatib et al., 2011). The focal point shifted, and language learners and teachers were focused mainly on the real world and practical situations. However, this did not mean the end of the era of literature in the classroom; as numerous approaches surfaced, the views on literary works were revolutionized. After considering it merely as a body of knowledge and as language practice material, it was finally regarded as a tool for personal development, using exercises which correlate with students' individual experiences, and as a result of this, developing their emotions and imagination (Paran & Robinson, 2016).

Since the study of literature involves a great deal of metalanguage (language used for the description of another language), critical concepts and knowledge of conventions, second-language learners need to have prior experiences and involvement with the usage of these in their first language (Carter & McRae, 1996). Once that is given, a whole new world of possibilities opens, through which teachers can discuss specific issues with their students using literary works. When the given piece of literature is discussed in the classroom, it is crucial to keep in mind that “full appreciation” of the text cannot be achieved by simply reading the work and using it for vocabulary enhancement. There is a dire need for ample, comprehensive, and disciplined study of literature, which correlates with product-based teaching (discussed in detail subsequently under Using Literary Works in the EFL Classroom), and in turn draws on the “historical, socio-cultural and biographical information” (Carter & McRae, 1996, p. 23) about the text. This is the key component to teaching literature in any language, whether it is a student's mother tongue or second/foreign language (Carter & McRae, 1996). Without this component, the main value of any literary work is lost, and sadly the class ends up doing what it does most of the time: reading the work together, doing individual writing tasks and vocabulary expansion (Ljung & Mai, 2021).

The aims of this thesis are the following: 1) to find out how literature can be used in the EFL classroom with the use of up-to-date methodologies that implement the principles of SEL and 2) to observe the reactions of students to the discussion of certain literary works that revolve around social and emotional problems.

The above-mentioned issue in combination with the principles of SEL is discussed in this thesis. In the research conducted, different pieces of literature were discussed and analysed on the topic of love, mental illness, and racism. During the lessons conducted, the students' reflective skills, debating skills, and critical thinking skills were aimed to be developed. 90 students from eight groups in a secondary school were asked to collaborate with the help of various tasks and exercises, to share their thoughts in small groups as well as in front of the

whole class. They were asked to provide feedback and thus they could improve their social responsibility and emotional maturity. In the following sections of this thesis, the necessary literature to understand the phenomenon of the combination of literary works and SEL in an EFL, secondary school setting is reviewed, and afterwards, the methods and results of the research are discussed, striving to shine some light on this niche. The objective is quite simple: “to help children and the adults who work with them address tough issues that kids face in their everyday social world” (Ludwig, 2012).

### **3 Theoretical Framework**

#### **3.1 Using Literary Works in the EFL Classroom**

##### ***3.1.1 Arguments for the Use of Literary Works in the Classroom***

Literature is part of all people's lives; hence it is part of our experience and using it in the language classroom does not take away from the students' language learning. On the contrary, it establishes connections that will occur in students' future professions, augments learning, and it also raises attention to different cultures (Paran & Robinson, 2016).

Literary works have been used for a long time in the language learning process, so it does not come as a surprise that a need for an updated approach came into view which called for the reconsideration of teaching literature in EFL classes (Povey, 1967). Literary works are seen, first, as being a substantial help for students to practice their four main skills – reading, writing, speaking, and listening – and they also present new vocabulary and grammar items (Usmonova, 2021). Careful deliberation is needed to be able to achieve more than this, and to execute what Povey (1967, p. 41) deemed to be the goal of the use of literature: “literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax”. With this in mind, it can be said that literature can develop language use, since it presents language in lifelike discourse, in a given dialect and register, and in a social context (McKay, 1982). These characteristics aid the development of tolerance and understanding as well as emotional growth, when it comes to the discussion of certain topics, such as love, war, loss, or grief (Usmonova, 2021).

The use of literature has a multitude of advantages. Khatib et al. (2011) name nine. The principles mentioned are the following: authenticity, motivation, cultural/intercultural awareness and globalization, intensive/extensive reading practice, sociolinguistic/pragmatic knowledge, grammar and vocabulary knowledge, language skills, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking. From these, a few are essential to discuss. With the help of literature, cultural and intercultural awareness can be developed (Carter, 1996; Van, 2009). In addition, literary works can promote the encouragement of tolerance of differences while portraying a cultural perspective (McKay, 1982). Furthermore, literature is viewed as means for developing critical thinking because it is claimed that literary pieces can bring about change in students' perspectives (Ghosn, 2002), and students can also reflect on instances of their lives, learning and language (Langer, 1997).

### ***3.1.2 Arguments Against Using Literary Works in the Classroom***

Despite the previously mentioned facts, the importance of the use of literary works in the classroom has significantly decreased, as literature ceased to be the focus of English coursebooks (Usmonova, 2021). According to McKay (1982), there are many common arguments against the use of literary works in the classroom.

First, the main aim of language teachers is to teach grammar and vocabulary, and the complex structure of literature does not contribute to this goal. Khatib and his colleagues (2011) present an idea in connection with these issues which is a three-way solution: using simplified texts, using easy texts, and using young adult texts. The last two are justified, however, Carter and McRae (1996) argue against the first point. They imply that the use of authentic, unsimplified material is significant. It is assumed that these are the types of materials that “construct experiences or 'content' in a non-trivial way which gives voice to complexities and subtleties not always present in other types of text” (Carter & McRae, 1996, p. 24). The emergence of ambiguities is also a feared point by many teachers, which is one reason why they generally opt for simplified, graded readers. Still, in the opinion of Carter and McRae (1996), these ambiguities provide beneficial opportunities for discussions and contrasting interpretations. This underlines the Reader Response Approach (RRA), which is rooted in constructivism, and entails the composition of each reader's own interpretation when they are met with a text. Hence, there is a very real possibility of having multiple interpretations rather than just a single superior one (Rosenblatt, 1994; Khatib et al., 2011).

Second, the study of literary texts provides little to nothing to students' academic goals. Khatib and his colleagues (2011) further reinforce the problem of the complexity of literary works, although they begin to argue for the implementation of literature and bring up advantages. They add that this intricacy can be seen as a source of practice for upper intermediate learners. In addition, the issue of lexical difficulty must be mentioned, more specifically old and outdated vocabulary, which further complicates students' ability to fathom the given piece of literature. As accurate as this assertion is, Khatib and his colleagues (2011) add an outstandingly paramount proposition: teachers are not compelled to implement old literature only. There is a myriad of modern literary texts to be used as a source of input, ones that were written closer in time to the students, ones with more digestible grammar and vocabulary, but most importantly, ones that discuss up-to-date topics and issues globally as well as regionally. Thus, when it comes to the choice that teachers have to make regarding the

discussed piece, they ought to decide on a work that students can obtain and relate to (Van 2009).

Third, literature reflects particular cultural perspectives, making it immensely difficult for students to comprehend (Paran & Robinson, 2016). Many more downsides are mentioned by Khatib and his colleagues (2011), such as phonetics and phonology, semantics, selection of materials, literary concepts and notions, literature and academic English, and lastly, cultural barriers. The latter calls for some explanation. Every literary work that students are presented with is “saturated with certain cultural concepts” (Khatib et al., 2011, p. 205) which makes the understanding of the given work frustrating if students are not prepared appropriately (Van, 2009). Notwithstanding, when students are prepared in an ample fashion both in their L1 and L2, the differences they are presented with are going to be effortlessly recognised and perceived. Overall, the discussion and consideration of these questions and issues are needed if literary works are to be discussed in a lesson.

### ***3.1.3 Reading in the EFL Classroom***

Reading in English in today’s EFL class still needs improvement. Students are forced to read “classics” – if they read literature in their lessons at all – without being prepared for it, or without the care for their current language skills. A solution to this is Carter’s (1996) idea of literature with a small “l”, which is a notion of contemporary literary theory, and it focuses on going against the canon and using texts for the basis of analysis which usually are not considered to be literary. Nonetheless, the hope for pleasurable and intrinsically motivated reading is not all lost. Widdowson (1979, p. 169) views reading as an “interaction between writer and reader mediated through the text”, and according to McKay (1982), this interaction takes place on two levels, linguistic and conceptual. Consequently, reading calls for the ability to correspond to the text by unravelling the language and grasping the presented notions. Reading is viewed by Rosenblatt (1994) as a type of act, one that involves a certain reader, a certain text, a certain time, and a certain context. So, reading takes place in a dynamic environment, where the reader and the text are not two fixed entities acting on each other but are two features that are part of this situation. She also regards literature as a tool that helps students understand others, to put themselves in others’ shoes, and adds that with the help of literature, unique interpretations are encouraged, creating a classroom environment in which students can express their opinions. The list of the advantages of reading in the classroom grows with Hayik’s (2016) ideas, who found that with the use of literary works, students' awareness can be raised of the embedded messages in the text, and this can affect their world views as

well. If not right there, in the present, then perhaps later in life, when a given trigger strikes them the right way, and all the memories arise, bringing forth the appropriate reaction and answer. These examples support reading, glorifying it to the highest, listing all the advantages and successes the use of literature brought. While these are all to be celebrated, as Povey (1967) asserted, ESL/EFL teachers ought not to forget that the linguistic difficulty of reading is different from the linguistic difficulty of listening. Not every word needs a proper description, as there is a notion called “recognition vocabulary”. As a result of this, students can grasp the meaning of a piece of literature without understanding every word and structure precisely. However, while teachers might consider their students at a given level, in reality, the level of the class is always more diverse. So, if a teacher thinks something about their students, the reality might be completely different, and – referring back to the previously mentioned recognition vocabulary – some students might recognise the new-fangled structure and syntax with ease, putting it into place, whilst others might struggle with it significantly (Povey, 1967). Besides, this issue does not only come into view with manageable, straightforward reading tasks. The tangible struggle begins when the aspect of culture is incorporated as well, because as Povey (1967, p. 44) claims, “the whole area of cultural comprehension is more likely than language problems to cause difficulty”. Distinct attention needs to be paid to striking a balance as well when talking about culture: whether the teacher should bring up culture in a universal term, e.g., by dealing with emotions all human beings feel, or specific cultural elements applying to specific groups of peoples. Nonetheless, if the teacher can, in fact, strike this delicate balance, an abundance of possibilities will open up to the students to fulfil, as they are given the opportunity to relate to the given work and see themselves in it. Thus, if there is an intricate balance present, if students truly appreciate the literary work and if they stay open-minded towards it, then even the most difficult to appreciate concepts – those farthest from the students’ own culture – will be understood effortlessly (Povey, 1967). McKay (1982) builds on the idea of culture represented in literature as well, raising the question of whether or not a text with a divergent culture represented in it is beneficial for the students. She concludes that it can help develop a tolerance for people from different cultures for the students and the teacher as well.

The next point McKay (1982) mentions is that the willingness of the reader to interact with the text is needed to achieve anything at all. This is where motivation proves to be crucial. Individual differences prevail here as well, but the fact stands that because of the motivating factor of literature, it can succour the development of reading proficiency hence contributing to students’ academic achievement.

When it comes to reading, Rosenblatt (1991, 1994) names two different approaches: efferent and aesthetic. 1) Efferent reading is a non-literary type of reading, where the attention of the reader is focused mostly on the public aspect of sense. Its name comes from the Latin word “effere”, meaning “to carry away”; the reader concentrates on what they will carry away from reading. In 2) aesthetic reading, the text is read with attention to what the words refer to, but what gets more prominence here is the thoughts, feelings and experiences the reader undergoes during reading. Rosenblatt (1991) stresses that reading can fall between these two categories and be a mixture of the two, and she also underlines the idea that texts should not be pigeonholed into these two categories either. Rather, they should be thought of as “written for a predominant attitude or stance, efferent or aesthetic, on the part of the reader” (Rosenblatt, 1991, p. 445). Thus, the focus is on the reader and the individual interpretations of a reader. Different readers have different interpretations of a text, and these interpretations are based on a reader’s past experiences. If the literary text awakens a given memory in a reader, an encounter or reminiscence might emerge in their heads, providing the text with a multitude of interpretations (Rosenblatt, 1991). Notwithstanding, Paran and Robinson (2016) argue that to some extent, efferent reading should always be present, because, without the ability to discuss and comprehend information about the plot, the characters or the themes, no literary work can be conferred about. Enjoying and appreciating the piece should have prominence, however, bringing in intelligent pieces of information will deepen and strengthen the already existing enjoyment.

### ***3.1.4 Communicative Language Teaching Integrated with Literature***

Van (2009) also brings up a compelling idea, which is about considering the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) when teaching English literature to students. However, she was not the first one to propose this, as Carter (2007) has already connected the methodology of CLT to the use of literature in the classroom. The advocates of CLT believe that the main function of language is communication, and its primary goal is to develop learners’ communicative competence (Hymes, 1972). Communicative competence can be defined as the ability to understand and reproduce perceived social behaviours, and additionally, it calls for the involvement of the learner in the production of the target language (Canale & Swain, 1981). It involves four competencies: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1981). Nevertheless, CLT is not considered to be one single method; it is more likely thought of as an approach which has “left its doors wide open for a great variety of methods and techniques” (Brandl, 2020, p. 6). All in all, there is no

single text that is viewed to have prominence over others, just as there is no single methodology which would prove true above all else. So, CLT uses given materials and methods when those are appropriate for the specific literary work (Brandl, 2020). For the application of CLT, Van (2009) perceived that literature would be the proper medium and listed five reasons for this. The first principle of CLT that she mentions is the 1) place of meaning. Meaning is a relationship between the text and the reader, it is dependent on the reader's experience, the context, the style and the difficulty of the language. It is also influenced by the way students relate to the author, the author's identity, culture, or gender. Second is the 2) purpose of learning. Van (2009) at this point elaborates on the fact that literature – when introduced properly – can in fact facilitate the learning process and aid students' motivation. Third is the principle of 3) activities in the classroom. Tasks used in the classroom are subject to change, so they can be used as a medium for meaningful group- and pair work activities which call for the use of English as the main mode of communication. Projects, dramatizations, or the above-mentioned group work tasks can facilitate active involvement with a literary piece. The fourth principle, the 4) role of the students states that literature is open to individual interpretations, hence students making these interpretations will be the ones who will want to continue the activities taking place in the class simply because they are interested in and fascinated by the topic. The fifth and last principle Van (2009) brings up is the 5) role of the teacher. The teacher is the one who will aid the learners in their process of understanding and interpreting a piece of literature. This must be done in an active, involved and encouraging way, which does not only entail the knowledge of the discussed literary work but also the activities used and the structure of the lessons. The understanding and utterance of content are thought to activate cognitive skills that provide the foundation for learning and for processes that promote the acquisition of the second language.

### ***3.1.5 How to Select the Most Appropriate Literary Text***

The main aim of a language classroom is to teach and practice the language. When we add the element of literature to this, careful consideration is needed when discussing why we are doing what we are doing, and what approach we should follow when dealing with literary works (Paran & Robinson, 2016). Observably, there has been a growing interest in the use of literature in the English classroom, whether combined with any other method or technique or simply used on its own. Whether teachers strive to use it as a tool to study the language of a literary work, using it as content (in a way where literature is the base material for a course, providing knowledge of historical, social and political background or literary theory) or



utilizing it for personal enrichment (encouraging students to recall their personal experiences, opinions, feelings) (Lazar, 1993; Paran & Robinson, 2016), important selection criteria should be kept in mind. According to Usmonova (2021), an appropriate text for the language classroom has a 1) *lexical complexity* which matches the level of the students. It should also provide the opportunity for a two-way relationship between the reader and the text, where readers can interact with the literary work they are studying and interpret it freely. The text should be 2) *interesting* for the students and it should also 3) portray *cultural significance*. Another idea to keep in mind is the 4) *age of the texts* to be used. Most of the time, the older the text, the more difficult it is for students to understand; hence, it should be considered what appeals to them, what they understand with ease and what they can submerge themselves in willingly and contently. Young adult (YA) literature is perfect to this end, as it is written for teenagers, the protagonists are young, and it discusses issues that students can relate to, such as age, gender, or general everyday problems (McKay, 1982; Paran & Robinson, 2016). As Usmonova (2021) mentions, when students work with authentic English literary texts, they not only develop their knowledge of the language itself but also advance their critical thinking and interpreting skills. Many activities can be used to achieve these goals, like retelling the story, predicting how the story will end, role-playing or filling in the gaps. The most traditional point when it comes to the study of literature, however, is still the cultural approach (Lazar, 1993). While it comes with many challenges – the question of reliability and the separation of language and culture –, many advantages arise from it as well. Literature provides "insights into the possible relationships, emotions and attitudes of the inhabitants" (Lazar, 1993, p. 17) of a culture; it helps learners see events from another, so far foreign perspective. Nonetheless, one thing should not be forgotten: the representation provided in a literary work is fragmentary, so students should be encouraged to treat it as such, with critical thinking and deep consideration. Teachers should respond to these cultural approaches in literature critically as well, so the portrayed cultural aspects are not evidently accepted, but are "questioned, evaluated and, if necessary, subverted" (Lazar, 1993, p. 17).

### **3.1.6 Emotions During Reading**

The use of literature in the classroom is a versatile tool which affects many areas of students' lives, including their emotions. Bibliotherapy – the use of literary works that specifically help with the development and psychological wellbeing of students – is often used to assess these emotions, and it focuses on our feelings, and how those feelings impact our behaviour (Heath et al., 2017). Therefore, Heath and her colleagues (2017) propose the idea of

using stories in order to build strong foundations for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), foundations which will have a positive influence on learners' behaviour; because good stories have the ability to alter how one thinks and feels. Bohn-Gettler and Rapp (2014) discuss the issue of emotions during reading and writing, and they state that there has been a great deal of focus on the cognitive processes that underlie reading and writing, as the goal is to comprehend and improve learners' development and achievement. Emotions are thought to affect the mental strategies which are used while problem-solving. Many theories of emotion also apply when these emotions occur while reading. Firstly, there are Semantic Network Theories. These state that "semantic memory represents a person's prior knowledge" (Bohn-Gettler & Rapp, 2014, p. 442). This knowledge is organised into a network, in which pieces of information are connected through semantic relations. Consequently, these emotions illustrate information in this network and are connected to the reader's knowledge and experiences. State-dependent learning is a term which can be touched upon here, as it occurs when one's memory is strengthened when their emotions while learning match their emotions while applying the knowledge (Bohn-Gettler & Rapp, 2014). Secondly, in Resource Allocation Models it is believed that emotional information is distinct from other types of depictions, mostly because emotional information is a lot more striking and significant than non-emotional information. Thirdly, the Affect Infusion Model stands for the idea that "attention is differentially focused as a function of mood" (Bohn-Gettler & Rapp, 2014, p. 444). This model supposes that emotions are connected with strategies that people rely on when completing a task. Another model and idea that Bohn-Gettler and Rapp (2014) presents is about mood congruency. It is stated that a reader remembers those pieces of information better which relate to their mood and recalls characters and texts easier when they are consistent with their mood. The research that this thesis presents will discuss the issue of emotions and their control when discussing controversial topics, such as racism or mental disorder.

## **3.2 The Applications of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in the EFL Classroom**

### ***3.2.1 The Foundations of Social and Emotional Learning***

It is undeniable that school has a vitally important role in students' lives. It prepares them to become well-informed, accountable, kind-hearted adults later in their lives. However, this is not a task that is completed with ease, veritable effort is needed to aid children on this path. In addition to this, it should not be forgotten that there is a tool very much present and ready to use for teachers – for those who look for it – that is ideal for achieving the above-mentioned goals: “thoughtful, sustained, and systematic attention to children’s social and emotional learning (SEL)” (Elias et al., 1997, p. 1). Social and Emotional Learning is defined by CASEL as:

the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (Fundamentals of SEL, 2023).

SEL is an essential part of education and human growth, and it focuses on authentic partnership amongst the school, the family, and the community. Through this, it strives to establish learning environments which can be characterized by trust, collaboration, a purposeful curriculum, and ceaseless evaluation (Fundamentals of SEL, 2023). Nonetheless, SEL is not only a device with which the emotions and personal experiences of students are fostered, it also contributes to academic achievement, decrease in problematic behaviours, increase in the quality of relationships (Elias et al. 1997), children’s readiness to learn, and helpful school environments (CASEL, 2003). In a study, Payton et al. (2008) found that SEL programmes – when implemented consciously and thoroughly – improved academic performance by 11 to 17 per cent. They also listed a few other points that describe SEL, such as: recognising and managing emotions, setting and achieving goals, showing care and concern for others, creating and maintaining positive relationships, making liable decisions and managing interpersonal situations successfully. When realised through classroom practice, SEL “broadens the framework of education and addresses the complex interplay of emotions and cognition in learning, remembering, and understanding” (Kress & Elias, 2006, p. 102).

A question arises: Is SEL important? Can a child or a school function without a SEL programme being implemented? Looking at most schools outside of the USA, the answer is yes, children survive without a strict SEL programme, but research in these areas is lacking. Elias et al. (1997) have found that the common factor among academically successful schools

is a SEL programme being executed. To further strengthen the idea of SEL being an advantageous tool for academic success, research has been conducted in the field of neuropsychology. It has been found that many components of learning are interconnected/relational and that social and emotional skills are necessary for cognitive thinking and learning activities. Other papers on brain studies show that memory is coded to specific events and connected to social and emotional situations and that the latter are “integral parts of larger units of memory that make up what we learn and retain, including what takes place in the classroom” (Elias et al., 1997, p. 3). Therefore, it can be concluded that SEL skills are essential for an individual to be able to use their “biological equipment and social legacy and heritage” (Elias et al., 1997, p. 5) to the fullest. Mahoney and his colleagues (2018) in a study about an update on SEL outcome found that students who took part in SEL programmes showed more positive outcomes regarding basic SEL skills, positive social behaviour, and academic performance than those students in the control group. The findings were also reinforced by Payton and colleagues (2008) in that there was an 11 percentile-point gain in academic achievement, suggesting again, that SEL indeed adds to the academic performance of students. The results of the study of Mahoney and his colleagues (2018) clearly suggest that there is a statistically significant benefit for students participating in these programmes and that while the acquired effects and skills fade over time, this is a natural phenomenon, as any effect that takes place is stronger on the short-term than on the long-term. Nonetheless, the long-term effects of SEL are still persistent, mostly when applied to academic growth (and the 11 percentile-point gain). Another reason why knowledge did not fade so much over time is because students perceived a great amount of gain in their social and emotional skills, thus learning turned out to be “sticky” (Mahoney et al., 2018, p. 22), so it faded less.

### ***3.2.2 The Five Core Competencies***

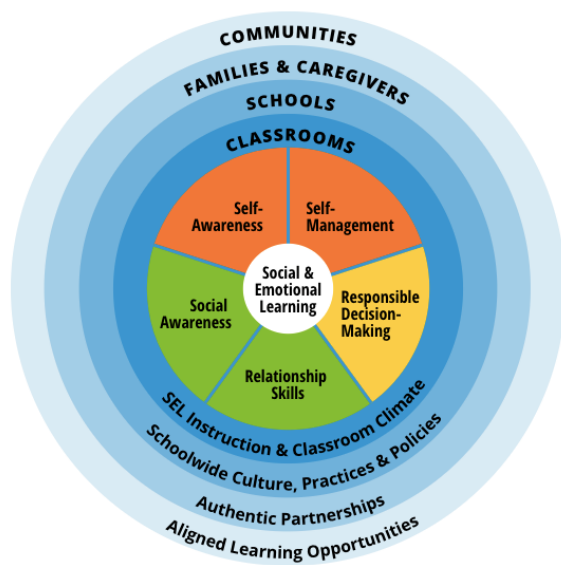
Now that it is established that a strongly implemented SEL programme is key to a thriving school environment, the five groups of core competencies of SEL are to be discussed that teachers should strive for. The five competencies are the following: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Responsible Decision Making, Relationship Skills, and Social Awareness (CASEL, 2003; Fundamentals of SEL, 2023; Payton et al., 2008). 1) *Self-Awareness* is about comprehending one's own emotions, feelings, interests, and values, and how these affect one's behaviours in different contexts. It also entails the ability to be aware of one's strengths and weaknesses and to have a well-grounded awareness of self-assurance and purpose. 2) *Self-Management* means controlling our emotions, behaviours, and thoughts in given situations in

order to reach our goals and aims. This includes detaining fulfilment, managing stress, and feeling motivated to achieve personal goals. 3) *Responsible Decision Making* entails the ability to make considerate and encouraging choices about behavioural patterns and interactions with people across various situations. Here, individuals should not forget to keep ethical standards in mind and to assess the advantages and disadvantages of given actions. 4) *Relationship Skills* are about the ability to initiate healthy and supportive relationships and to successfully navigate situations with diverse people as well. It incorporates the capacity to communicate clearly, listen actively and solve problems collaboratively while providing guidance and seeking help when needed. Finally, 5) *Social Awareness* means being able to put oneself in others’ shoes, to feel empathy and understanding for individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures. This includes feeling sympathy for others and comprehending wide-ranging historical and social norms.

Figure 1 below also shows the different levels which need to work together to foster students' Social and Emotional Learning. This does not only involve the classroom environment but the schools, families, caregivers, and communities as well. For a child’s life to be completely filled with SEL-influenced occurrences, all these levels have to “align on common language and coordinate strategies and communication around SEL-related efforts and initiatives” (Fundamentals of SEL, 2023).

**Figure 1**

*5 core competencies of SEL (Fundamentals of SEL, 2023)*



### ***3.2.3 Embracing Emotions in the Classroom through SEL***

Precise *care* is required to be able to work in a coordinated fashion while not losing sight of children's wellbeing. This caring mentality is what should be passed down to children, as caring is primary when it comes to the construction and maintenance of meaningful relationships (Elias et al., 1997). This inherited caring only occurs when children receive the same type of caring from their guardians, and when they can comprehend that they will be accepted and respected for whatever abilities they might or might not possess. As Elias et al. (1997) put it, "caring is a product of a community that deems all of its members to be important, believes everyone has something to contribute, and acknowledges that everyone counts" (p. 6). As we can see, caring can also be represented in learning communities. It is paramount to keep in mind the fact that these programmes should not only be concentrating on SEL but also on a community-strengthening belief (Kress & Elias, 2006). To achieve this, no shortcuts can be taken; if the desired outcome strives to be authentic, then coordination, integrated programmes, and team effort must be at hand. "The real message is that children themselves become a community of learners when the learners around them mobilize to become a community with the goal of developing children's skills" (Kress & Elias, 2006, p. 103).

Students can acquire many skills when their social and emotional skills are attended to, such as the five core competencies, optimism about the future, setting and achieving goals, empathy and respect towards others, and effective communicational skills. So, all in all, these skills can be taught (CASEL, 2003). Additionally, many SEL programmes focus on issues such as substance abuse prevention, violence prevention, sexuality, and character education. SEL is prevention-focused, and it is not yet extended by the topic of reaction, meaning what to do when a problem has already set in. By this it is meant that most SEL programmes deal with ways which – if followed – lead to a life that is not troubled by, for example, addiction or illnesses that could have been prevented. These programmes do not talk about the actions to take if the certain problems have not been prevented and are already present in an individual's life.

### ***3.2.4 The Effects of SEL on Students' Mental Health***

SEL can also benefit mental health and psychological wellbeing as it promotes prosocial behaviours, reduces emotional anxiety, and improves academic performance. However, SEL has been criticized for not paying enough attention to historically marginalized groups, because it tends to focus too much on the widely accepted social rules and it fails to look after the engagement of students in comprehending and labelling equity, such as "positionality, identity

development, interpersonal bias, and racism” (Stark et al., 2021, p. 2). There has been development in recent years that included the transformative SEL approach, which entails the development of positive ethnic and racial identity, and analyses privilege and power in a critical fashion (CASEL, 2021). It focuses on engaging young people in working towards equity and on developing “identity, agency, belonging, curiosity, and collaborative problem-solving” (CASEL, 2021). If these transformative SEL programmes are implemented, the conventional SEL model will improve, and its relevance will increase to students from various cultural backgrounds. It is also known that students with learning disabilities, language disorders, mental delays, and neurological disorders have difficulties when it comes to SEL skills (Agoratus, 2020; Elias et al., 1997). These students are more likely to have difficulties regarding reading social cues and managing frustration and stressful situations. (Elias et al., 1997). Those students who are on the autism spectrum can have shortcomings in the areas of SEL skills, and with the use of SEL, these areas can be addressed. They also might need help with having these social and emotional skills, acquiring them, and using them appropriately. It is also important to view behaviour as a skill, and not as a “compliance issue” (Agoratus, 2020, p. 35), as students with autism may act inappropriately because they do not know what is expected of them or they do not have the communication and coping skills needed to be able to react in a suitable fashion. SEL improves attendance, reduces problematic behaviours, and increases peer interactions; attributes which can be difficult for students with autism (Agoratus, 2020).

### ***3.2.5 Literature Integrated with SEL***

Most SEL programmes are usually delivered in separate educational settings. There is, however, an alternative way in which social and emotional skills can be taught, and that is through subject matter as an essential element of the content learnt (Shechtman & Abu Yaman., 2012). This type of learning comes with the liberal arts, such as literature. Students, when reading a literary piece, identify the characters, understand their problems and hindrances, and ultimately start understanding their peers and acquire insight into their own emotions and behaviour. As Storey (2019) states, the value of literature does not only lie in moral education but in helping children explore and interpret life. Literature includes a great variety of emotions and experiences that each reader can interpret and encounter individually. This can be aligned with the concept of SEL which concentrates on students' ability to compare their own perspectives to those around them and understand that one situation can be interpreted in various ways. Literature has an immense power to teach empathy, a sense of community, perspective, decision-making, critical thinking, empowerment, and moral judgement (Store,

2019). Research conducted by Stevahn and colleagues (1996) has shown that the group that has been taught conflict resolution skills through a literary work retained this knowledge and was able to apply these skills, a shift happened in their views about conflicts together with an improvement in their academic achievement.

Reading can be viewed by students as a pleasurable act, as it can be a source of entertainment, stress relief or escape. It can also be compelling because youngsters can get reassurance about their feelings and experiences from a literary work. While they are reading, teenagers can develop self-awareness, self-identification, and self-construction which can help them transition from adolescence to adulthood (Howard, 2011). This means students recognise SEL skills and the social and emotional power literature can have and are encouraged to explore the given literary work (Storey, 2019). Literature also deals with a myriad of topics which can be a convenient tool for SEL. Elias and colleagues (1997) mention the following ones: friendship, courage, duty, loss, loyalty, freedom, family, and friends. When students are asked to relate these themes to their own lives, teachers are striving to construct a new context of meaning for what otherwise might be perceived as a dead work.

A few practical realisations of the use of literature integrated with SEL can be the following: read-aloud, group discussion, journal writing, problem-solving, role-playing, introspective essays, creative writing projects, and discussion questions (Ludwig, 2012; Plucker, 2019). Plucker (2019) brings a great example of the integration of literature and SEL, the ability to deal with failure. Success is overemphasized in today's society, so students might not know how to react when they are faced with obstacles. Literature can help with this issue, for example, with the help of biographies. Many famous scientists, inventors, and athletes have encountered failures that they had to overcome. These texts can show children resilience and help them see failure as not a negative process but as something which provides opportunities for improvement. As Shechtman (2009) stated, "through the imaginative process that reading involves, children have the opportunity to do what they often cannot do in real life – become thoroughly involved in the inner lives of others, better understand them, and eventually become more aware of themselves" (p. 37).

### **3.2.6 Summary**

To sum up, literary works have been and will be part of our lives, so they should not be left out of our classrooms. Literature can be viewed as a helping tool when it comes to the four main skills teachers aim to develop (Usmonova, 2021). Nonetheless, educators should see further and realise that literature can increase all language skills as it is a representation of



lifelike dialogues, registers, and social contexts (McKay, 1982). With these in mind, students can grow emotionally and advance in the discussion of certain taboo topics, for example, loss, war, or grief (Usmonova, 2021). Encouraging students to read is the initial step that must be taken, and as Carter (1996) suggests, literature has to be made feasible and enjoyable for every learner. This is further reinforced if the texts to be discussed are chosen accurately, with the principles of lexical complexity, interest and cultural significance kept in mind (Usmonova, 2021).

To summarise *Social and Emotional Learning*, it can be said that it is a vital part of education as well as life itself. SEL focuses on the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills needed to develop healthy identities and manage emotions. It also calls for empathy towards others, a supportive environment, and responsible decisions (Fundamentals of SEL, 2023). Besides qualities, SEL also strengthens academic achievement, and as Elias et al. (1997) have concluded, SEL is essential for people to be able to fully embrace their mental and social skills. The five core competencies it develops are Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Responsible Decision Making, Relationship Skills, and Social Awareness (CASEL, 2003; Fundamentals of SEL, 2023; Payton et al., 2008).

Based on these facts, the integration of literary works with SEL seems more than possible, as Shechtman and Abu Yaman (2012) suggest in their study, saying that SEL skills can be taught through subject matter as an essential element of the learnt content. This type of learning is aided by liberal arts, such as literature. The process of reading and getting to know certain characters, identifying with their problems and obstacles leads to understanding students' own emotions, as well as their peers'. As Storey (2019) argues, literary pieces are filled with emotions and experiences ready for the learner to interpret. This aligns with SEL in the aspect of concentrating on students' capacity to relate to others' perspectives and interpret certain situations in various ways. The act of reading also helps develop core SEL principles, such as self-awareness, self-identification, and self-construction (Howard, 2011). Finally, it cannot be forgotten that literature is a beneficial tool to use if a teacher wants to introduce any topic to a class, as literature encompasses every possible theme, such as freedom, courage, or friendship (Elias et al., 1997). So, it can be said that the integration of literary works and SEL is a possibility worth exploring further.

#### **4 Aim and Research Questions**

The aim of this thesis is to explore how Social and Emotional Learning could take place in a secondary school EFL classroom with the help of literary works. To achieve this, 23 lessons were held for eight groups of students on three topics: love, autism, and racism. In the following section of the thesis, the creation of the lessons, the lessons themselves, the results, and some difficulties encountered along the way will be discussed.

Emerging from the literature, the following research questions were formulated:

- RQ 1 How can literature be discussed in the secondary EFL classroom using up-to-date methodologies based on the principles of Social and Emotional Learning?
- RQ 2 How do secondary school EFL students react to the discussion of literary pieces revolving around social and emotional problems?

## 5 Methods

### *5.1 Participants and Settings*

The presented research was conducted in a secondary vocational school in Hungary. This setting added the element of the students not being the most proficient or motivated, and posed an extra challenge to see how they would receive the topics. Eight groups of students (90 students overall) participated in the research project. All three lessons were strived to be held for all the groups to provide sufficient and reliable data. The students were from grades 9 to 11, from ages 15 to 17, their level was between intermediate and upper-intermediate (B1-B2). The groups consisted of 15-20 students and the lessons were 45 minutes long. The lessons were held in the place of their regular English lessons. Each group's teachers were able to hand over their groups for the purpose of this research. The groups did not discuss the upcoming material in the syllabus in the lessons but deviated from the topic and participated in the lessons discussed in this thesis. The students knew the lessons were to be held by someone else than their teacher, so they knew the lessons were going to be different but did not know the exact themes to be discussed or the aim of the research; they were only presented with these at the beginning of the lessons.

As part of the study, interviews were conducted with three English teachers. The interviewees were three secondary school teachers from different age groups, from their 20s, 30s and 50s. All of them used literary pieces in their classroom beforehand and shared their ideas and experiences with the author. Table 1 presents pieces of information about them. Cecil is a teacher of more than 30 years; she has worked in many schools but always remained in the public education system. Currently, she works in a secondary school in Budapest and is a head teacher of a 7<sup>th</sup> grade class. Mark is only in his 30s, but he is already head of the English department at his school. Sylvia was the youngest interviewee, but she had the most diverse experience out of all the participants. She is currently working at a university's practice school, where teacher trainees do their short-term teaching practice, but she has worked at a language school, a secondary school and at a vocational school as well.

**Table 1***Interview participants*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Approximate age</b>	<b>Teaching experience</b>	<b>Type of school</b>	<b>Place of work</b>
Cecil	50	+ 30 years	Secondary school	Budapest
Mark	30	10 years	Secondary school	Budapest
Sylvia	25	5 years	Practice school	Budapest

**5.2 Data Collection Methods****5.2.1 Classroom Study**

The lessons were planned around three topics, namely love, autism, and racism. All lesson plans were made based on the principles of SEL and aimed to encourage students to improve their emotional maturity and social responsibility through literary works. The lessons included pair work and groupwork activities as well as individual and whole class exercises. Each lesson started with a warmer that helped students open up more and share their ideas freely. Background music was also played for students while they were working. Of course, as these lessons were a one-time occurrence, the desired atmosphere was lacking behind the environment that could have been achieved with a long-term implemented SEL programme. Students were given the opportunity to personalise the tasks they were presented with and to do what they felt comfortable doing, but they were also encouraged to step out of their comfort zone, whether by talking in front of the class or discussing controversial topics with their peers.

In the study, students were subjected to qualitative as well as quantitative data collection methods (Mahboob et al., 2016). This way, while qualitative methods tend to focus on the process, be interested in meaning, are descriptive and involve fieldwork, they can also have downsides which need to be balanced, such as not assigning frequencies to data, ambiguities being overlooked, and their findings not being able to be extended to wider populations. On the other hand, quantitative methods ensure validity, they try out the instruments that will be used in the study (usually with the help of clarification, definition, or a pilot study), and with the help of that, check their relevance and reliability. However, they tend to be confirmatory and deductive as well (Ochieng, 2009). So, with the balanced use of these two methods, the study is aiming to become as valid and reliable as possible, while providing widespread data that is

concerned with the process and the meaning. Data was collected with the help of feedback sheets. First – during the pilot – pieces of paper were distributed to students at the end of the lesson, then, later data was collected with the help of Google Forms. Students were asked to answer 6 Likert-scale questions and were encouraged to provide written feedback, but the latter was voluntary (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

#### ***5.2.1.1 About the Three Lesson Plans – Lesson About Love***

The lesson about the topic of love was held in two settings. Once, as a single lesson and once as two lessons right after each other. In this lesson, students dealt with poems only. They started with a brainstorming activity about love in general to get them introduced to the topic, and then moved on to a gap-filling exercise with a poem. They were asked to use Adrian Henri's *Love is...*, which talks about how many different things love can feel like. The latter task required them to read the poem about diverse representations of love and then to fill in the gaps according to their interpretation. Afterwards, they were able to compare their answers to the original poem and were asked to write an extra stanza to the poem, many of which were read out loud during the lesson. The aim of doing this was to let them express themselves and to make them follow a rhyming pattern in one or more stanzas. The poem continuing task was only done in one lesson, where the students had two lessons right after each other, so more time could be filled with exercises. Students also had to complete a project. By this, they were able to cooperate, collaborate, and discuss things together as well as present their original ideas to the whole class at the end. They worked in three groups and made a poster on love towards one's spouse, pet, and self. Most poems included were at an accurate level for the students, however, some challenging ones were used as well, such as *A Conceit* by Maya Angelou, which deviated from the usual unproblematic love, and *Serenity Prayer* by Brian Bilston, which discussed the simplicity of love with references to popular culture. The ones that could be considered "easier" to understand included two Rupi Kaur poems, *Love Is a Skin* and *Frisbee* by Brian Bilston, and *She waits* by Charlie Milne. All these were straightforward and used less complicated vocabulary.

These posters were presented at the end and later on displayed in their classroom as a permanent piece. Students added the poems, drawings, and pieces of art to their poster and were encouraged to add unknown words as well. This way, they not only learnt about the different concepts of love, but also broadened their vocabulary. Students were given a piece of paper containing all the discussed poems at the end of the lesson to read at home if they wish so. The lesson ended with the students listening to Derek Walcott's poem, *Love After Love*. They were

shown an illustrated video of this poem as the last task, to end the session with an important conclusion, that – as the title suggests – love is one of the most important qualities a person can have. The lesson plan and the poems can be found in Appendix 11.1 and the posters can be seen in Appendix 11.3.

#### ***5.2.1.2 About the Three Lesson Plans – Lesson About Autism Spectrum Disorder***

The lesson on autism spectrum disorder was built up intentionally in a way that students would not suspect the theme of the lesson until after they had been introduced to the book. Students were kept in the dark with the help of 3 exercises, the first one being a warmer task, where students had to make a list of things they liked and disliked, the pieces of paper were collected and then randomly redistributed. After trying to guess the person who could have written the things on their pieces of paper, it was concluded that people are a lot more than what they like or hate. Next, they were presented with the likes and dislikes of the protagonist of Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of The Dog in the Night-Time*. This book is about a 15-year-old boy called Christopher who is on the autism spectrum. He is the narrator of the story, and the book beautifully portrays how his brain works so distinctly. Students tried to guess some characteristics of the main character, and only after this were they able to listen to a few chapters from the book. Their guesses were divergent, most of the time they were not able to make correct guesses about the protagonist. While listening, they had to either answer a few questions or draw an illustration of what they heard. This was asked of them to make sure they paid attention while listening. At this point, they were asked if they found something special about the protagonist; the fact that he was on the autism spectrum. Some groups did better in this aspect than others, but generally all groups figured out the solution. As a last task, they had to continue the story from the point of view of three different characters. They could either be the original protagonist or two other, very different characters. They were encouraged to create dramatic endings and involve the previously known facts as well. By doing so, they had to put themselves in others' shoes, practice some writing, and keep in mind the moral of the story – that just because someone has a condition, it does not mean they are worth less. The lesson plan can be found in Appendix 11.1.

#### ***5.2.1.3 About the Three Lesson Plans – Lesson About Race***

The planning of the lesson about race required careful consideration and thorough background knowledge, for the author as well as for the students. The warmer here was a song (*Freedom* by Beyoncé) which students had to listen to and then were asked to write their

feelings down. By doing so, they were encouraged to share these feelings with each other, and the task also helped them to practice listening and guessing the topic of the lesson, which in most cases was a correct prediction. Following this, students were asked to make a mind map in groups about racism globally as well as locally. This was an effective way to collect their ideas together. The same answers circulated, involving “hate”, “African Americans” and “gypsies”. They had to share their answers, the combined mind map was drawn up on the board – so the collected ideas could be seen altogether – and with the help of frontal teaching, students could hear about the origins of slavery, racism, colonisation, immigration, and the effects of these topics in today’s society. It was an important factor for the students to be equipped with the necessary knowledge to discuss this topic, and with some helping questions, a fruitful discussion emerged as well. The local point of view was also emphasized to make the topic feel even more relevant and closer to the students. Next, a few chapters were read from *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett. This book is about two twin sisters who were both born into an African American family, but one of them could pass for white. The difference in their life is the main topic here, how their opportunities and the attitudes towards them differ based on their skin colour. While listening, one half of the students had to list characteristics of one of the protagonists, the other half about the other one. These lists gave the students an insight into the sisters’ privileges and struggles. By making them pay attention to one character only, the workload was divided, and the collected answers were shown on a slide to make sure everyone understood the differences between the two girls. Then, they were asked to complete a jigsaw reading task in pairs to practice asking targeted question from each other, and lastly, they had to write an ending to the story. The endings were focused on the difference between the two sisters, how their whole lives were determined by their skin colour. With the help of this task, they could put themselves in others’ shoes and reflect on the issue of racism even further. As a final task, students had to write an exit slip mentioning one idea they took away with them from the lesson. This task made sure they will remember at least one idea from the lesson, and as it can be seen in 6.3, Table 3, they mentioned some crucial dilemmas that are worth talking about. The lesson plan can be found in Appendix 11.1.

The table below provides an overview of the tasks done in each lesson.

**Table 2***Tasks Done during the Three Lessons*

<b>Lesson about Love</b>	<b>Lesson about Autism Spectrum Disorder</b>	<b>Lesson about Race</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brainstorming about the idea of love</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing a list of things students love and hate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listening to a song and trying to guess the topic</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gap-filling exercise with Adrian Henri's <i>Love is...</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making assumptions about the book's (<i>The Curious Incident of The Dog in the Night-Time</i> by Mark Haddon) protagonist based on the things he loves and hates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mind map making in groups about racism (globally and locally)</li> <li>Providing background knowledge about the topic</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing and additional stanza to the poem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answering questions while listening to a few chapters, fine tuning guesses about protagonist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Filling in worksheet while listening to a chapter of a book (<i>The Vanishing Half</i> by Brit Bennett)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poster making, groupwork activity about different types of love (spouse, pet, self)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing the story from different points of view, group work activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jigsaw reading in pairs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation of the posters</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing the story from different points of view, group work activity</li> </ul>



#### **5.2.1.4 Student Feedback Sheets**

Students were asked to provide feedback at the end of each lesson. These questions were the following:

- How much did you enjoy the activities?
- To what extent do you think they contributed to developing your emotional maturity and social responsibility?
- How much did you like the discussed poems/book?
- To what extent was the language of the literary work at an accurate level?
- How much would you like to take part in similar types of lessons in the future?
- To what extent do you feel inspired to read in English after the lesson?

The examination of the answers to these questions can be seen under Results.

#### **5.2.2 Interview Study**

Interviews were also used as a tool for data collection, three English teachers were questioned about their practices and viewpoints on using literature in the English classroom and on the importance of students' SEL skills. With the help of these interviews, a connection was made between the author and the interviewees which helped the reveal of personal feelings and situations and the tearing down of barriers between the two parties (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The following interview questions were asked.

- Have you ever used literary works in the EFL classroom? What types of literary works did you use? Why?
- How do you think students benefit from reading literary works in the EFL classroom?
- What is your opinion on the conducted study and the endeavour to care for students' SEL skills?
- How important it is for you to aid students' emotional development in the EFL classroom?

#### **5.3 Limitations and Ethical Concerns**

The limitations and additional improvements of the study are points that need further elaboration. Limitations involved the short-term implementation of the programme and the fact that only one secondary school was used as the object of the study. Group diversity regarding language level and a restricting, rather outdated school setting also added to the difficulties. Further improvements and research are needed to get a full picture that is accurately

representative of the Hungarian field. Another aspect that could have been done is a check-up session with the participants to see if their memories are still vivid and their SEL skills are at a higher level, or not. More schools' participation would be needed with a diverse group setting, the number of lessons should increase, and all groups should take part in each lesson, providing mandatory feedback after each session. This would undoubtedly be a more time-consuming work, but the larger scope of it would provide an accurate representation of today's Hungarian teenagers' social and emotional skills, which are not highlighted in the curriculum enough.

## 6 Results

The data analysis and discussion of results is presented in three sections, centring around the three different lessons. Students were asked to answer six questions in all lessons; this was the data that provided the basis for the analysis, as well as additional written feedback and a few pieces of oral feedback, both of which were voluntary.

### 6.1. Lesson about Love

This lesson plan focused on the use of poems, on students' feelings, creativity, and cooperation. It included a project where students had to make a poster on one of the three types of love (in this case, love towards one's spouse, pet, or self). They were asked to work in groups for a long time, discuss, cooperate, and create a poster and present it together. The feedback they gave showed that students immensely enjoyed working in these groups and they thought they should be able to do this more often as well. *"I really enjoyed it and I loved that we had to work in groups"* and *„it was a really enjoyable lesson because I like to work in groups with my classmates and it was a great exercise"* were some of the pieces of feedback they had given. While one would assume that today's school system is not focused on frontal teaching, still, group work tasks were a rarity for these students, and they thoroughly enjoyed them. It must be mentioned that these students were attendants of a secondary vocational school, and the mode of their English lessons was rarely the most student-centred and cooperative.

However, this only added to the element of their enjoyment, and can be seen in their answers to the Likert-scale question *"How much did you enjoy the activities?"*. The mean of this question was 4.65 (n=44) indicating that students found the exercises and the lesson highly enjoyable. Besides the high level of entertainment, there was one student who was on the fence about the tasks. This fact is not surprising, as every student's interest is different and unique, so it cannot be expected of them to enjoy the same thing.

The second question – *"To what extent do you think they contributed to your emotional maturity and social responsibility?"* – proved to be too difficult first, as it used words and concepts that were foreign to students, so it had to be explained. However, after they have understood it, they gave great answers. They rated the question quite high, with a mean of 3.97 (n=44), showing that students believed the tasks were beneficial for their emotional maturity and social responsibility, and as this feedback was provided anonymously, they could not have been scared and could not have changed their answers because of being afraid of stating their opinion with their name and face. The answers provided to the second question depict that the

lesson plan was successful at achieving what it strived to. Students who participated in these lessons showed great involvement and cooperation, they took the tasks seriously, presented their work confidently, and found the posters aesthetically pleasing (these posters can be found in Appendix 11.3).

The third question, “How much did you like the discussed poems?” had a mean of 4.09 (n=44). Choosing the right poems proved to be more difficult than anticipated, but, as students have stated, it was still an understandable and enjoyable selection of poetry. When having individual discussions with students, the group who worked with poems about love for one’s spouse stated that their poems were considerably more difficult than the others’. However, all students were provided with synonyms for more difficult words in the poems, they could ask questions, and even use Google Translate if they felt like it was necessary.

The next question “To what extent was the language of the poems at an accurate level?” talks about the issue of language difficulty further, as most students understood the poems with a little help, but it is visible from the results – a mean of 4.25 (n=44) – that the language of the poems were the most difficult compared to the other literary works used in the other lessons.

When it came to the willingness and motivation of students, as the answers to the next question – “How much would you like to take part in similar types of lessons in the future?” – present, they showed great enthusiasm and interest about participating in similar lessons. This was highlighted by their feedback as well: “*I really enjoyed it!*” and “*I think this lesson strongly facilitated to the improvement of our emotional intelligence and maturity, probably this will make us interested in psychology.*” The mean of this question was 4.5 (n=44), and as it can clearly be seen, the latter piece of feedback seems to be at a higher level than all the others. This is because there was one student in one group whose level of English was outstanding, as well as their view on life. He personally handed in his feedback sheet at the end of the lesson and proceeded to have a discussion with the author, asking about their motivation, future opportunities, and the lesson in general. This student was also the one who recommended adding *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen to the poster about self-love and the case of Mr. Darcy. His abilities were clearly above the level of his peers, and he was himself on the autism spectrum. He participated in the other lessons as well, so the discussion of his role will continue there.

The last question was “To what extent do you feel inspired to read in English after the lesson?” The results were fairly varied and represented that even if most of the students enjoyed the lessons and the tasks, they might not have enjoyed all the poems equally. The mean here

was 4.06 (n=44), which is still considerably high, but their enjoyment was certainly lacking in this category.

## **6.2 Lesson about Autism Spectrum Disorder**

The lesson about autism spectrum disorder focused on the sensitization of students regarding this topic. It discussed Mark Haddon's book, *The Curious Incident of The Dog in the Night-Time*, which can be seen as the diary of a protagonist who is on the autism spectrum, one that shows his innermost thoughts, feelings, and thought processes. In some of the groups, usually the ones that were made up of 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> graders, students quickly realised the book was about someone who is on the autism spectrum. On the other hand, those in 9<sup>th</sup> grade took a longer time recognising the characteristics of the protagonist and connecting it to their background knowledge about autism. The discussions at the end of the lessons proved to be rather successful, as students – with helping questions from the teacher – were able to voice their honest opinion about this topic. Most groups came to the conclusion that people who are on the autism spectrum are not different from those who are not, and hence, should be treated the same as others, with patience, kindness, and compassion. However, it needs to be added, that in one group students had very strong opinions about this topic. The previously mentioned student, who had given the very distinguished piece of feedback on the lesson about love, left the room before the start of the lesson because he had seen the topic previously. This was unfortunate, as his reaction to the lesson would have been engrossing, but the best solution was to let him leave right then and there. As it turned out, this person and some other members of the class had an ongoing dispute, as the others were not able to understand how and why he does things, and vice versa. The class members stated their opinion firmly, that just because someone is on the autism spectrum, they should not be treated differently, but they also should recognise themselves and not act selfishly. This is a two-way situation, and it felt like neither of the parties really wanted to understand each other and resolve their conflict. The background of this could have been that “emotions represent information within the network and are thus connected to relevant knowledge and experiences” (Bohn-Gettler & Rapp, 2014, p. 442), so, as their experiences were negative, their emotions portrayed it as well. Therefore, the lesson progressed without the one student relative smoothly, no big controversial comment was said, nevertheless, the student came back into the classroom after the lesson to have a chat with the author and the teacher. The class's teacher made a remark regarding the fact that she thought the student could have stayed and might have enjoyed the lesson. The student gave the author a piece of paper with terms on it that were connected to autism spectrum disorder. He had done

this to educate the author and not as an insult. Another comment made by this student was that he had known the lesson was going to be about autism because he had seen the blue cover of the book. The book itself has many varieties of covers, but if the student does not mention this detail, it would have gone unnoticed.

Students were asked the same questions about all lessons, but their answers were always varied. The mean of the question “How much did you enjoy the activities?” was 4.54 (n=64), indicating that students enjoyed most of the activities, they liked putting themselves in the characters’ shoes and continuing the story with the added element of dramatization. “*I enjoyed being Christopher*” was one piece of feedback provided that can underline this. One longer piece of feedback was received:

*I really liked this lesson, it was fun for the most part! And I really like the fact that it brought attention to autistic people. I have an autistic friend and he’s really nice! What I didn’t like was some of my peers’ reaction to autism... So, very good lesson, I loved your teaching style! Have a nice day!*

This comment shows that just because on the whole, students seem to receive the message of the lesson, as individuals, they can still be unsure about what is going on or if they agree with the said principles. It needs to be said that this particular class was not so quick to recognise what the topic was, they were 9<sup>th</sup> graders, but all in all, they did not show signs of judgement.

The question “To what extent do you think they contributed to your emotional maturity and social responsibility?” yielded varied answers. They rated this question with a mean of 3.9 (n=64) because – as they have stated – they had already heard about this topic and felt decently educated on it. So, there was some confusion about the question, it could have been formulated differently, so the students’ confusion was understandable. Still, they found the lesson beneficial and useful and will hopefully remember what they have heard in the lesson later in their lives.

The liking of the book was also diverse – “How much did you like the discussed book?” – ; while many thoroughly enjoyed it, others thought it was too absurd. This is supported by the mean 4.0 (n=64). As students have said, the topic, without any introduction, was too shocking (as the book discusses the death of a dog who was murdered with a garden fork in the first chapter), but it is important to say that the topic was introduced without a detailed foundation on purpose, to make students gradually realise what the theme was.

On the other hand, the level of the book – “To what extent was the language of the book at an accurate level?” – was perceived by all the students as understandable, with the mean of 4.4

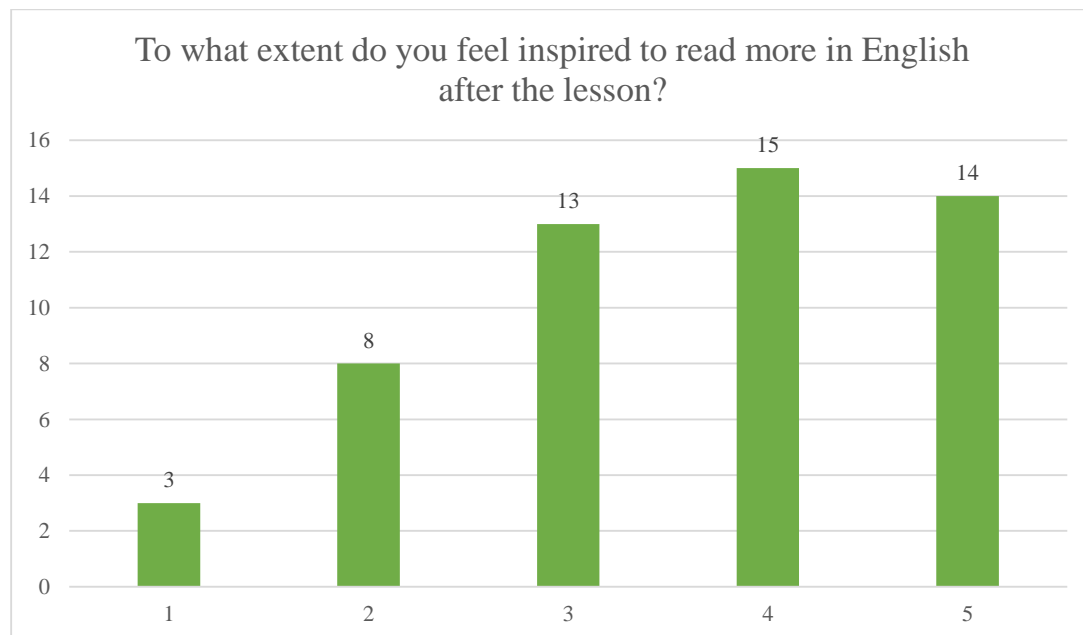
(n=64). This is accurate, the language of the book is indeed appropriate for even lower-level students than B2.

Numerous students (n=59) felt like they would like to partake in similar lessons in the future, which is shown by the mean 4.4 (n=64) to the question “How much would you like to take part in similar types of lessons in the future?”. Students had provided many encouraging pieces of feedback regarding this aspect as well, such as “*This lesson was very good and I think you can be a very good teacher.*”, „*I really enjoyed how energetic and positive you were doing this whole lesson. It kinda made my day.*” and „*I think you will be a good teacher. You have the facilities to be a good, contemporary teacher.*”

The last question here provided the most diverse results, as Chart 1 represents: “To what extent do you feel inspired to read more in English after the lesson?” The mean was 3.5 (n=64), and many students felt truly motivated to read in English or they have already been reading in English, as one piece of feedback shows “*I already read a lot of English fanfictions. I mostly read in English.*” Sadly, no other feedback was provided that could be brought as a cause for the varied answers. One thing that could have shaped the answers was the topic, as said previously.

### Chart 1

*To what extent do you feel inspired to read more in English after the lesson? – Lesson about Autism Spectrum Disorder*



### **6.3 Lesson about Race**

This lesson called for the most thorough planning for it be done accurately. Students mostly focused on pair work during this lesson, they were given worksheets (found in Appendix 11.2) they had to complete and that they could keep after the lesson. Following proper introduction to the topic with the help of a song and a brainstorming task, a discussion was held with the help of frontal teaching to activate students' background knowledge or provide the necessary knowledge if they didn't have it beforehand. Close attention was paid to the global and local implications of race and racism to enable students to view this issue not as something remote from them, but as something they can perceive every day. A generous amount of feedback was provided by the students, as they had to write an exit slip at the end of the lesson. These pieces of feedback show how passionate the students were about the topic. The pieces of feedback have been organised in Table 3 by the content of their answers and the number of answers. The statement they had to answer was "Write down one thing you're taking away from the lesson." The answers show students' understanding of the seriousness of this issue and that they became aware of it even more and are ready to act on their beliefs if needed.

**Table 3**

*Content and Number of Answers*

<b>Content of Answers</b>	<b>Number of Mentions</b>
Acceptance towards others	10
New words from the lesson	3
Development in racism	2
A new book about racism	2
BLM	1
Supporting people of colour	1
Difference in lives because of different skin colours	1
Hate towards people of colour	1
Being faithful	1
Racism can be talked about	1
The history of racism	1
Human rights	1



Students showed great enthusiasm about the activities, as the mean for the question “How much did you enjoy the activities?” was 4.6 (n=40). A reason for this high level of enjoyment could have been that students recognised the importance of the topic and were able to see a life-like example through the discussed book, *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett. Some students needed more explanation or an example, maybe some nudging to start working and to speak up, but all students participated willingly after they got comfortable.

As the exit slips have already been presented, students felt like the lesson contributed to their development. This can also be seen in their answers to the question “To what extent do you think they contributed to your emotional maturity and social responsibility?” which produced a mean of 4.1 (n=40). The theme is topical, so students might have already been informed about it, but all in all, they have found the lesson to be beneficial.

Most of the students also liked the book and felt the level of it was accurate, as the mean of 4.2 to the question “How much did you like the discussed book?” and the mean of 4.25 (n=40) to the question “To what extent was the language of the book at an accurate level?” show.

When it came to the will to participate in similar tasks, students were enthusiastic as the mean of 4.5 (n=40) shows to the question “How much would you like to take part in similar types of lessons in the future?”. Their feedback was the following: “*There should be more lessons like this in the future.*”, “*Everything was perfect.*” and “*I really like this lesson. I love it.*” As the mean and their pieces of feedback show, students felt that this was a serious issue to talk about and thought that they should be able to discuss such things in the school setting more often.

Many of the students also found the book compelling, and as it can be seen on their exit slips, they were encouraged to finish reading the whole book as well. To the question “To what extent do you feel inspired to read more in English after the lesson?” they provided a 4.0 (n=40) mean.

#### **6.4 Interviews with Teachers**

Interviews were also conducted with three Hungarian teachers who were asked about their opinion on the use of literary works in the English classroom. Various excerpts of the transcriptions of the interviews can be seen in Appendix 11.4.

These interviews further underlined and strengthened the previously stated beliefs about the importance of the use of literature in the EFL classroom. All the teachers that have been interviewed used or use literary works in their classes regularly. Some use the literary pieces as

they come, some opt for graded readers and some for film adaptations. What all teachers had in common was that they found it paramount to place enough focus on something more than just literature: to aid students' language ability as well as their emotions, their capacity to express themselves and to put themselves in others' shoes. It was also mentioned by Mark that literature is the authentic approach towards the elements of cultural reality. This shows that 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers realise the importance and potential of literature in the English classroom when it comes to addressing present and sometimes controversial topics. The interviewees differed a fair amount when it came to their views on the literary pieces they have discussed or would discuss. The biggest difference was about using literary works from not contemporary writers, such as Shakespeare. Cecil said she would never bring in the works of Shakespeare, while Sylvia has already done so and talked about the fruitful results it has yielded. Young adult pieces were brought as examples as well as classics, fiction and nonfiction, novels and poems. A wide variety of literature could be seen in these teachers' lessons used for multiple purposes. Mark and Sylvia used these works to supplement the given course material, Cecil intertwined the use of the literary works with another lesson, and Sylvia chose to make it a conscious and continuous practice to talk about students' reading experiences.

Nevertheless, all of them agreed that students' emotional development is immensely important, and that the English lesson is one of the best places to care for this. Sylvia connected emotions and the proper expression of emotions to the school leaving exam, which requires students to be able to talk about themselves, which inevitably involves their emotions as well. So, while preparing students for their exams and tests, we can also prepare them for real life. One idea mentioned by Sylvia stood out, which was the following:

*There are many instances in life when one is alone and is not able to connect with others. At these stages, students are unable to develop their social responsibility, so, when it comes to handling these problems, they freeze and don't know what to do. Life becomes a lot easier if children are prepared for these instances and if they can try themselves out in safe spaces in these situations. What teachers have to figure out is how to do this efficiently.*

In conclusion, the interviews added to the validity and reliability of the study, further proving the points already stated and anticipated while also adding real-life experiences and examples of the successful use of literature in the English classroom.

## 7 Discussion

To answer the first research question (*How can literature be discussed in the classroom with up-to-date methodologies with the principles of Social and Emotional Learning?*), it can be said that while students and teachers may be afraid to use literary pieces, it is indeed possible with techniques such as group and pair work activities, brainstorming sessions, worksheets, and story continuation (Harmer, 2007; Lazar, 1993). When SEL skills are involved, students not only develop their interpretation skills (Rosenblatt, 1994), their critical thinking and emotional intelligence also flourish (Ghosn, 2002; Khatib et al., 2011). It is also important to remember that literature encompasses a variety of emotions and experiences that need to be interpreted successfully and in a varied fashion. This aligns with SEL's endeavour which warrants students to put themselves in others' shoes and compare and understand their own and different perspectives as well (Storey, 2019). The worksheets in Appendix 11.2 present some examples of tasks that use literary pieces with SEL in mind. These are concerned with racism and involve listening to a song by a woman-of-colour about the topic, making a mind map about the topic, writing down attributes of characters from the book while listening to excerpts and contrasting them, jigsaw reading, and writing an ending to the story. Some other ideas were also mentioned in the conducted interviews, such as watching film adaptations of novels, interviewing the protagonist, imagining what students would do in the place of the protagonist, reading articles and watching TED Talks on the topic, using a literary piece to awaken discussion about personal issues (aging, interest of individuals or the community, the importance of order and discipline), show and tell with recent reading experiences, constructing discussion questions, and roleplaying. Based on the conducted research, it can be said that students and teachers find that social and emotional skills should be developed and concentrated on during the English lesson, and as the interviews have shown, many teachers prefer using literature as a built-in part of their curriculum, helping and aiding the discussion about certain, more sensitive topics. The research question can further be answered by the research presented by Ludwig (2012) and Plucker (2019) which show that with the careful combination of literary pieces, care for students' SEL skills and new-fangled methodologies – such as read-aloud, group discussions, problem-solving, sharing personal experiences, and putting themselves in others' shoes – learners enjoy and benefit from the lessons. Shechtman's and Abu Yaman's (2012) research also answers the research question, as it shows that literature contributes to the positive behaviour of students, a motivation to learn, and an intimate atmosphere where students are willing to cooperate. The combination of SEL methods with literature also adds to students being engaged on a personal

level, to the reassurance of their feelings, and to drawing personal and social connections (Storey, 2019).

To answer the second research question (*How do secondary school EFL students react to the discussion of literary pieces revolving around social and emotional problems?*), it can be concluded that because reading can be seen as a pleasurable act by students, as it can be a source of entertainment, stress relief or escape (Howard, 2011), their attitude towards the lessons was generally positive. The quantitative as well as qualitative data show the high level of enthusiasm from the students and the true appreciation of the discussion of such topics. Students did not feel threatened or intimidated by the literary works discussed, and some of them even commented on already mostly consuming literature in English. They enjoyed the discussed pieces of literature and felt motivated to read more after the lesson. This was also aided by the fact that they craved the discussion of these issues and were able to get reassurance about their feelings and experiences from the literary works (Howard, 2011). Students felt encouraged to dive into the topic and the literary works as they recognised the SEL skills and the outstanding social and emotional power it can have (Storey, 2019). The multitude of topics literature deals with is also a motivating factor for students, and as it could be seen in the research, the certain topics that were discussed also aligned with the principles of SEL: discovering emotions (love), mental health (autism spectrum disorder) and acceptance (racism). The topics also awoke strong emotions and feelings from the students which had an impact on their behaviour. Heath and her colleagues (2017) talk about this phenomenon and propose that stories can be used to build SEL skills. As the study presented in this thesis shows and as Bohn-Gettler and Rapp (2014) argue, emotions affect the mental strategies which are used while problem-solving. This could be seen in one of the lessons that discussed autism spectrum disorder, and when the class showed a heightened level of emotional sensitivity because of the disagreement between them and one of their classmates (one who was on the autism spectrum). Their emotions clouded their judgement, decision making, and problem-solving, as after this issue arose, they were unable to dissociate the abstract context of someone being on the autism spectrum from their past experiences.

## 8 Conclusion

As the results of the study have shown, it is undeniable that the use of literary works in the classroom is still a valid practice, if executed appropriately. It is known that the use of literature was declining in the past, but just as Pugh (1989) argued for literature being an abundant source of significant input, M. Faraj (2021) further reinforced this by stating that although literature should not be overused, it can diversify and compliment the material used in the classroom.

Students' overall reaction to the discussion of literary pieces talking about social and emotional problems was a bit hesitant at first, as literature seemed to be a very distinct topic only liked by those whose specific field of interest it was. Nevertheless, by the end of the first lesson, and even more in the following ones, students showed a great level of interest and participation. They expressed their opinions freely and were open to having discussions and educated debates on the sensitive topics that were addressed.

The goal of this study was to see how students in a secondary vocational school would react to literature in the classroom combined with SEL. As the results show, the study can be proven successful in the sense that the anticipated excitement and participation were even more present than first thought. Students, regardless of their school or background, showed great social and emotional skills emerging and had educated debates about the discussed topics. They stated their opinion bravely and were sensitive to the themes of the lessons.

These findings suggest that students benefit from the use of literary works in the classroom when these practices are combined with the concepts of SEL.

Future research directions involve the discussion of other taboo topics that would benefit SEL skills, such as climate change, equality, disabilities, addiction, etc. The research could also be conducted in different school settings which would affect students from different socio-economic backgrounds. The implementation of a long-term SEL programme would be the best way to assess the development of students' skills, however, this is not the most realistic of the further directions.

The experience discussed in this thesis has also contributed to me as a teacher. I, just as the students, felt hesitant at first. Nonetheless, as each lesson progressed, the atmosphere had gotten so accepting and filled with anticipation that I also adapted to it and started to believe in the purpose of my research more and more. There are two definite points I would consider as the main takeaway of the research. 1) The use of literary works in English lessons of any level is going to be constructive and met with interest by students. 2) The prominence of Social and Emotional Learning is lacking in secondary education, however, when even a small amount of

focus is placed on it, astonishing things can happen. I will for sure keep these outcomes in mind when continuing my teaching career and try and talk about this topic with my fellow colleagues as well. This way, I can spread awareness on this newer field of research and shine some light on the importance of this method underlined by the findings of my study.

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## **11 Appendices**

### ***11.1 Lesson plans***

The lesson plans can be found under the following link:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1v2pHFhy4ozaYAy2BHVK3FJucFmSqpqQ/edit?usp=share\\_link&oid=109811588368486602443&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1v2pHFhy4ozaYAy2BHVK3FJucFmSqpqQ/edit?usp=share_link&oid=109811588368486602443&rtpof=true&sd=true)

*11.2 Worksheets about Race*

**Worksheet – Race**

- A -



**1. Warmer**

We'll listen to a song, Freedom by Beyoncé. Write down your feelings that come up in you when you're listening to the song.

.....  
.....  
.....

What was the song about?

.....

**2. Background knowledge**

What is racism?

.....

What do you know about this issue? Make a mind map. Collect ideas, examples from history, songs, films, pieces of literature, etc. connected to race and racism. Reflect on the situation in the world but also in Hungary.

**3. Chapters from *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett**

While you listen to the chapter from the book, collect characteristics of one girl. Write these things in the correct column.

**Desiree**

**Stella**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**4. Jigsaw reading**

Work in pairs. You'll both receive the same text, but different pieces of information are missing from them. Ask questions from your partner and try and figure out what the words are that are missing.

Sometimes she lost Stella and had to search for her, wanting to call her name but afraid to send her voice ..... off the ceilings. Once, she'd found her polishing the bedroom ....., staring off into the vanity mirror adorned by tiny bottles of lotions, ....., as if she wanted to sit on that plush bench and rub scented cream onto her hands like Audrey Hepburn might. .... herself for the sake of it, as if she lived in a world where women did such a thing. But then Desiree's ..... appeared behind her, and Stella looked away, ....., almost, to be seen wanting anything at all.

**5. Write an ending**

Work in groups. Come up with an ending to the story. Involve elements that we talked about today.

.....

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.....

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## Worksheet – Race

- B -



### 1. Warmer

We'll listen to a song, Freedom by Beyoncé. Write down your feelings that come up in you when you're listening to the song.

.....  
.....  
.....

What was the song about?

.....

### 2. Background knowledge

What is racism?

.....

What do you know about this issue? Make a mind map. Collect ideas, examples from history, songs, films, pieces of literature, etc. connected to race and racism. Reflect on the situation in the world but also in Hungary.

### 3. Chapters from *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett

While you listen to the chapter from the book, collect characteristics of one girl. Write these things in the correct column.

Desiree

Stella

.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

**4. Jigsaw reading**

Work in pairs. You'll both receive the same text, but different pieces of information are missing from them. Ask questions from your partner and try and figure out what the words are that are missing.

Sometimes she lost Stella and had to ..... for her, wanting to call her name but afraid to send her voice echoing off the ..... Once, she'd found her polishing the bedroom dresser, ..... off into the vanity mirror adorned by tiny bottles of lotions, wistfully, as if she wanted to sit on that plush bench and rub ..... cream onto her hands like Audrey Hepburn might. Admire herself for the sake of it, as if she lived in a world where ..... did such a thing. But then Desiree's reflection ..... behind her, and Stella looked away, ashamed, almost, to be seen wanting anything at all.

**5. Write an ending**

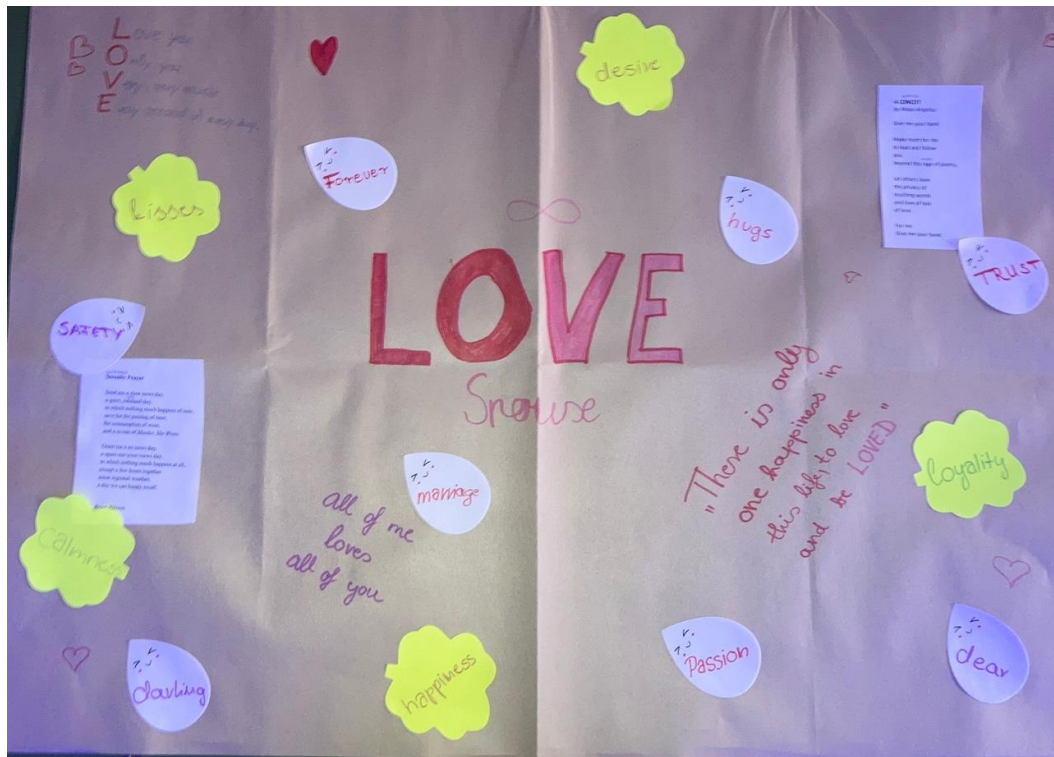
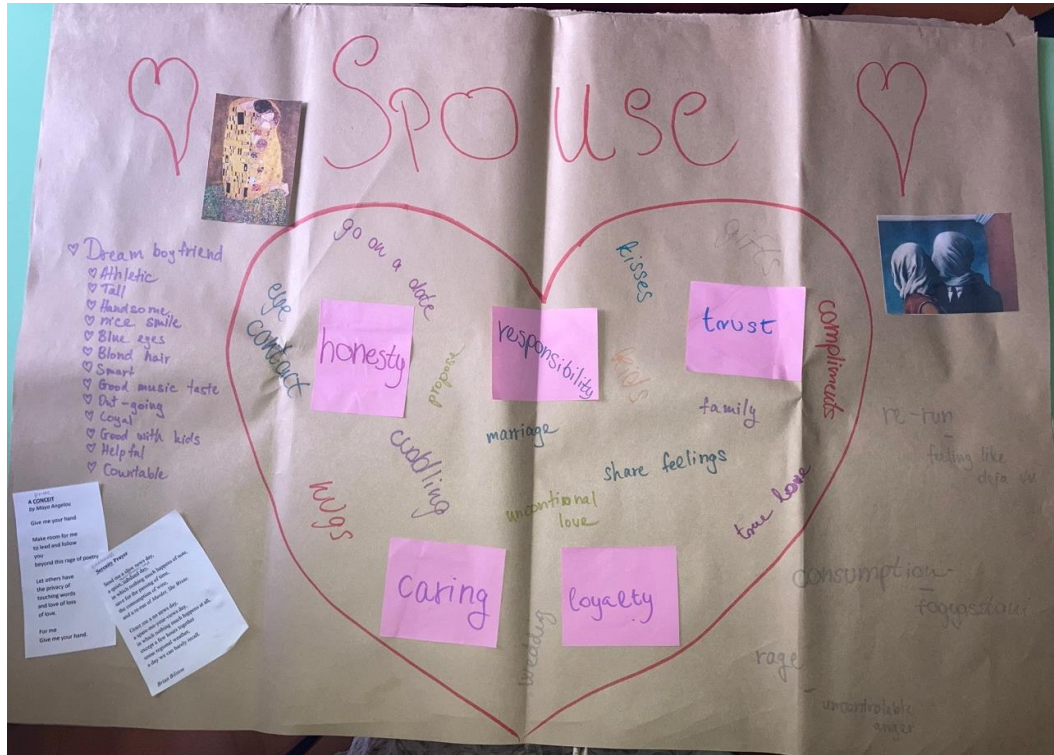
Work in groups. Come up with an ending to the story. Involve elements that we talked about today.

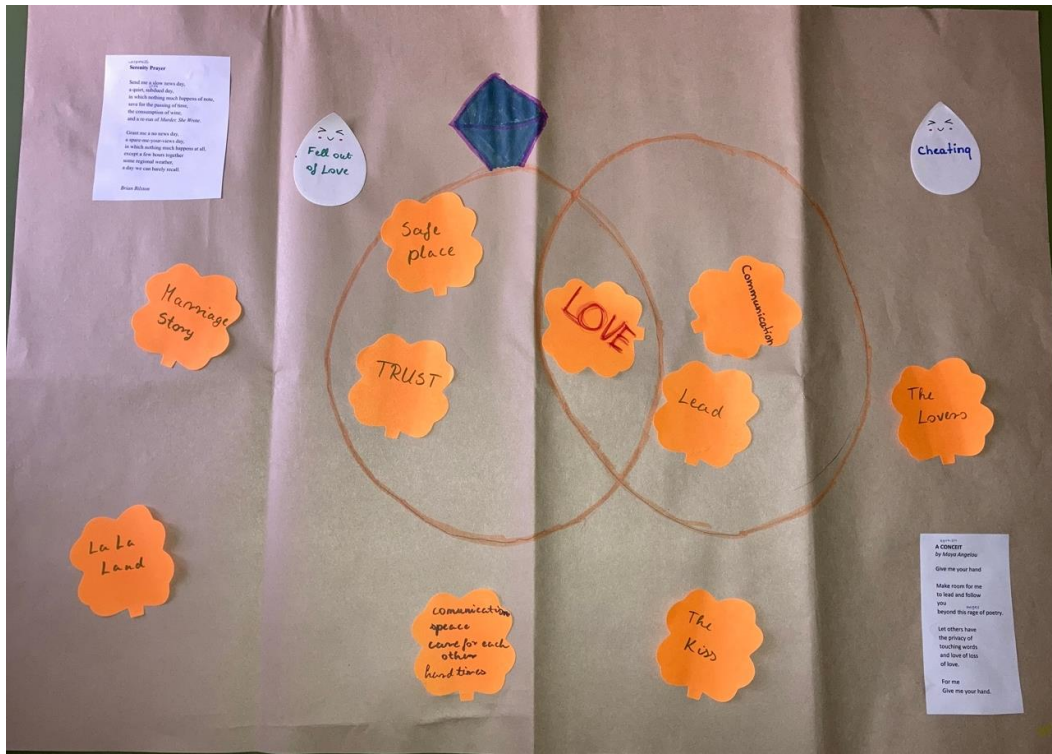
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### 11.3 Posters by Students Made on the Lesson about Love

#### 11.3.1 Posters about Love for One's Spouse

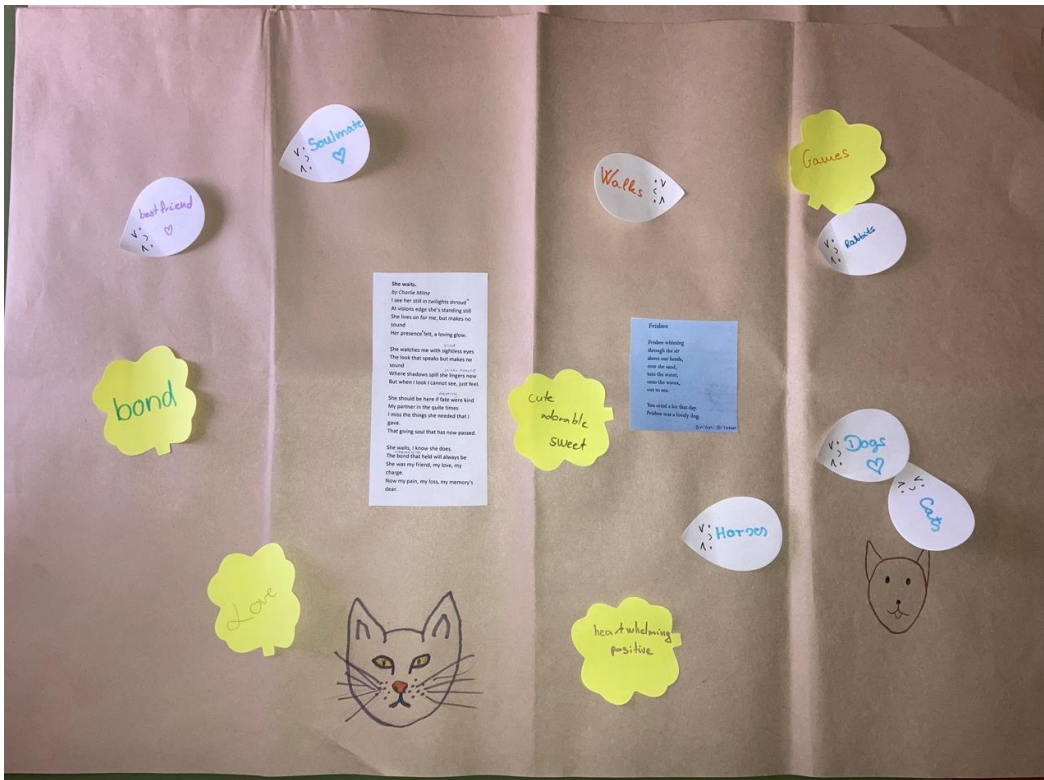
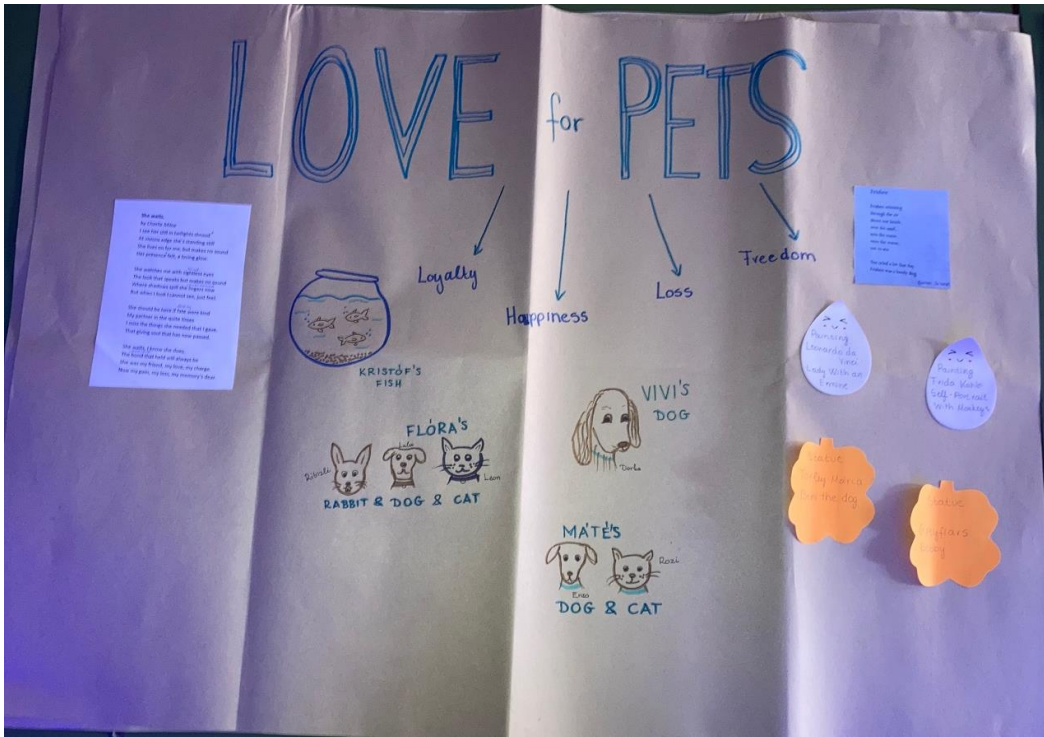




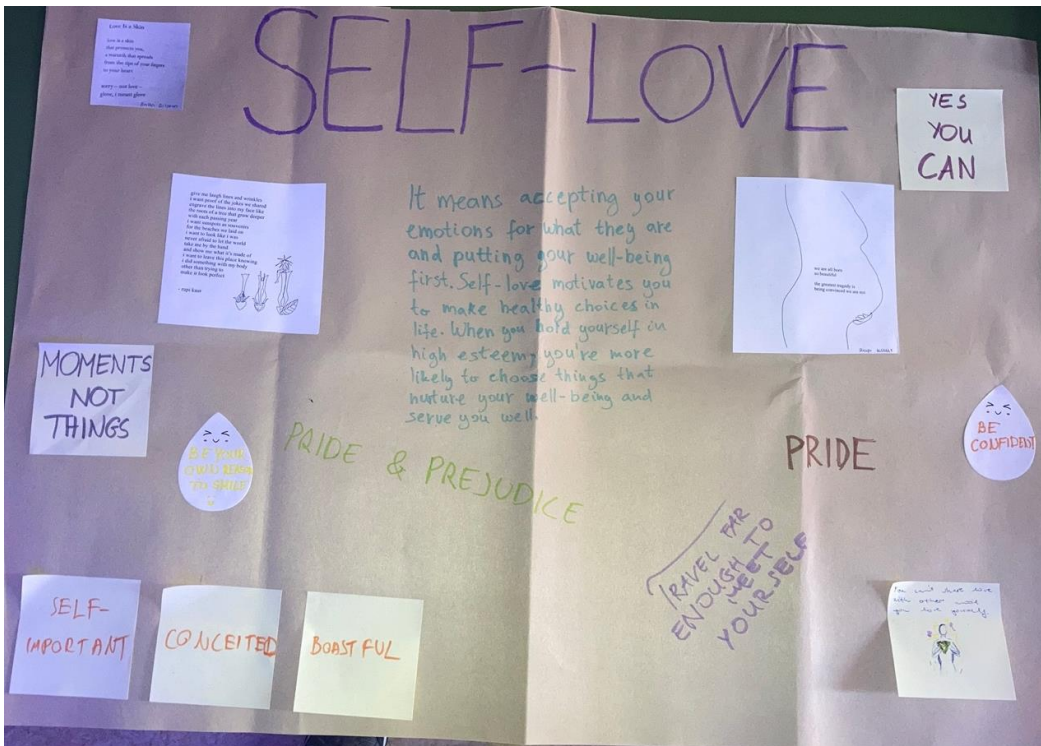
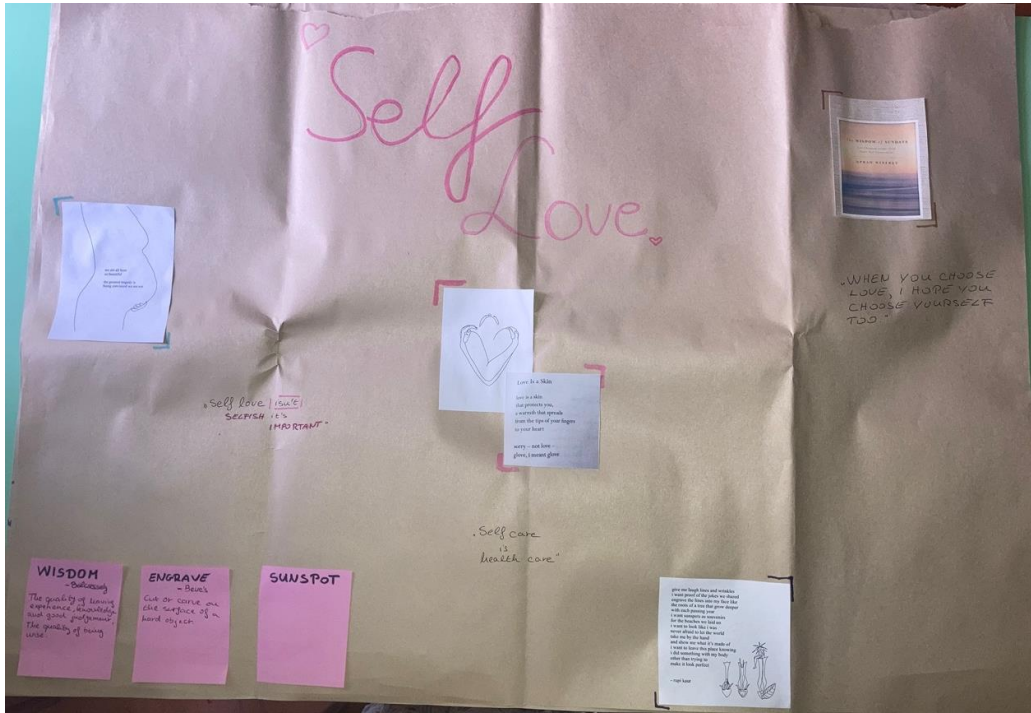
**11.3.2 Posters about Love for One's Pet**

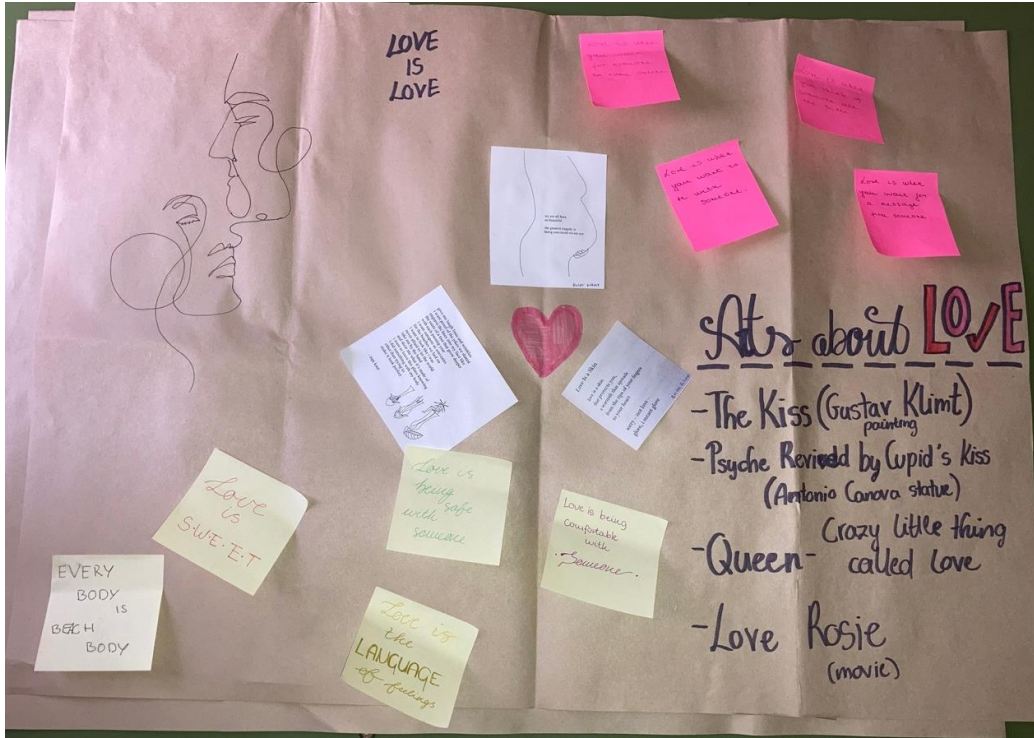






### 11.3.3 Posters about Self-Love







## *11.4 Excerpts of Transcriptions of Interviews*

### *11.4.1 First Interview*

#### **Have you ever used literary works in the EFL classroom? What types of literary works did you use? Why?**

I usually use films that are adaptations of classic novels, but I would also consider using novellas. However, I wouldn't use poems, I would leave that up to their literature teachers. Two of these film adaptations come to mind that were the most memorable, one being *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak and the other *Fateless (Sorstalanság)* by Imre Kertész. [...] I have talked to the class's Hungarian Grammar and Literature teacher, so the two lessons were in sync. [...] To make students remember what has happened in the film, we have a quiz or a multiple-choice task at the beginning of the lessons. Some tasks students especially enjoy are the ones where they have to elaborate on a given topic or conduct an interview with the protagonist. One more book comes to mind, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne, which is about the Holocaust. It can be used with younger children as well, as the book is about children. One thing I would never bring into class is Shakespeare. It is just too complicated and difficult; it would only confuse students.

#### **How do you think students benefit from reading literary works in the EFL classroom?**

Students usually hate reading, so the use of films helps them understand and actually like compulsory reading material. They benefit in many areas, such as their social responsibility, sensitivity, acceptance towards others regarding social and religious background, etc. [...] Literary works also enrich vocabulary and provide new idioms and phrases for students. [...]

#### **What is your opinion on the conducted study and the endeavour to care for students' SEL skills?**

It is an outstanding topic. If I had the chance and the idea, I'd have researched this myself. [...]

#### **How important it is for you to aid students' emotional development in the EFL classroom?**

It's not only about teaching the language; it is through literary works or movies that children can be understood. [...] It is also immensely important what you say and how you say it. Your own experiences and identity are represented through your acts of communication; this also helps capture students' attention, they love it when the teacher talks about their own life.

#### *11.4.2 Second Interview*

**Have you ever used literary works in the EFL classroom? What types of literary works did you use? Why?**

I have and I still do. I execute this in two ways. After determining the level of the students in a given group, we do a reading project, through which students read a graded reader which was originally written in English, it could be fiction or nonfiction, and which is connected to the topic of the coursebook. This way, there is a new topical element, but the overarching theme stays the same. Language-wise, we read graded readers as well as originals. When it comes to poetry, I usually choose pieces that are from the literary canon or ones I have learnt at university. For graded readers we use the Oxford Bookworms Library. [...]

**How do you think students benefit from reading literary works in the EFL classroom?**

Literature is the authentic approach towards the elements of cultural reality. Any films, articles, TED Talks, literary works and folk tales serve this purpose. [...] It also should not be forgotten to implement a pedagogical point of view when discussing these pieces of literature, meaning the tasks students do should align with the pedagogical context of the teacher.

**What is your opinion on the conducted study and the endeavour to care for students' SEL skills?**

It is very important to talk about these topics. The main aim seems to be pressing in on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and global citizenship, all of which have an effect on the education process. [...]

**How important it is for you to aid students' emotional development in the EFL classroom?**

It is obviously very important, and with the use of literature, we can access the elements of cultural reality. It also helps students expand their world views.

### ***11.4.3 Third Interview***

#### **Have you ever used literary works in the EFL classroom? What types of literary works did you use? Why?**

I have used many, some of the most memorable involve a monologue from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* called *The Seven Ages of Man*; it talks about the different stages of life. [...] More recently, in one on my groups we read a book called *The Giver* by Lois Lowry which is a relatively short novel describing a dystopian society. [...] On Fridays, we do a read and share activity with my groups, in which they are invited to share something which they've read, let that be a book, an article or anything in between. [...]

#### **How do you think students benefit from reading literary works in the EFL classroom?**

Their language develops, involving their vocabulary, grammar, and overall, they are able to produce more correct speaking patterns. [...] It gives them confidence when they were able to and were brave enough to talk about a topic. However, their personality also plays a huge role in this process. Their interests and what they know about the world will influence their enjoyment of a topic and the outcome of the process.

#### **What is your opinion on the conducted study and the endeavour to care for students' SEL skills?**

It is crucial to try out these tasks as well and not to forget that we can learn a lot from each other as teachers. There are many instances in life when one is alone and is not able to connect with others. At these stages, students are unable to develop their social responsibility, so, when it comes to handling these problems, they freeze and don't know what to do. Life becomes a lot easier if children are prepared for these instances and if they can try themselves out in safe spaces in these situations. What teachers have to figure out is how to do this efficiently.

#### **How important it is for you to aid students' emotional development in the EFL classroom?**

In my opinion, the English lesson is the best way to develop students. Just to bring an example, the school leaving exam requires them to be able to talk about themselves, which involves their emotions. This is what the lesson should be about, to make them think about certain topics and to enable them to express those opinions. [...]