

# **CAT 4 RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

**GROUP 4 - 61**

**MAKE LIT, LIT**

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## **Abstract**

Students have often complained of the difficulty of Literature and that lessons are often dry. As fellow students who have struggled through the difficulties of Literature and come out of the other side better off than some others, we want to share the “secrets” of success in Literature to juniors - skills. This resource was hence created after a survey and interview for needs analysis. A review was carried out which found a great need for such a resource, and refined through a pilot test and a feedback form for pilot test participants. Many participants found our resource to be better than the current system. The resource has been proven to be potentially successful and may be implemented in schools across Singapore as a hybrid between the current content based system and out skills based system.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Rationale**

Across our two years of studying Literature, we found that little people had true passion for Literature, nor did they truly understand the value and beauty in Literature, simply treating the subject as another grade to vault them to success, with students simply being fed answers. We also found that many were unable to do well in literature due to the flimsy foundations built by the current syllabus which immediately gives out content without giving students the basic understanding of how to utilise it, leading to large amounts of trial and error before students are able to succeed, and sometimes students fail to grasp the content. This resource hence aids such struggling students as well as ensures that solid foundations are built so that students can easily succeed, creating a passion for Literature.

## **1.2 Objectives**

There were three objectives to the resource we had produced: To make studying Literature and scoring in Literature easier for students learning Literature for the first time or for students who are weaker in Literature; To equip students with the skills they require to provide the content they need in order to succeed in Literature, instead of having teachers spoon-feed answers, and to ignite a passion for Literature within students that goes beyond examinations, but a true passion and understanding to learn further than the limited school curriculum can ever bring them to.

## **1.3 Target Audience**

Our target audience for this resource was Lower Secondary students taking Literature for the first time or students who are weak in Literature. This was because such students often need a slower pace of learning and a “back to basics” kind of learning environment as compared to a class deep diving straight into content, which is what the current system tends to do. This resource hence aided this target audience by providing the platform they required to make mistakes and learn in a low stakes environment, fostering trust and a willingness to open to mind and to express oneself without fear of backlash.

## **1.4 Resource Created**

The resource created was a lesson package consisting of lesson guides, worksheets, interactive quizzes and a mindmap, among others. The worksheets and lesson guides were written based on the findings of various studies on effective pedagogical methods, which will be discussed in Chapter 2. Videos were used as a visual stimulus for students, as well as to encourage note taking, with the rationale being discussed in Chapter 2.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Existing Resources**

Existing resources include various Literature help websites such as SparkNotes, CliffNotes and Shmoop, among many others. These websites are more focused on content and impart little to no skills, simply spoon-feeding content to students, hence they are unable to acquire content for themselves, making these resources unsustainable and not entirely effective in the context of getting students to understand Literature, rather than scoring for the sake of grades.

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) is a viable alternative to the above sites, providing skills such as literary devices, themes and theories, some of which we teach with our resource as well. However, the OWL is targeted at a more advanced audience, with basic skills often being glossed over quickly with little scaffolding. The OWL focuses on higher level content such as theories which are difficult to grasp for beginners, making it a less ideal resource to aid beginners taking their first step into Literature, which can result in disorientation and confusion, quickly killing off interest in Literature.

Lastly, the current Literature syllabus is our largest competitor. While it gets the job done and imparts the content students require to do fairly well in a Literature exam, what it fails to do is impart the skills for students to be able to acquire content, and more importantly, it cannot ignite a passion for Literature within students, as can be seen in our needs analysis which will be discussed in Chapter 3. Students feel no desire to carry on studying Literature after lower secondary, and those who do often find themselves struggling to cope with more advanced concepts, as in upper levels students are expected to use their own arguments instead of repeating the teacher's answers.

### **2.2 Creating Effective Lessons**

Group work has been seen to allow for effective learning. According to Chiriac (2014), majority of students reported that working in groups facilitated learning of collaborative skills and academic knowledge. Students reported that they learnt more in group work settings as compared to individual learning. However group work was also found to be less efficient than individual work.

Learning must be made visible to both students and teachers in order to maximise learning potential. According to Hattie (2009), in his book *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximising Impact on Learning*, learning must be made visible to students in that clear objectives, goals and rate of progress are clearly defined and seen throughout the lesson. He wrote that teachers had to see themselves as evaluators of their students' progress. He also found that effective learning depended upon four main portions of the lesson: Students' prior ability, the desired level at the end of the lesson, the rate of progress and lastly the teacher's collaboration with students to ensure optimised learning.

The most effective learning style for students, especially those in a top school such as HCI, is visual learning, referring to learning through the use of various media such as videos or pictures. This has been seen from Raihan and Shahidi's (2014) research done in a Malaysian top school. From their research, it was found that visual learning was the most effective style of learning for students, with students learning best from visual materials such as videos. Another finding was that the students enjoyed copying notes from the board.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Needs Analysis**

We carried out a survey surveying 59 students across many schools on their results in Literature in Secondary 1, whether they found the subject difficult to grasp and whether they were interested and an interview conducted with Mr Darrell Tan, an educator well

versed with the English Language and Literature. The results of the survey are shown below. The transcript of the interview with Mr Tan can be accessed in Appendix A.

On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being very easy and 10 being failing badly, how did you fare/are you faring in Literature in Sec 1?

59 responses

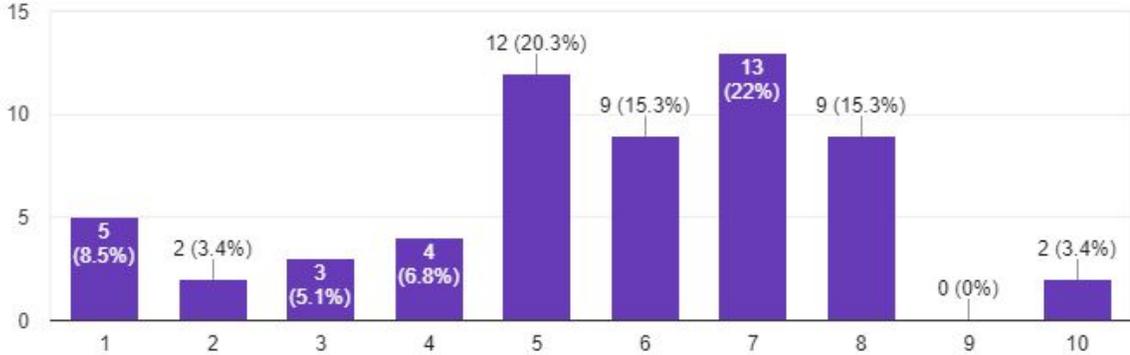


Fig. 3.1

What part of Literature do you find the most difficult?

Acquiring Content	29 (49.2%)
Analysing the text on the spot	36 (61%)
Organising your essay	32 (54.2%)
Figuring out themes	26 (44.1%)
Understanding language and Rhetoric	31 (52.5%)
None	2 (2.4%)

Fig. 3.2

Do you enjoy studying literature/appreciate literature?

59 responses

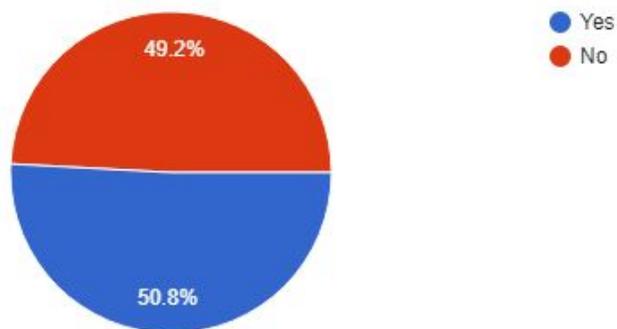
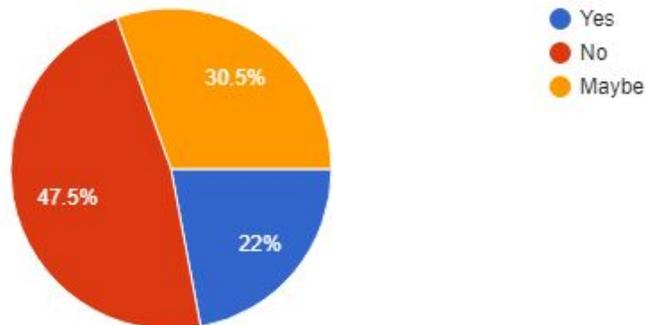


Fig 3.3

## Do you think that you would take Literature as a Humanities Subject in Secondary 3

59 responses



*Fig. 3.4*

As seen from the figures above, majority indicated that they felt that the subject was out of their depth, and were not interested in continuing to take Literature when they were given a choice, indicating either a lack of interest confidence in being able to succeed. It is hence clear that a resource needed to be developed to increase students' aptitude, confidence levels and interest in the subject.

From our interview with Mr Tan, it could be clearly seen that the current system was inadequate in helping students understand Literature. We discerned some needs that current system lacked in and aimed to serve these needs through our resource.

### **3.2 Construction of Resource**

The resource was constructed with pedagogical methods proven to be effective kept in mind, as well as suggestions from teachers on the ground, so that majority of students could benefit from our resource. Our resource was designed to fill in the gaps identified by the needs analysis and the gaps left by current existing resources as seen above.

We made our worksheets with the help of online resources, and questions were crafted on our own and vetted by our mentor. The pilot test was marked ourselves, with open ended questions marked out of 10 marks, based on our understanding of how Literature would be marked in a normal assessment.

### **3.3 Pilot Test**

A pilot test was carried out with a class of 25 students for a duration of 1 hour. The pilot test was carried out in the form of a lesson. Two concepts were taught - diction and literary devices. Diction was a topic that the class had never learnt before, and thus its purpose would be to ascertain the effectiveness of our resource in teaching a completely new skill. Literary devices had been covered beforehand, and we recapped it with them to allow them to compare our resource with the old system and help us ascertain that our resource is an improvement over the old system. The learning materials used were a worksheet, and the videos we had produced for the two topics. Feedback was obtained; the first being verbal feedback from our mentor, the second, verbal feedback from a few participants, and the third, a feedback form for participants. We also used the students' performance while doing the worksheet as a gauge of how well our resource managed to convey the concepts to them. The results of the survey can be accessed in Appendix B.

## **Chapter 4: Outcome and Discussion**

### **4.1 Outcome**

In the pilot test, our resource received mostly positive feedback. We worked to eliminate the problems pointed out by the pilot testers. We removed the watermark by using a separate software, and ensured that the worksheet was formatted in such a way that was easy to use. By recommendation of some pilot testers, we decided to include a Kahoot quiz which many reported that they would want to see.

The worksheets were fairly well done. The results of the worksheet showed that our resource was effective in allowing us to achieve the desired results of students learning skills. However, open-ended questions were mostly poorly done, with only a few outstanding answers. This may have been due to the fact that the students had not yet learnt to write essays at the point of time when we did the pilot test. The questions assessing skills however were fairly well done, showing that our resource is overall effective in its desired purpose.

#### **4.2 Limitations**

While our resource is targeted on skills, some students may find trouble in applying it to the text they are using, although we try to bridge this gap as much as possible using the scaffolding we create for them through our notes and worksheets. Some may also find the methods used ineffective due to different learning styles, as while our resource caters to a majority of learning styles in the context of Hwa Chong, it is impossible to cater to every learning style while still allowing the teacher uniformity and control over the class.

#### **4.3 Possible Further Work**

We can look into the possibility of a board game being created as a tool for further consolidation. A continuation of this resource for more advanced skills can also be created to aid upper secondary and even junior college students in Literature. Collaborations with Hwa Chong's English and Literature Department can be made, and if proven successful, tie-ups with the Ministry of Education can be attempted as well to get the resource out on a national scale to create a generation passionate about Literature and armed with the knowledge to fuel and grow their passion. Through the improved grades that students can achieve through our resource, there is a higher chance for students to generate interest in Literature after tasting success, giving them motivation to go further beyond mere grades. Our resource can also be transformed into

an online learning package or self-study package so that students can learn at their own time and pace.

### **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

This project has allowed us to grow in our collaborative and time management skills. Between CCA commitments and studying, we had little time to meet up and make content. We hence had to manage our time carefully in order to ensure that we were able to finish our content in time. We also needed to collaborate efficiently in order to ensure we maximize our time so that we could finish our content while ensuring it was of high quality. We also had to iron out disagreements between ourselves quickly to ensure work got done with everyone happy with it. All these problems helped us to grow not only as students in our knowledge, but in our values and skills as well.

### **Chapter 6: Acknowledgements**

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Every student who did our needs analysis survey, for helping us ascertain the need for our resource.

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## **Appendix A**

**Lower Secondary students are often seen struggling Literature. What do you think can be done to help them?**

I think the first reason (as to) why Lower Secondary students struggle in Lit, is because many students come into the subject feeling like its very foreign, and there are terminologies that they don't understand, and sometimes looking at poems or even novels from a perspective that they feel they cannot get right because only the teacher has the right answer. But on the contrary Lit is a subject that ought to be something that is accessible to every student because there's no one way to read a text, there's no one way to read a poem. The first way is to empower the student to see that, Lower Secondary students especially, the power to see that their perspective is valid to begin with. I mean, there are many different ways to read a text, and there are better ways to perceive a text sometimes, but I think at the very start, many Lower Sec students feel quite discouraged because when they do try to apply their interpretation to a text it is often said to be wrong, and I think the first step is empowering them to see that there's this relevance in their interpretation. I think the second thing is the idea of making the subject relevant to them. Of course, the school can go straight into covering terminology and the technicals, but Literature is really about appreciation first and foremost, and I think that teachers tend to bypass that process. It is important for Lower Sec students to

learn to appreciate and enjoy the text before even starting to cut it up. The essence of Lit is about appreciating the text, and feeling how it takes on human sensation and a bodily form. It really isn't going straight into the text because it is not really something that's very organic. I liken Lit to a human being - you can't go in to understand a human being in a very technical sense. You need to communicate with Lit like how you communicate with a person, you got to feel a person, just like the whole idea of feeling a subject, feeling the text or a poem. I think that's very important, and I think that isn't done enough. It's made to be perceived as a subject that's really technical and dry, but really I think the problem is the starting point. I think the technicals can follow after a Lower Sec students have gotten acquainted with the subject and perhaps found out a little more relevant maybe by doing some pieces of local Lit, or maybe allowing them to write and express their interpretations but the whole relevance and accessibility issue needs to be tackled first before we even move into the technicals. To really make it more relevant, I think that the best way is to get them talking about it, empowering them by lending weight to their interpretations, allowing them to ask themselves how they feel when they read a text. It doesn't need to start off with a right and wrong, and I think problematically it often starts that way.

### **How do you think that appreciation for Literature can be fostered in students?**

I think there needs to be a platform where students...? Students cannot go into a text and immediately say 'oh, what does it mean', because when you read novels and poems they sometimes do appear to be a bit ambiguous but sometimes I think that everyone can definitely feel a poem like how do I feel when I read it, you know. (We have to ask questions like) "How does the poem make me feel" "What words stand out to me" "What do I think that this poem is talking about" I don't think that there's a right and wrong answer to these questions. There is a right and wrong answer if you ask what is the interpretation of this poem but sometimes I tell my students sometime, unless I meet the poet I wouldn't know. What makes a teacher know that they've gotten an interpretation entirely correct? A student, if they are able to substantiate what they

say, are able to get it as right as the teacher gets it, probably from a different perspective as well, and that is why there are so many controversies concerning poems on the internet. Many people are arguing over what a poem means. So my point is that from the very start open ended questions like “How do you feel when you read the poem” “What are some words that stand out to you” “What are the images that you see when you close your eyes and have the poem read to you”. Because the interesting thing is that a poem is meant to be heard, and sometimes the first thing a students is made to do is stare at a poem line by line and cut it up, but a poem is meant to be read out in the head and through the ears, and it is supposed to take a living form. In fact some words in a poem are meant to be heard in order for it to achieve its effect. For the imageries, the metaphors to come alive a student has to just pause a little while and close his eyes and imagine what's going on, but these platforms, these open ended questions, I think they're a good start. I think one of the beautiful ways of starting poetry or even literature is bringing students into a relevant settings. I remember how I used to bring students to a lake, the old secondary school I taught at had a lake, and we sat by the lake and read poems that had to do with water. I thought that the atmosphere played a major role. Sometimes Literature when studied in the setting of a classroom is quite restrictive in terms of the students' imagination as well. Bringing them out of the classroom into a different setting altogether changes the entire vibe. I think these are little things that are very achievable by every teacher, you don't need to be a teacher who has to come up with special games for Lit but I think allowing students the space to speak their minds in a safe space, I think the whole idea is creating that safe space. After a while students come into Literature, not just Literature but many other subjects as well feeling like even though they have an opinion they can't speak up. And I think creating that safe space is important. Even though as a teacher I do not agree with what the student is saying, I don't necessarily have to first and foremost put him or her down. I think that creating a safe space, and I think posing some open ended questions, those that don't come with right or wrong answers, and then of course creating a suitable ambience or atmosphere for the poem I think these are a good first few steps to helping

students appreciate Lit,.

**Worksheets have been said to be dry and uninteresting for students. What do you think are more interesting and effective ways for students to practice their skills in a classroom settings, seeing that some schools don't have facilities like lakes?**

As a mentioned earlier I think that Lit is a very multi sensory subject. So worksheets are just a platform I wouldn't draw the conclusion that first and foremost worksheets are boring. Worksheets are facilitation tools. If worksheets have questions that are really good they can facilitate vibrant and active discussion as well. I wouldn't come to the conclusion that worksheets are boring, worksheets are just a platform. Because it is such a multi sensory subject I suggest that the other alternative is engaging the senses. If the poem is a very auditory kind of poem then accessible from the internet are different sounds in order to create the right audio settings for the poems. Students can themselves create the right sounds for a poem . It's very interesting. I read something on the internet that in the West there are things called poetry slams, and I think the spoken word is getting quite popular in Singapore as well. The power of the spoken word is that students are able to bring the poem to life through reading it in the way that he or she interprets it. And that comes from looking for different objects that represents the right words, that's a very exciting activity because you are giving your interpretation to the poem. By reproducing or producing a performance of the poem will perhaps bring alive the poem. Because it's so visual and metaphorical students don't have to be great artists to draw out the imageries. What I've done before is given students poems and asked students to find pictures on the internet that they feel are so compatible with the poem. Because eventually when you look at poems or even novels it's a feast for the eyes, but all students get when they look at worksheets are words. It's so ironic when poems and novels are a feast for the eyes, for the senses and even for the emotions, students are still staring at just words, and I don't think it does the piece of work justice. There are alternatives to allowing students to draw what they feel about the poem, to find images on the net to bring the words to life, almost a little bit like a photojournalism

journey, to be able to find sounds. I think there has to be interaction in the class when it comes to Lit. I do always feel that it is insufficient to just have a written exam for Lit. What doctors have is they have assessments where they are posed oral questions for what the diagnosis or illness is. I think it should be that way. The grading always guides the learning because the grading is written and everything in class is written but if there is alternative assessment the whole process will be different as well so I suggest that first and foremost the assessment be changed to a teacher and four students and the students are supposed to have a little discussion, an impromptu discussion on a poem or prose or chapter on a novel, and they be graded on their response with the same band descriptors as oral examinations. I think it will present a very interesting dimension to all of this because it is all about perspective, and it's about responding to different perspectives as well. If you give students a written (assessment) for Lit all they see is their perspective, but if you give you give a opportunity where they can exchange in some sort of a crossfire, they can listen to other people's perspectives and give their response, which can change the dynamics of lessons, because in order to prepare for exams teachers have to ensure more interactions occur in class rather than just writing the right answers. I think it's good for students to present their findings in front of the class, and I think that's very important because it's not really about writing key words and allowing the teacher to say I agree with it but I think students need to learn how to present their findings in front of an audience. I think that will emphasise that Lit is alive because it is pieces of writing or text or content that attempts to elicit a response but when students are standing in front of an audience trying to elicit a response or persuading them to accept a particular viewpoint, that in itself is Lit coming alive. So I think these are viable alternatives to pen and paper or worksheet based learning in the classroom

Do you think that the current system is sufficient for students to understand Lit?

I think that it is insufficient. I would like to believe that there is no optimal state of being for the teaching of a subject. As teachers I think there should be a constant search for

how more can be done. But I don't really get the question, whether right now the syllabus in schools is acceptable for the subject. I don't believe enough is done. I don't believe young, creative, groundbreaking ideas happens. I don't think that in certain schools the person with the highest qualifications will have a more substantial view on how Lit should be conducted. Sometimes that's a HOD of 50, 60 years old thinking that how Lit has been taught the last 30 years is the way it should be taught. And that's how it is isn't it, the majority of teachers teaching Lit in Singapore, they are 40, 50 years old, thinking that that's all there is to teaching Lit. I believe that although experience is important we need alternative and creative ideas to come from the young. I see brilliant ideas from my team of trainee teachers, from my mentees, and I don't undermine them.. They'll have ideas and I'll say "let's try it" because the whole point of Lit is to try, isn't it. But these young Lit teachers often have their ideas hit down, and you don't have creative ideas in the classroom. I think many teachers are change adverse and don't want change because that's a whole new kind of lesson. I don't want to paint a dystopian picture, but if there's anything that should change, it is our resistance to change. Especially Lit is such a dynamic subject, we cannot afford to be resistant to change. So when we think of new ideas - the whole internet is filled with ideas on how to execute Lit lessons interestingly - let's not think that we have the best idea in our minds. I think it's ok to implement something that we read online, it's ok to implement something that young teacher says. At the same time, i think that the foundations are not well built. Sometimes overseas Lit remains a very woolly subject. It's very fluffy, it's about emotions and ideas. What I feel is different about Singapore Lit is we don't have our foundations right. We have very posh materials. We have good literary devices and substance when it comes to interpreting a novel or poem. We have great minds, but the tools that allow us the freedom to interpret are on the contrary lacking. What i appreciate about Singapore is that we have very strong foundations for Lit. I think it's important to recognise the foundations that have been laid for us, and I feel that we should appreciate the foundations, but when it comes to the space for students to freely express themselves I think Singapore has to work on that aspect. I think we have good

material, but what's the point of having good material if students are not engaged? What are they learning? If food is not attractive enough to be eaten, no matter how hungry someone is, if the food does not look good enough to be eaten no matter how good it is it will not be eaten. I think that we need to get our first phase of engagement right. We cannot be killing off interest before getting to the real stuff. We need to harness and cultivate it before giving them a key understanding and string grasp of the subject.

## Appendix B

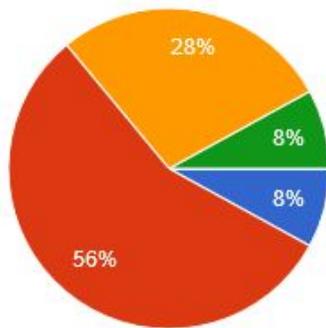
Worksheet Results - highest to lowest

Mark	Percentage (%)
40	88.89
37	82.22
36	80.00
33.5	74.44
33.5	74.44
32.5	72.22
32	71.11
31.5	70.00
31.5	70.00
31	68.89
31	68.89
31	68.89
30.5	67.78
30.5	67.78
30.5	67.78

30.5	67.78
30	66.67
30	66.67
29	64.44
29	64.44
28.5	63.33
26.5	58.89
26	57.78
24.5	54.44
18	40.00

### I enjoyed the pilot test

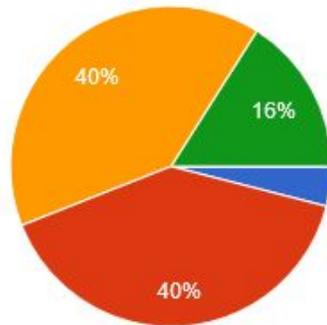
25 responses



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

## The videos were interesting

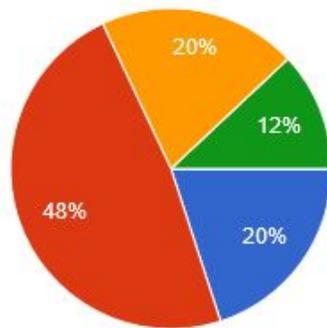
25 responses



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

## The videos were effective in teaching the concepts

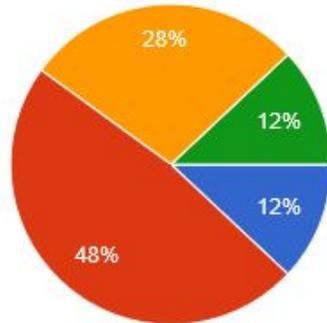
25 responses



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

## The worksheets were interesting

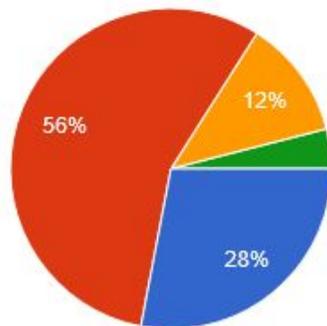
25 responses



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

## The worksheet was effective in teaching the concepts

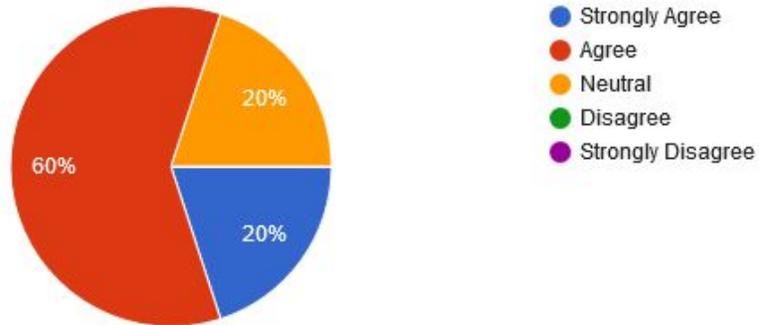
25 responses



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

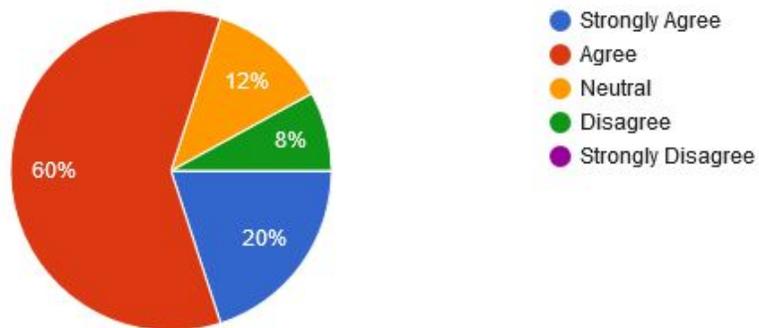
### The lesson met its objectives (taught you diction and literary devices)

25 responses



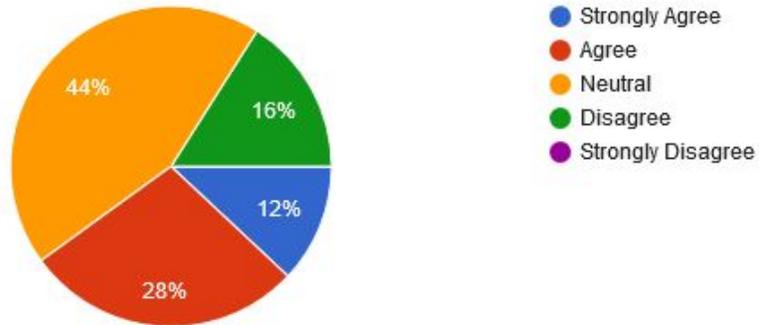
### The package is useful to me

25 responses



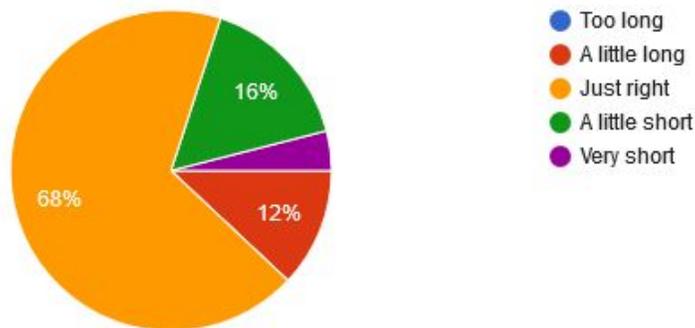
I prefer this way of learning to the current way Literature is being taught.

25 responses



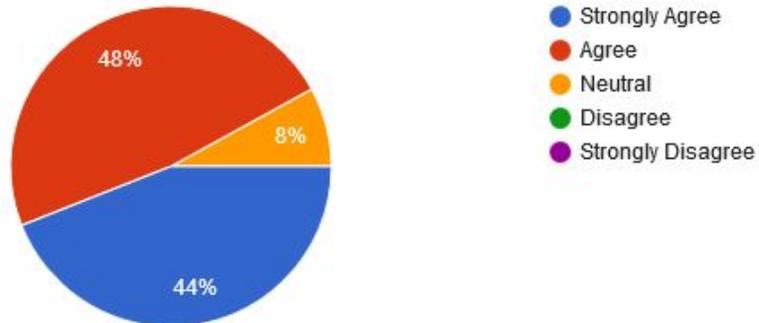
The lesson time was

25 responses



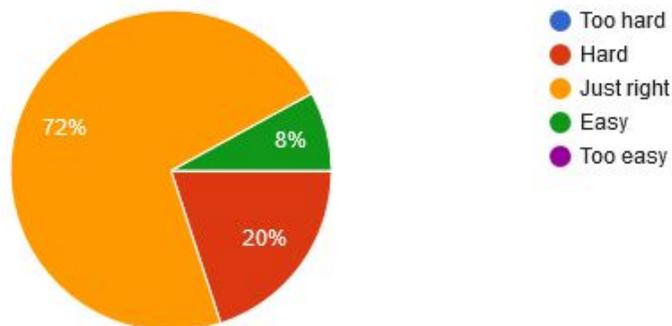
## I feel that a game will be an effective method of learning literature

25 responses



## The difficulty of the exercises was

25 responses



How does our resource compare to the current methods of teaching?

1. It's more engaging in a sense
2. It is more visual as we get to watch a video
3. Nil
4. the resource still requires a teacher to further explain i feel
5. It allows students to apply what they have learnt immediately after they learn it.

6. Nil
7. Its about the same. To be honest, i couldn't really see much of a difference.
8. The example texts are very interesting to read
9. It is more easier to understand.
10. Less boring
11. More interesting and fun to do
12. More fun
13. It's more interactive as there are videos
14. Better
15. NIL
16. It feels the same
17. It has a different approach
18. the resource gives a simpler form teaching
19. It splits up different parts of lit.
20. Slight edge to current teaching as of now, but I think you're method can be more effective if properly optimised.
21. It's ok I feel that a teacher teaches better although your lesson is more efficient and faster
22. It's slightly more enjoyable.
23. The jump between difficulties is way too large. The second one is easy peasy then the third one is confusing
24. This is an easier way to learn about literary devices as we can refer to the video easily if we do not understand or if we don't know how to do the questions
25. Currently, the method of teaching literature is mainly by doing group work and presenting to the class from a particular book, where the class would learn from the groups strengths and weaknesses. Your resource relies on notes on diction, tone, etc. Where you would learn from your own weaknesses and try to improve.

What can be improved about the lesson?

1. Nil
2. A different website can be used to make the video as the watermark covers some things
3. Nil
4. the videos have more explanation and less boring
5. It could be made more engaging
6. The handwriting in the video is a bit illegible; and the words written on the board in the video were a bit useless, a powerpoint presentation/some other software would have easily been much better. I noticed in this survey that you placed a lot of emphasis on interest. But honestly, who will find learning literature engaging? (aha! I learnt something from your worksheet!) Maybe something like a Kahoot quiz will stir up more interest amongst students.
7. Make it unique
8. More interesting texts in the papers, and more videos.
9. There can be more explanations so that we can understand better.
10. More exercises
11. One more exercise for each section e.g. One more section for diction
12. Clearer pronunciation for video.
13. The worksheets are a bit dry.
14. More explanations
15. The videos were too muffled so improve the audio quality
16. The video
17. Make to video less draggy.
18. Have a video that is shorter and more HD.
19. The videos can be improved. Eg the handwriting.

20. Potentially increasing difficulty, add more questions.
21. The audio is very muffled and the handwriting might be too messy to read you could use stop motion work instead so I can't see the hand.
22. It can be made to be more fun.
23. The watermark. Please. The watermark needs to either be removed or worked around with
24. I feel that the 3rd section of each lesson was a little time consuming.
25. Your lesson was rather interesting. I would say that I would not really find much to fault about this lesson.

Any other feedback?

1. Get rid of the filmora watermark, you can use adobe after effects. Vet your videos and worksheets, question 4 of this survey is wrong.
2. Use a different video editor (such as iMovie) or get the premium version of Filmora.
3. Very good idea and I believe it would be a success.