

Reception of Selected Texts with the Theme of Shoah by Students of the Lower Secondary School

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Abstract

The paper presents the rate of reception and interpretation of selected texts on the topic of Shoah by pupils of the lower secondary school in one region of the Czech Republic. The level of reception and interpretation was monitored through a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire contains excerpts from three artistic narratives, in which one line of events of World War II is thematized, and a section in which we follow the basic demographic data on respondents to the research (gender, year that respondents attend, etc.). The research is part of the verification phase, which serves to verify the selection of selected intentional texts on the topic of the Shoah, which we intend to integrate into the monothematic anthology of the Shoah texts, which are intended for all grades of lower secondary schools. For this purpose, the questionnaires differ in the level of the samples included – other samples are intended for respondents from different grades, due to the fact that the reception requirements and the interpretation of texts depend on the receptive and cognitive abilities of pupils in individual grades.

Keywords: Shoah, reception, interpretation, lower secondary school, monothematic set of Shoah texts.

1. Introduction

The paper deals with the presentation of partial results of the research, which focuses on the verification of the anthology of texts with the theme of the Shoah for pupils of the lower-secondary schools. The research is part of a project whose main goal is to compile and verify a monothematic set of texts on the topic of the Shoah designed for all grades of the lower-secondary institutional education in the Czech Republic.

In order to compile and verify the monothematic reading-book, we are guided primarily by the increasing topicality of the Shoah phenomenon in contemporary society¹:

¹ Abrams in the article *Elie Wiesel – Nobel Lecture (1997)* says the Shoah can be seen as a warning to “who is ‘different’ – whether black or white, Jew or Arab, Christian or Moslem – everyone whose orientation differs politically, philosophically, sexually“. Compare: “Jeff Jacoby, editor of the American newspaper Boston Globe, says that this phenomenon can now be seen as a warning against human rights and freedoms, xenophobia and racism, media control by one party, an individual or group of people with shared private interests, or intolerance and prejudice” (Jacoby, 2016 in Mašát, 2017: 69).

increasing rates of intolerance, racism, xenophobia, intolerance and anti-Semitism², as well as the lack of integration of Shoah-related texts into reading-books that currently have a clause³ of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic⁴. The relevance of the Shoah issue in the 21st century is underlined by the recent adoption by the *Parliament of the Czech Republic*⁵ of a provision based on the definition of anti-Semitism by the *International Alliance for Holocaust Remembrance*⁶: “We, deputies of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, in connection with the commemoration of the Holocaust Remembrance Day⁷ and the prevention of crimes against humanity, accept this legally non-binding working definition of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism is a kind of perception of Jews that can be described as hatred of Jews. Verbal and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed against Jewish and non-Jewish persons or their property, against institutions and worship places of Jewish communities⁸” (Mašát, 2019a; 2019b; 2019c; Mašát & Sladová, 2019; Mašát & Šmakalová, 2019).

- Literary texts are a suitable means of presenting the Shoah theme.
- Respondents from the eighth year of the lower-secondary school lack the factual knowledge of the Second World War, which leads to a deeper understanding and interpretation of selected Shoah demonstrations.
- Respondents most liked the excerpt from the publication *As long as Tears (Zolang er nog tranen zijn)*.
- Publication *A Girl from another World* is suitable for inclusion in the teaching of literary education at the lower-secondary school, especially by a simple narrative, which has considerable potential for developing various themes from the period of one line of the Second World War.
- In line with current trends in the field of didactics of literature, it is possible to extract from the publication *A girl from another world* for example, to work with the title of the sample (before the text) or to apply the characteristics of the main characters, to explain the historical-social narrative aspects, or to draw the selected main characters (cross-curricular relationship with art education).

² The term anti-Semitism “put into use a circle of Berlin journalists, headed by Wilhelm Marr, in the summer of 1879. The term quickly expanded to include in the vocabulary of fighters against the alleged Jewish power to which (not for the first and last time!) and cultural areas. The newly invented term signaled the break-up of modern hatred with traditional religious forms of anti-Jewish hatred and persecution. At the same time, the neologism (...) enveloped who was the object of hate” (Kryl et al., 2011: 43).

³ Most elementary schools that use reading-books in their classes use teaching aids that contain a so-called clause. To some extent, this clause guarantees the technical and linguistic correctness of the teaching aid, and the costs that educational institutions have with their acquisition are borne by the state: therefore, schools are not normally required to use only the teaching aid containing the clause. Forced to pay the costs from their own budget, or pupils and students (or their parents) must pay them themselves.

⁴ See <http://www.msmt.cz/>.

⁵ See <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/hp.sqw?akk=7>.

⁶ “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities” (IHRA, 2016). Adopted by as part of a conference held in Budapest in 2015.

See https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press_release_document_antisemitism.pdf.

⁷ Always 27 January. See: “The last twenty years have seen a paradigm shift in national memories, placing an unparalleled emphasis on the Holocaust and on the Jewish plight throughout the continent. Single national narratives started changing and, overall, it seems that Europe has acknowledged the Jewish tragedy as a key event in the fashioning of its history: the date of the 27th of January, which commemorates the opening of the gates of Auschwitz by the Soviet army, is one of the very few – if not possibly the only – common commemorative ritual shared by the countries of the European Union” (Brazzo & Schwarz, 2010: 6).

⁸ See <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/cms.sqw?z=12305>.

The increase in anti-Jewish sentiment in European society can be demonstrated by research *Anti-Semitic Violence in Europe, 2005–2015. Exposure and Perpetrators in France, UK, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Russia* (Due Enstad, 2017), which investigated the development of anti-Jewish sentiment in seven selected European countries (France, Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Russia)⁹. A total of 16 500 respondents took part in the survey and defined themselves as Jews. A total of 85 % of respondents stated that they perceived the rise of anti-Semitism as a serious problem (Mašát, 2019a; 2019b; 2019c; Mašát & Sladová, 2019; Mašát & Šmakalová, 2019).

2. Terminological anchoring

Mémorial de la Shoah (2017, p. not specified) on the website states that “Shoah is the Hebrew word for ‘catastrophe’. This term specifically means the killing of nearly 6 million Jews in Europe by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during the Second World War. The English-speaking countries more commonly use the word Holocaust, which is Greek for ‘sacrifice by fire’”.

Leonard Grech (2000: 8) has a suitable term for the Holocaust based on the delimitation defined at the conference *Teaching about the Holocaust* (1-6 April 2000): “Holocaust, which is derived from ‘holos’ meaning ‘whole’ and ‘kautos’ meaning ‘burnt’. Holocaust means large scale destruction especially by fire. Usually the term is used to refer to the extermination of Jewish communities by the Nazi regime. Sometimes the Hebrew word ‘Shoah’ is used instead. There are those, however, who prefer to give a wider meaning to the term ‘Holocaust’, referring not only to the extermination of six million Jews, but also to many other groups including Gypsies, homosexuals, handicapped persons, Jehovah’s Witnesses as well as others killed by the Nazis”.

In the contribution, **the term Shoah means one line of war events experienced as followers of Judaism or of persons of Jewish nationality** (Mašát, 2019a; 2019b; 2019c; Mašát & Sladová, 2019; Mašát & Šmakalová, 2019).

*United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*¹⁰ summarizes the positives brought to students by the presentation of the Shoah issue (Mašát, 2019b, Mašát & Sladová, 2019; Mašát & Šmakalová, 2019):

- 1) “democratic institutions and values are not automatically sustained, but need to be appreciated, nurtured, and protected”;
- 2) “silence and indifference to the suffering of others, or to the infringement of civil rights in any societies, can-however unintentionally-perpetuate these problems”;
- 3) “the Holocaust was not an accident in history; it occurred because individuals, organizations, and governments made choices that not only legalized discrimination but also allowed prejudice, hatred, and ultimately mass murder to occur”;
- 4) “the Holocaust was a watershed event, not only in the 20th century but also in the entire course of human history”.

The reasons for presenting a defined phenomenon to pupils and students are given by Moisan, Hirsch and Audet (2015: 250): “Reason given for teaching the Holocaust is to educate students about ‘good’ citizenship (...). One of the preferred ways to develop positive moral values is to make links between the Holocaust and current examples of racism and discrimination”.

⁹ See https://www.hlsenteret.no/aktuelt/publikasjoner/digitale-hefter/antisemittisk-vold-i-europa_engelsk_endelig-versjon.pdf.

¹⁰ See <https://www.ushmm.org/>.

3. Literary texts and the topic of the Shoah

We are of the opinion that literary texts are a suitable means of presenting the issue of Shoah to students at all levels of institutional education. In artistic narratives, both positive and negative patterns of behavior are presented to recipients. It is important that the art literature that pupils and students are acquainted with is primarily intentional. We assume that this area of literature is adapted to the specific age of its readers, and therefore the impact of reading in the field of acquiring axiological values or behavioral patterns may be greater by reading literature for children and young people. According to Jordan (2004: 199-200) is literature “one of the best pedagogical tools for educating youngsters about the facts of the Holocaust, for conveying the importance of remembering what happened without explicitly divulging emotionally disturbing information”. The thesis is supplemented by Oliveira (2017: 1164): “Literature is a way of postulating reality, of inventing possible other modes of thinking and inhabiting the world”.

Corresponding to the above statements, Gejgušová’s assertion (2011: 14-15, marked by the authors of the paper) that “reading artistic texts fulfills several functions, in particular:

- **instrumental function** – the text is a source of information, knowledge, stimuli usable even in common situations;
- **confirmatory function** – fulfills texts that are consistent with the reader's values, opinions and opinions, evoke positive feelings and reinforce his/her attitudes;
- **aesthetic function** – based on the artistic essence of a literary text, its multi-meaning, its content and formal qualities; prestigious function – by reading a specific literary work (a certain author, genre), the individual identifies with a social group and perceives their belonging positively on the basis of the same opinion on the quality of the literary work;
- **relaxation function** – reading is perceived as enriching leisure time, space for relaxation, or escape from normal reality”.

Through artistic narratives, pupils can develop their imagination, artistic narration has the potential to present historical facts because “the reality of the Holocaust is the only reason its literature exists, language arts teachers must allow history to drive any literature based-study of the event” (Lindquist, 2008: 29).

4. The Theme of Shoah in Czech literary reading-books for lower-secondary schools

Literary reading-books represent both the content and methods of literary education (Hník, 2017: 44). Dorovská (1989: 21) on the integration of reading-books into teaching in the historical context of Czech institutional education states: “Traditionally, the basic means in teaching reading-books. Before the establishment of the single school, there were many methodologically different reading-books (...). Their selection and use in individual schools depended on the decision of the local education authorities or on which of the methods of teaching reading-books were applied at the school (...). Practically until the beginning of the 20th century, school reading-books were attributed instrumental functions (...) and functions of educational elementary polythematic textbooks (canon of contemporary ethical and educational standards and requirements for general education of the widest sections of the population)”.

The integration of the reading-books into the Czech educational process has been accompanied by many debates. Many experts believe that reading-books should be an integral

part of institutional education, but only to a limited extent: for example, Jan Mukařovský¹¹ believed reading-books should not be part of the educational process from and including sexta.

Ondřej Hník (2017: 46-52; compare Fibiger, 2006: 126-131) defines the basic issues in currently used reading-books:

- “a number of questions concerning the non-literary aspect of the text”;
- “questions concerning literary history or history”;
- “conceptual teaching in a considerable amount”;
- “marginalizing some aspect of a literary work and vice versa”;
- “submitting individual and sub-questions rather than tasks requiring a wider range of competences”;
- “little creative questions and tasks; awarding type-poor activities; low confidence in pupils and students in the formulation of tasks”;
- “posting tasks to activities after reading; strict and interpretive questions”;
- “low motivational power of questions and tasks; asking more closed than open questions”.

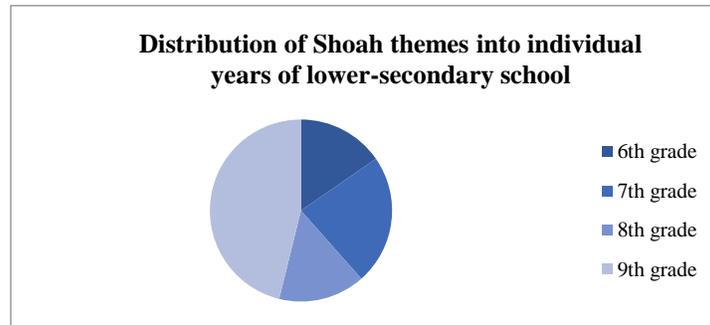
We believe that the topic of the Shoah has the potential to appeal to a child reader. It offers tension, drama, but also insight into the inner experience of sufferers, provides insight into the Shoah from both children and adults, portrays the perception of the time persecuted and persecuted.

Even though the theoretical prerequisites for the implementation of the defined themes in literary education are considerable, they appear sporadically in literary reading-books for the lower-secondary schools. While the textbooks contain the theme of World War II, we must distinguish between themes focused on World War II in general and the Shoah. The artistically elaborated issue of World War II in its entirety is another phenomenon. This reduces the representation of the Shoah phenomenon in the reading-books analyzed.

¹¹ “Jan Mukařovský was a high school teacher until he was thirty-eight. In 1915 he received a Czech and a French qualification for higher real schools at the Prague Philosophical Faculty. In 1919 he left the Roman Catholic Church and his first teaching post and became a professor at the girls' reform real grammar school in Pilsen. It was accepted by the director Alois Mesány, who became Mukařovský's father-in-law the following year. In the early twenties Mukařovský began to develop his scientific career. At the end of 1922 he was awarded a doctorate and the following year he published his dissertation *Příspěvek k estetice českého verše* (*Contribution to the Aesthetics of the Czech Verse*). His scientific activities led him to Prague, where in September 1925 he joined a real grammar school in Truhlářská Street. He became a colleague of Bohuslav Havránek, who, however, for scientific reasons had a reduced teaching time. From the following school year, Mukařovský also received this privilege. In 1928 Mukařovský transferred to the lower-secondary school in Smíchov and applied for an associate professorship in aesthetics; he presented his book Máchův *Máj* (*May*) as a habilitation thesis to a committee composed of professors, Nejedlý and Weingart. He became an associate professor the following year and from the school year 1930/31 he took a permanent leave at lower-secondary school, which was renewed annually. From spring 1931 he lectured at Charles University and from autumn 1932 also at Comenius University. His lectures were honored, but considering that until mid-1934, when he became associate professor of the Faculty of Arts in Bratislava, his salary was debited by the lower-secondary school account. In fact, Jan Mukařovský was a lower-secondary school teacher for fifteen years. However, his lower-secondary school activity was not limited to teaching, classifying and running a 'pupil' library. Mukařovský also reviewed lower-secondary school textbooks, participated in the development of new curricula and educational books, and in several articles dealt with lower-secondary school teaching of Czech Language and Literature” (Podhajský, 2009: 97-98).

We analyzed literary reading-books for the lower-secondary schools, which in 2017 had a clause of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic¹².

As can be seen from the graphical representation (Graph 1), the subject of the Shoah is unevenly distributed into literary reading-books for the sixth to ninth grades of lower-secondary schools.



Graph 1. Distribution of Shoah-themes samples into individual grades of lower-secondary schools

“Our analysis shows that the topic of the Shoah is not well represented in the reading-books. Possible causes can be seen in the curriculum not anchoring this topic in *FEP BE*¹³ or by dispersing the Shoah texts in all grades of lower-secondary schools. The distribution of the Shoah shows can be considered as the reason why the Shoah is not (in most cases) interpreted as a distinctive, self-standing phenomenon, but is mostly included in the field of literary texts from World War II as a whole. In our opinion, this fact takes away the Shoah of significance, and this issue is a ‘mere’ – albeit an integral – part of that historical period.

Almost all the Shoah themes are non-intentional. There are several reasons for this. The authors of the reading-books include in their textbooks works originally intended for the adult reader, which are verified in the literary-historical field. This is closely related to the fact that many of the Shoah-related works intended for a child reader were created after 1989, so it can be assumed that the reading-books do not fully trust these publications; consideration should be given to changing this approach: as long as this line of reading texts is maintained, works a priori intended for children will never be included in the teaching aids, or very sporadically. We do not want to say that the selection of samples is completely unsatisfactory, however, we believe that these – in most cases known – works can be supplemented by fiction for children and young people, thus preventing certain content ‘obsolescence’ of reading-books” (Mašát, 2017: 72-73).

The outlined situation in the field of (non)integration of Shoah themes into Czech literary reading-books for the lower-secondary schools, which in 2017 had a clause of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic motivated us to compile a monothematic collection of Shoah themes-samples for lower-secondary schools pupils. In this paper, we present partial results of a research that was undertaken to verify selected intentional Shoah texts that we intend to implement in monothematic Shoah anthology. We are guided to the given procedure – i.e. to a certain pre-selection of samples, their subsequent verification and to verification of questions and tasks postulated for individual excerpts – especially by the effort to integrate as much as possible into pedagogical practice, i.e. practically applicable.

¹² The list of reading-books is available on the website of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports: <http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/zakladni-vzdelavani/opatreni-ministryne-skolstvi-mladeze-a-telovychovy-kterym-se-1-1>.

¹³ Compare: Jeřábek et al., 2017.

5. Research methodology

In order to verify a monothematic set of texts on the Shoah theme, one complete¹⁴ elementary school in the Vysočina Region was approached¹⁵. The advantage of the institution is that all grades of the second grade are taught by the same teacher in the Czech Language and Literature, i.e. at least partially identical starting position of the respondents (lower-secondary pupils), is ensured. At the same time, to some extent, a similar form of lesson management and a similar hourly grant to the individual components of the given field of study (style and communication education, literary education and language – grammar – component) are provided. In our opinion, these aspects, which were one of the key aspects for the selection of the school, be guaranteeing the identical starting position of the respondents of the research in the area of possible influencing of the results by the educational institution. Of course, we realize that the researchers did not really have an identical starting position, for example due to different social backgrounds, different levels of cognitive, reading and life experiences, or due to different personal approach to literature as such. We believe that it is not the researcher's ability to identify, define and name these "external" circumstances affecting the results of the investigation.

A school from the Vysočina Region was approached because there is no university in the region focusing on the education of future teachers. Based on this fact, we assumed greater willingness on the part of the management of the elementary school addressed by us to participate in the research. Our assumption has come true.

The main research tool was a questionnaire consisting of three samples on the topic of the Shoah, which we decided to implement into a monothematic set of texts on the theme of one line of events of World War II. The snippets were equipped with questions and tasks related to the narrative. Questions and tasks are postulated in the light of the knowledge of contemporary professional didactics of literature. The main objective of the questionnaire survey was to verify the appropriateness of the year differentiation of individual samples: selected Shoah-snippets differed for respondents from individual years based on the expected delimitation in the reading-books and verification of postulated questions and tasks, especially in terms of their cognitive and time demands.

The research's main tool was a non-standardized questionnaire consisting of three excerpts from books about the Shoah: (1) *Somewhere there is still a Sun* (2017, Michael Gruenbaum & Todd Hasak-Löwy), (2) *A Girl from another World* (2014, Aharon Appelfeld), and (3) *As Long as Tears (Zolang er nog tranen zijn)* (2018, Hannelore Grünberg-Klein).

The first publication can be included in the field of intentional literature intended for lower-secondary school readers. We believe that, given the orientation of the publication on the theme of the internal experience of the events of World War II from the adolescent's focus, the narrative of this publication provides a suitable implementation space for the presentation of the phenomenon of the Shoah in the teaching of literature.

The publication *A Girl from another World* falls within the area of literature for children and youth. We believe that this is a typical example of integrating the spiritual and philosophical questions of human being into the simple story of children living in World War II. In order to include this publication in the questionnaire, we were guided primarily by our assumption of the difficulty of reception of this text for elementary school pupils (the cover of the book reads "for readers from the age of nine") in a connotation with the view that readers cannot experience to include text in a different dimension than at the reception level of the primary plot.

¹⁴ This means that it includes the first (1st-5th grade) and second (6th-9th grade) degree.

¹⁵ A list of schools and school facilities is available on the Vysočina Region website: <http://extranet.kr-vysocina.cz/seznam-skol/>.

As Long as Tears thematizes the real fates of the Jews before the Nazi extermination machinery were fully developed. The publication contains a considerable amount of information (data, excerpts from available official correspondence between states and so on) beyond Nazi power. We know this book is very demanding for lower-secondary school pupils and it is largely unhelpful (this is mainly due to the absence of factual knowledge of recipients about the given time or significant elimination of narrative). By integrating Hannelore Grünberg-Klein into the questionnaire we wanted to find out about our postulated assumption and at the same time we wanted to find out to what extent the specified sample of respondents can accept the text.

One complete elementary school in the Vysočina Region was approached with the intention of an exploratory survey. A positive prerequisite for the implementation of the research in each institutional facility was the fact that each grade of second degree is only once in the given institution, all classes being taught by the same teacher (similar form of lesson management, equal share of literary education within a weekly lesson etc.), which in our opinion ensures at least a partial identical starting position of respondents in the area of objective factors affecting the research.

The questionnaires also included a section that looked at the basic demographic data of respondents relevant to the survey (year, gender), and generally formulated questions about samples: for example, *Did you read the samples well?* (respondents voted **yes, rather yes, rather no, no** for each sample); *Which example did you like best?* (respondents had multiple choice); question about length of samples and question *Are you reading books in your free time?*

5.1 Respondents in research

In the paper we present opinions and scope of interpretation of mentioned Shoah-texts by pupils of **ninth grade**. We have chosen this year because in the framework of the *Fraus publishing house* and the *State Educational Publishing House* (the most widely used reading-books according to the answers of the respondents of the research focused on the views of Czech Language and Literature teachers at lower-secondary schools)¹⁶ the representation of the Shoah texts is considerable.

6. Results and discussion

A limited sample of respondents liked sample number 3: *As Long as Tears*. This fact is quite surprising, especially in the context of several factual events that the book contains and because of the well-eliminated story-telling part. It is worth noting that the excerpt from the publication placed worse (second place) in the eyes of ninth-year pupils: who should have at least elementary awareness of the History of the twentieth century under the *Framework Educational Program for Basic Education*¹⁷. To a certain extent, this situation undermines the assumption of increasing popularity of more demanding texts with increasing volume (i.e. the age of respondents). The results of the question focused on the popularity¹⁸ of the selected snippets are shown in Graph 2. The values are given in absolute numbers, respondents had the choice of multiple answers. Interesting is also the fact that the sample number 2: *A Girl from another*

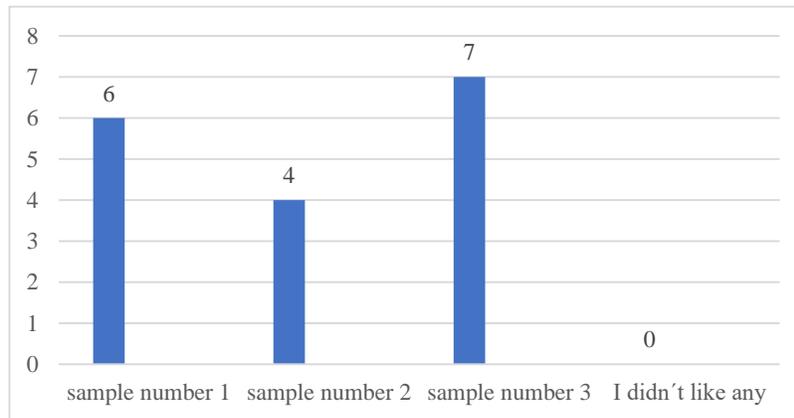
¹⁶ Compare: Mašát, 2017; Mašát, 2019a, Mašát, 2019b; Mašát, 2019c; Mašát & Šmakalová, 2019.

¹⁷ Compare Jeřábek et al., 2017.

¹⁸ “We perceive the concept of popularity as a combination of two aspects: primarily the recipient must understand the book in the sense of understanding the recorded narrative; at the reception, they enjoyed the text in some way (this may not be the privilege of only humorous narratives). We perceive the result of these two basic components as so-called popularity” (Mašát & Šmakalová, 2019: 1343).

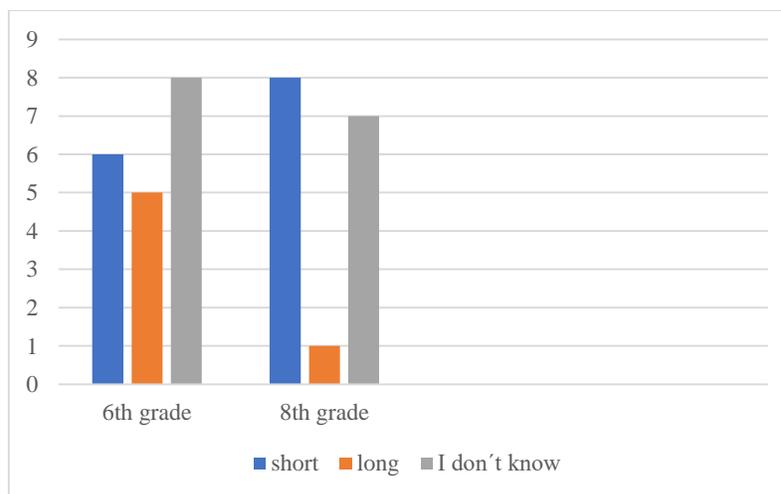
World, intended for children from the age of nine, took the last place among readers from the eighth year.

In the second part of the questionnaire, we asked pupils about the length of the snippets. The large representation of the “don’t know” answer points to the abstractness of the “snippet length”, which can be viewed through the prism of the missing pattern in the reading process (6 out of 7 respondents in the eighth class who reported “don’t know”) does not read. The question was included in the questionnaire mainly to monitor the evolution of opinion on the issue among pupils of individual years. For a demonstration, we compare the sixth and eighth grade pupils (see Graph 3).



Graph 2. Popularity of selected samples by prism of eighth grade pupils

When comparing the answers of the sixth- and eighth-year respondents in the area of sample lengths, there is a significant decrease in the “long” responses of the pupils of the upper grade and a slight increase in the “short” responses. Respondents from the eighth year, who stated that they seemed to have long demonstrations, also indicated that they do not read in their spare time.



Graph 3. The extent of the presented demonstrations according to the opinion of the sixth- and eighth-year pupils

In the next part of the paper we will focus on selected answers of pupils, where it is possible to demonstrate certain thought processes of recipients (especially in connotation with current global events).

One of the questions under example number 2 (*A Girl from another World*) was postulated as a concrete quote: “If you are happy about the flow of water, you would like to see a sleeping dog”, asking students how to interpret the quotation (again, the publication has been dedicated **to readers since the age of nine**). In the responses we will find, for example, that “water is calm and quiet, so when the dog sleeps, it is calm and quiet; because the water flow is boring and slow as a dog falls asleep; that she enjoys the little things; when you enjoy the crap like the flow of water, you won’t be bored watching the sleeping dog; that she enjoys the little things; when you can look at the flow of water, you can also look at a sleeping dog that does not make any movement; when one enjoys life, one can also enjoy all the little things”. A total of ten responses filled the semantic field of the word “I don’t know”.

In the third question formulated under example number 3, we asked respondents if they thought that emigration was taking place at present. The answers to the postulated question are very interesting and to a certain extent show the perception of the world by adolescents and their possible opinion influence by the media, family or other social group. Even at this point we see the possibility of shaping the desired profile of a citizen of a democratic society: we leave aside (not) the possibility of interfering with school in the personal (family) life of respondents. For example, the pupils reported “yes; yes, it takes place; yes, it is happening, in a country where there are wars, people try to get into a country with better conditions (because of better living conditions); yes, even today, there are refugees in Syria who want to flee the war, not only in Syria but also in other countries; yes, from some war-fighting states, people flee to safe countries; yes, it is happening now, there are problems with that; yes, because someone wants to kill someone, so they run”.

7. Conclusion

The paper presented partial results of the exploratory probe, which examined differences in the reception of selected Shoah texts by pupils of the second grade of the selected elementary school in the Vysočina Region. We focused on the level of reception, understanding and interpretation of the texts by pupils of the eighth year, mainly due to the significant representation of the excerpts on the Shoah theme within the two most widely used reading-books in the defined region.

The evaluation of selected questionnaire items showed a certain deficit of factual knowledge of the respondents, and this shortage makes it difficult to receive the above texts. A surprising finding was the fact (in the context of a considerable lag in the narrative storyline) that respondents liked the extract from *As Long as Tears*. In total, 50 % of the eighth-year respondents seemed short, seven readers said, “I don’t know”. We believe that the pupils decided to choose this option mainly due to the absence of certain reading patterns: the use of reading-books at the school is considerably delayed at the expense of reading complete publications.

Open questionnaire items showed a high rate of updating of the issue of migration by art narrative to the events in the contemporary world. Many recipients could not interpret the citation from Appelfeld’s publication from the focus in which it was incorporated into the sample. We believe that (not only) this fact shows that the dedication given to the readers on the cover of the publication is quite inappropriate if the readers are to include the complete depth of the narration *A Girl from another World* (the story line is quite superficial with a simple plot).

The research probe showed a certain deficit in basic institutional education in the use of adequate intentional contemporary Shoah-texts. This finding leads us to the conclusion that it is necessary to create a cross-sectional set of independent texts on the topic of the Shoah, which the Czech Language and Literature teachers could use in the literary lessons.

Based on the results of the research, we decided not to include the factual publication and the book located at the interface of intentional and non-intentional literary production into the upcoming anthology of the Shoah texts. We are led to this step by the above-mentioned research results (the article presents the results of the eighth-year respondents) and by our decision to orient the anthology to contemporary intentional literary production with the topic of the Shoah.

Research has shown that the reception and interpretation of Appelfeld's work is very difficult. Despite this finding, we decided to include the publication in the prepared set of Shoah texts. We were particularly led to the fact that in our opinion pupils will be able to capture a simple storyline, which can serve, for example, to develop a discussion on the issue of the fate of Jews during World War II. An integral part of the upcoming anthology is also questioning, and tasks related to selected snippets. The questions and tasks are formulated in the context of contemporary didactics of literature, i.e. they are directed to so-called creative expressivity: work with text as such (transformation of text or its parts, change of focalization, word completion, outline creation, work with publication title etc.).

Excerpt from publication *A Girl from another World* will be included in the book for the 6th year – we chose the given class definition mainly because of the simple narrative of the given narrative, while leaving the use of the text to the teachers. The following examples and tasks are postulated for the excerpts from this book:

Before reading:

- Try to write what a book entitled *A Girl from another World* is all about.

After reading the snippet:

- Has your opinion changed about what the book might be about after reading?
- Attempt to explain the phrase “in the ghetto”.
- Try to briefly characterize Adam and Thomas.
- What do you think was the fate of Adam, Thomas and Mina?
- Try to draw Mina.
- Attempt to complete this scheme.

Text passage		My comment
1		
2		
3		

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