

Teaching literature in lower secondary school

*Is the teaching of literature in the 9th grade
based on the personal-response approach,
or the reader-response approach to
literature?*

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Abstract

The present qualitative study examines whether the teaching of English language literature in the 9th grade is based on a text-centered (New Critical) or a student-centered (reader-response) approach to literature. It is based on semi-structured interviews with eight teachers in lower secondary schools in the Oslo, Akershus and Vest-Agder counties, and a content analysis of the literary tasks in four 9th grade English textbooks.

The interview data was analyzed using two sets of codes. One of these was derived from research related to the practical application of New Criticism and reader-response theory in teaching, while the other was derived from the collected data. The literary tasks were analyzed according to four coding categories that were also based on the above-mentioned research. I then examined what the two sets of data showed about the theoretical orientation of the teaching in the 9th grade and explored the extent to which the two sets of findings were in agreement.

The findings of this study indicate that the teaching of literature in the 9th grade alternates between a text-centered and a student-centered approach, while the literary tasks in the textbooks tend to be text-oriented. The interviews revealed that the informants were often not aware of their shifting between the two approaches, or of what this could mean for the pupils' understanding and appreciation of the literary texts being taught.

In the discussion I argue that teachers should take the comprehensive and varied manner in which literature is taught into consideration when planning and teaching literary texts. Above all, I argue that they should make the transitions from one approach to the other much clearer and more transparent for the pupils. This would make it easier for the pupils to understand what kind of responses and contributions are expected of them in the teaching of English literary texts, and perhaps increase their level of participation and their enjoyment of literature.

Sammendrag

Målet med denne kvalitative undersøkelsen var å finne ut om undervisningen av engelskspråklig litteratur i niende klasse er basert på en tekstsentrert (ny-kritisk) eller en elevsentrert (leserens respons) tilnærming til litteratur. Undersøkelsen er basert på halvstrukturerte intervju med åtte lærere fra ungdomsskoler i Oslo, Akershus og Vest-Agder fylke, samt en innholdsanalyse av litterære oppgaver i fire lærebøker i engelsk for niende trinn.

Dataene som ble samlet inn under intervjuene ble analysert i henhold til to kodesett. Et av disse var utledet fra forskning knyttet til anvendelsen av nykritikk og leserens responskritikk i undervisningen, mens det andre var utledet fra det innsamlede materialet. De litterære oppgavene ble analysert i henhold til fire kodingskategorier, som også var basert på den tidligere nevnte forskningen. Jeg undersøkte så hva de to datasamlingene antydte om den teoretiske tilnærmingen til undervisningen på niende trinn, samt graden av samsvar mellom disse.

Funnene av denne undersøkelsen indikerer at undervisningen av engelskspråklig litteratur på niende trinn veksler mellom en tekstsentrert og en elevsentrert tilnærming, mens de litterære oppgavene i lærebøkene har en tendens til å være tekstsentrerte. Intervjuene avslørte at informantene ofte ikke var klar over at de vekslet mellom de to tilnærmingene, eller hva dette kunne innebære for elevenes forståelse og verdsetting av de litterære tekstene som blir undervist.

I diskusjonen argumenterer jeg for at lærere, både når de planlegger og gjennomfører undervisning knyttet til litterære tekster, burde ta i betraktning at dette emnet blir undervist på en omfattende og variert måte. Fremfor alt argumenterer jeg for at de burde gjøre overgangene fra en tilnærming til en annen mye tydeligere og mer synlige for elevene. Dette vil gjøre det enklere for elevene å forstå hvilke former for respons og bidrag som forventes av dem i undervisningen og kanskje øke deres deltakelse og glede av litteratur.

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1 Introduction

Most of us went to graduate school to understand more fully the literature that had moved us. Why, then, do we forget that without that emotional basis we would probably not have felt the need to move beyond our early, unsophisticated encounters with literature. (Clifford, 1979, p. 38).

My love of reading started in elementary school, and as a child I quickly devoured one novel after another. However, by the end of the 9th grade, my fondness of reading and literature had almost disappeared. There may be many reasons for this, of course, but I remember thinking that the way that we read and worked with literature in school was very different from the way I enjoyed novels at home.

In my free time, I simply read the books at my own pace and enjoyed them for what they were. Even at that early age, I felt that every single one of these novels enriched my life, each in its own way. At school, however, we read all kinds of fictional texts knowing that we would have to summarize the plot or answer comprehension questions later on. With that as the ultimate goal for reading, I felt that reading became more or less pointless. I started thinking that I had probably been reading literature in the wrong way from the very beginning. Maybe the way that we read literature in school was also the way that these texts were supposed to be read in the real world? Needless to say, I did not find this all that motivating.

Fortunately, my love of reading and literature returned to me after three years of teacher education. Once more, it became a hobby that I would not want to be without. Around this time it first occurred to me that my earlier loss of interest might have been brought about by the way that we worked with literature in lower secondary school. As a student teacher, I was therefore determined to teach literature in a manner that would promote, not diminish, the pupils' interest in reading and literature. However, before I could attempt to do so, I realized that I needed to examine how teachers typically teach this topic. Sadly, at this point I only learnt that very little was known about how literature is taught in Norway.

As a practicing student teacher, I also repeatedly found myself at a loss when it came to teaching literature. In the beginning, I tried many different activities, but this approach soon felt too haphazard to me. In addition, I found that I had to make sure that the way that we worked with literature would actually prepare my pupils for the tasks that they might be given in relation to this topic on the 10th grade written examinations. Although I was aware of

the requirements in the subject curriculum, I did not know what kind of tasks they might be required to solve in practice. After this initial, experimental stage, I therefore quickly fell into the habit of basing my teaching on the tasks in the textbook. Since I always found myself pressed for time, I never got around to creating an approach to literature that I might be proud to call my own. I was consequently concerned about my becoming as demotivating a teacher of literature as my own teachers might have been.

During my final years as a student teacher, I have therefore taken every opportunity to learn more about how I might approach the teaching of literature, since this topic is so close to my heart. I started by writing two short papers about literature. For the first, I interviewed three lower secondary teachers about the way that they teach literature (Løvstuhagen, 2011a). For the second paper, I conducted a content analysis of the tasks related to literature that had been given on the 10th grade written examinations from 2008-2011 (Løvstuhagen, 2011b). When I decided to write a thesis in English subject didactics, I saw it as an opportunity to examine the way that literature is taught even more closely, so that I, hopefully, could develop my own way of teaching this topic.

In my work with literature, I have long been intrigued by what Hirvela (1996) refers to as the personal-response and reader-response approaches to literature. Whereas the former focuses on the text itself, or the author's intentions with it, the latter emphasizes the individual reader's experiences with the text (Hirvela, 1996; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994). Although I believe that these two approaches may complement each other, I am of the opinion that teachers, as Clifford (1979) writes, must not forget that the pupils may need to react to a literary text emotionally before they may want to explore it further. Maybe by encouraging them to do so, we might motivate them to examine the text further, and thus help promote their interest in reading and literature (Davis, 1992).

In the following I continue this chapter by briefly reviewing what I consider to be the main reasons why literature should be regarded as an important part of the English subject. After that, I present two recent studies that suggest that the way that this topic is taught may affect both the pupils' language learning and their interest in the subject. Next, I present my research statement and elaborate on the main goals of the study. Finally, I give an outline of the thesis and define some of the key terms that will be used in this study.

1.1 Why is literature important?

Research indicates that the reading of literature may be an important part of the English subject for several reasons. First of all, what we have learnt about the nature of reading and the development of reading skills indicate that practice is essential if pupils are to become proficient readers (Alderson, 2000; Day & Bamford, 2002; Hellekjær, 2007; Krashen, 2004). In this respect, the topic of literature can provide pupils with opportunities to practice, so that they, in time, may become proficient readers.

Furthermore, Day and Bamford (2002) argue that extensive reading of foreign-language texts may also play an important role in the development of pupils' interests in foreign language reading. In addition, Hellekjær (2007) has found that the extent to which pupils read English texts in their free time has a high correlation with reading test scores, meaning that pupils who read English outside school appear to be better readers than those who do not. In short, it seems that having pupils read more may not only give them the practice that they need if they are to become proficient readers, but if done correctly, it might also encourage them to read more and thus become even better readers.

Moreover, the work that is done in relation to literature may also be important for the development of pupils' English language competence in a number of ways. Since working with English language literature necessarily involves reading, it constitutes a potential source of input in the English subject. Ellis (1997) defines input as samples of either oral or written language that learners are exposed to while using or learning a particular language (p. 139). Several theories of Second Language Acquisition acknowledge the importance of input in the development of several aspects of learner language, and in relation to learners' mental grammars in particular (Ellis, 1997; Krashen, 2004).

Grammatical, and by implication also linguistic competence, underlies the development of reading and listening skills as well as pupils' ability to speak and write English (see Alderson, 2000; Hellekjær, 2010; Luoma, 2004; Weigle, 2002). It therefore seems reasonable to infer that literature, as written input, can potentially contribute to the continued development of these skills as well. According to Kramsch and Kramsch (2000), literature is, at present, regarded as an authentic source of English language.

Furthermore, reading is both necessary and beneficial for the development of the pupils' vocabularies (Krashen, 2004; Schmitt, 2000). According to Schmitt (2000), written input is probably more important than oral input in this process, since written texts contain a larger portion of low-frequency words than do oral texts. Moreover, written texts can also

provide pupils with the repeated exposures they need to both expand and consolidate their vocabularies. According to Alderson (2000), vocabulary plays a crucial part in reading and text comprehension. It might therefore be reasonable to assume that, as pupils' vocabularies develop, so will their reading skills (Alderson, 2000; Pike, 1979, as cited in Read, 2000; Schmitt, 2000).

As far as the teaching of literature involves different activities in which pupils use English, it may also play an important role in generating output, that is to say spoken or written production in English. Swain (2000) argues that pupils also need to practice using a language in order to learn it, and that there are several ways in which they can learn from the language they produce themselves. Output can, for instance, help pupils notice the ways in which their linguistic proficiency may be improved. The teaching of literature can consequently contribute to the development of pupils' English skills in numerous ways (Swain, 2000).

Finally, there are also certain scholars who argue that working with literature may also promote pupils' cultural competence. Collie and Slater (1987, as cited in Parkinson & Reid Thomas, 2000), argue that literature can contribute to cultural enrichment, since reading and working with such texts allows pupils to become familiar with characters from cultures other than their own.

1.2 Does it matter how literature is taught?

According to two recent studies, the manner in which literature is taught may affect both the pupils' interest in the English subject and their language learning. By comparing the results of two classes that had received different types of literature instruction before and after the teaching had taken place, Yang (2002, as cited in Paran, 2008) found that the teacher's approach to this topic appeared to have an impact on the students' language learning. In the first class, in which the teaching had been teacher-centered and mostly lecture-based, the students' results did not reveal any statistically significant improvement. In the second class, which had used a more student-centered approach, however, the results revealed a significant improvement in the students' language learning. Furthermore, the students who had worked with literature in a student-centered manner also "showed a much more positive attitude to the literature used in the class" (Paran, 2008, p. 479).

In an examination of the attitudes towards the study of Shakespeare among 400

second-language learners of English in German secondary schools, Schmidt (2004, as cited in Paran, 2008) found a strong connection between the students' interest in the subject and the teaching approaches that were reflected in their responses. According to the author, the "pupils seem to profit most from a balanced combination of both learner-centered and text-centered approaches" (Schmidt, 2004, as cited in Paran, 2008, p. 479).

1.3 Research statement

In the present study, I will examine how literature is taught in lower secondary school, and more specifically in the 9th grade. I chose to focus on the 9th grade because the three participants in my pilot study expressed that they tended to focus on the enjoyment of literature in the 8th grade, while the teaching in the 10th grade was more geared towards the final examinations (Løvstuhagen, 2011a). As such, I believe that the teaching of literature in the 9th grade might be more balanced in relation to these two concerns, and thus more representative for lower secondary school as a whole. I also decided to examine how this topic is taught in relation to Hirvela's (1996) theories about two common approaches to literature, namely the personal-response and reader-response approaches.

My research question is therefore as follows: "Is the teaching of literature in the 9th grade based on the personal-response approach, or the reader-response approach?"

The goal of this study is, in other words, to examine how literature is taught in relation to these two approaches in the 9th grade. In order to do so, I want to explore the types of activities that teachers use when they are working with different literary genres, how they assess this topic, and their views on the relative importance of different elements associated with the two approaches. I also want to examine the extent to which teachers make use of their textbooks and, if relevant, look into which of the two approaches might be inherent in a selection of these. If relevant, I would also like to examine the extent to which the results of the textbook analysis are in agreement with the information provided by the teachers.

However, since this study focuses on the teaching of literature in the 9th grade, I have chosen to limit my investigation to the four literary genres that pupils in lower secondary school are to work with in this subject, that is to say according to the competence aims in the current curriculum. These genres are: poetry, drama, short stories and novels. As already indicated, I have also chosen to investigate how each of these genres is taught, instead of examining the topic of literature as a whole.

1.4 An outline of the thesis

In chapters 2 and 3 I present the theoretical framework of this study. In the former I review relevant literary theories and the two approaches that are to be examined, as well as some of the relevant research that has been conducted on the teaching of literature. In the latter I introduce the current curriculum and explore the topic of literature from the perspective of the Core Curriculum and the English subject curriculum.

Chapter 4 contains an account of the methods and procedures that I have used in the present study. The results are then presented in Chapter 5, before the findings are discussed in light of the research question and relevant theory in Chapter 6. Finally, I summarize the practical implications of the study's findings and provide suggestions for further research in Chapter 7. The reader will note that a copy of the material that has been used in this study, as well as more detailed information about the informants, can be found in the Appendices.

1.5 Definitions

There are a few terms that I use in this thesis which I would like to explain in order to avoid confusion. These terms are listed below.

Literature: In its broad sense, this term is defined in accordance with the definition provided by Wolfreys, Robbins and Womack (2011), as:

any written textual production; more specifically, any work of prose or poetry involving what has been designated 'imaginative', 'creative' or 'fictional' writing; thus, those works defined by the major genres – epic, ode, drama, novel, lyric, and so forth. (p. 343).

In a more narrow sense, and for the purposes of this study, the term *literature* will refer to English language literature only.

Task: May refer to either a single prompt or a collection of prompts given in connection with a literary text. In the present study, one task is distinguished from another on the basis of the numbering provided in the respective textbooks.

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter I present the theoretical framework on which the present study is based. I start by presenting the literary theories referred to as New Criticism and Reader-response theory, along with the work of one leading scholar associated with each of these. As part of this presentation, I also describe the two approaches to teaching that are based on these theories, namely the personal-response and reader-response approaches, and then compare these. Next, I present relevant research that has been conducted into the manner in which literature is taught, and the factors that might influence teachers' approaches to this topic.

2.1 New Criticism

Originating from Literary Formalism, the New Critical Movement began in England in the 1920s and 30s with the work of I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot. New Critical theory was then further developed by literary critics in the United States from the 1940s to the 1960s (Beach, 1993; Fjellestad, 2011; Robey, 1982/1986; Siegel, 2006). As for the name of the movement, this was probably based on the title of John Crowe Ransom's book *The New Criticism* from 1941 (Abele, Cronmiller, DeZurik, Hudson, Marinos, Ogborn, & Pellicier, 1993).

According to New Criticism, literary criticism was to be based solely on the evidence found by the text itself. The New Critics opposed traditional criticism's preoccupation with matters extraneous to the literary text¹, since they regarded such criticism as impressionistic. The New Critics consequently promoted the view that literary criticism should exclude any references to, for instance, the author's biography or the context in which a literary text was written (Abele et al., 1993; Beach, 1993; Robey, 1982/1986; Siegel, 2006).

Furthermore, the New Critics argued that the text was to be clearly separated from the author's intentions on the one hand, and its effects on the other. These two factors were referred to as the Intentional Fallacy and the Affective Fallacy. While the former refers to establishing a text's meaning on the basis of the author's intentions, the latter refers to the confusion between a text's meaning and the reader's emotional response to the text (Beach, 1993; Siegel, 2006). Instead, they argued that literary criticism needed to have an objective

¹ Although much literary theory refers to the texts that the New Critics were concerned with as poems, Robey (1982/1986) writes that this term is "short-hand, as usual, for a literary work of art" (p. 81). In order to make this point clear, I will therefore use the terms literary text or text when describing the general characteristics of New Criticism.

basis, and that this was best achieved through a focus on the text alone, as mentioned above (Becker-Leckrone, 2011). The texts were consequently to be treated as the object of study and scrutinized in terms of their literary properties (Beach, 1993; Robey, 1982/1986; Siegel, 2006).

The literary text was, in other words, a special kind of object that could be considered by scholars in an objective manner. It was also, in itself, the only proper source of meaning. Furthermore, the meaning of a text could be discovered through a detailed analysis of the text itself, often called a close reading (Beach, 1993; Becker-Leckrone, 2011; Dias, 1992). According to Wolfreys et al. (2011), a close reading is a “process of analysis grounded in the language and form of a given text, whereby thematic and formal aspects are deduced through detailed comprehension of textual elements” (p. 336). The language and structure of a text was thus of particular importance, and literary criticism should furthermore be conducted systematically and in accordance with a set of generalizable principles derived from theory (Becker-Leckrone, 2011).

Moreover, the New Critics’ systematic approach to literary criticism led to the development of technical terms such as *theme*, *symbolism* and *irony* (Scholes, 2001). These terms, together with the theoretical principles for the analysis of texts, were also the criteria on which the literary value of a text was to be determined (Robey, 1982/1986; Scholes, 2001).

Since its beginnings in the 1920s, however, the New Critical Movement has attracted a great deal of criticism. This was mainly due to the fact that New Critics sought to exclude all evidence external to the literary text, whereas literary scholars outside of this movement regarded such evidence as useful sources of insight into the text to be studied (Abele et al., 1993). However, although the prestige of New Criticism has consequently been in decline since the late 1950s, this movement has continued to influence the way that literature is taught up until the present day (Applebee, 1993; Beach, 1993; Becker-Leckrone, 2011; Parkinson & Reid Thomas, 2000; Scholes, 2001; Sell; 2001).

2.1.1 I. A. Richards

As mentioned above, the work of the English literary critic Ivor Armstrong Richards (1893-1979) formed an important part of what was to become the basis of the New Critical Movement. Some of Richards’ most influential ideas were published in the 1920s in the works *Principles of Literary Theory* (1924), *Science and Poetry* (1926) and *Practical Criticism* (1929).

On the one hand, the ideas promoted by Richards have been influential for the teaching of literature, since his theories were important for the development of the New Critical Movement in the 1940s and onwards, as mentioned above (Robey, 1982/1986; Sell, 2001). But on the other hand, his ideas were not typical of the movement that developed in the US, since he did not promote the view that the author's and reader's perspectives should be fully excluded from literary criticism. As such, his work contained features that resemble what would later be labeled reader-response theory, as we will see below (Fjellestad, 2011; Robey, 1982/1986). However, since his scholarship is rich and diverse, I will only summarize a few of his ideas that are most relevant to this context.

According to Robey (1982/1986), Richards was concerned with the distinctive features of literature and stressed the importance of paying careful attention to such details in the text through close reading. This was something he would have in common with the New Critics who were to follow in his footsteps. However, Richards differs from most New Critics in that he not only focuses on the text and the analysis of textual means, but also “on the reader's response to literature and on the evaluation of this response” (Robey, 1982/1986, p. 74).

The experience that Richards emphasizes is more specifically the experience of the right kind of reader, that is to say, someone who is able to approach the text with the right kind of attention. This kind of attention is one that allows the reader to recreate within himself the mental condition or experiences of the author that are embedded in the text (Robey, 1982/1986). The author's mental condition is, in other words, given an important role in literary analysis and criticism according to Richards. In contrast, most New Critics sought to remove this concern from literary criticism altogether, as mentioned above. As Fjellestad (2011) expresses it: “Richards opens up for an analysis based on what the readers think that the poet may have felt, the reasons for writing and perhaps also a response to his own work” (p. 27).

As indicated above, many features of Richards' work, such as his focus on literary texts and close reading, have become established parts of the New Critical tradition. As such, these ideas have influenced the teaching of literature that takes place in the classroom (Robey, 1982/1986). However, some of the other elements that are characteristic of Richards' scholarship, such as his focus on the author's mental condition or experiences, have also influenced the teaching of literature that is based on New Criticism, as we will see below.

2.1.2 New Criticism in practice: The personal-response approach

There are several approaches to the teaching of literature that are associated with the theories promoted by the New Critical Movement and I. A. Richards. While Applebee (1993) calls such an approach to literature text-oriented, Hirvela (1996) refers to this as the personal-response approach, while scholars such as Karolides (1992) and Christenbury (1992) refer to the approaches based on these theories as traditional.

In the following, I will provide an overview of the characteristics associated with the practical application of the above-mentioned theories. I will also describe the teachers' role in such an approach, as well as the classroom activities that are commonly associated with it. Since I have chosen to base this review on the characteristics provided by Hirvela (1996), I will refer to this manner of working with literature as the personal-response approach. However, the reader will note that the approach described below differs somewhat from that described by the author.

The characteristics of the personal-response approach

In the personal-response approach, the author's text, or the literary text itself, is primary. The pupils thus respond to the meanings perceived as inherent in the text, and to what they regard as the author's intentions with a particular work. In the personal-response approach texts are also regarded as static, in the sense that a text only has one meaning (Applebee, 1993; Hirvela, 1996; Karolides, 1992; Small, 1992).

Since meaning is regarded as inherent in each text, reading is viewed as an essentially unproductive activity in which the pupils simply decode the meaning found in the text. The pupils are consequently posited a passive role as readers, because they do not contribute anything to this process. The pupils are, in other words, regarded as secondary in relation to the literary text (Hirvela, 1996; Karolides, 1992; Small, 1992).

Furthermore, the personal-response approach is task-based, and typically involves the use of many and a wide variety of exercises. These tend to be related to the literary content and the form of the text that is being examined (Applebee, 1993; Hirvela, 1996; Karolides, 1992). Hirvela (1996) provides an example of the tasks associated with this approach, which has been included on the following page (p. 133):

Personal-response approach

- 1** The title of the poem is also its first line. What do you think the author intended by starting the poem in this way and with this first line?
- 2** What do you think the author intended by including the second stanza in the poem?
- 3** What do you think were the author's intentions in his apology in the final stanza? Was it meant to be read as a sincere apology? Why or why not?
- 4** Why did the author emphasize the taste of the plums in the final stanza? And what is the intended effect of the word 'so' in the final two lines?
- 5** What effect(s) do you think the author intended this poem to have upon the person who owned the plums? Why?

As we can see from the example above, these tasks focus on different aspects of the author's intentions with the text and on the text itself. The tasks provided by Hirvela (1996) also require relatively short answers. Each of these can therefore be solved in a fairly short amount of time. From this example it is also apparent that the tasks associated with the personal-response approach can be solved independently of one another, since the answer to one of these will not affect the answer to another (Applebee, 1993; Hirvela, 1996).

Moreover, the tasks associated with the personal-response approach are devised to facilitate the production of English language discourse by providing the pupils with as many opportunities as possible to express themselves in this language. Since the production of such discourse is the goal of these exercises, it is also considered the end of these tasks (Hirvela, 1996).

The role of the teacher

In teaching based on New Critical theories, the emphasis on the one correct reading of the text places the teacher in a position of authority (Beach, 1993; Christenbury, 1992; Small, 1992). Teaching in accordance with the personal-response approach consequently tends to be teacher-centered (Applebee, 1993). Beach (1993) describes the teacher as a "master explicator who, as mediator between students and critics, held the keys to unlocking the text before the

admiring eyes of the students [...]” (p. 17). The teacher, in other words, becomes the one who holds the answers and who is to lead the pupils to the correct understanding of each text. The knowledge held by the teacher is, in turn, also likely informed by the work of literary critics.

Furthermore, it is also regarded as the responsibility of the teacher to teach his or her pupils the skills associated with close reading and analysis, so that the pupils will be able to appreciate the complexity of the literary texts beings studied (Applebee, 1993; Beach, 1993).

Teaching in accordance with the personal-response approach

As indicated above, teaching based the personal-response approach tends to involve an examination of the meaning rooted in literary texts as well as the authors’ intentions (Applebee, 1993; Hirvela, 1996; Karolides, 1992; Small, 1992). Moreover, the classroom activities may also be related to the text’s structure, language or genre (Applebee, 1993; Hirvela, 1996; Karolides, 1992). Activities associated with the personal-response approach include teacher-led class discussions, pair/group work, and various written activities based on questions related to the above-mentioned topics, the use of literary concepts, or that require the pupils to analyze the text in an objective manner (Applebee, 1993). Lectures are also considered a common feature in lessons such as these. Such lectures may, for instance, include references to the life and times of the relevant author(s) (Small, 1992).

In class discussions based on the personal-response approach, the teacher asks the questions and the pupils answer them. Such discussions thus mainly consist of interaction between the teacher and the individual pupils. Since this activity tends to be closely related to the literary text, and the authority lies with the teacher, Small (1992) argues that these discussions may more accurately be described as oral quizzes rather than as authentic dialogues. This is because the answers have been pre-determined by the teacher, which means that the pupils have to guess what the teacher wants to hear, unless they are able to figure out the correct answer (Small, 1992).

The tasks associated with the personal-response approach emphasize text-based comprehension and are based on the assumption that there is only one correct answer to each task. Furthermore, these commonly require the pupils to recall, paraphrase or analyze different elements in a text (Applebee, 1993). As mentioned above, the tasks associated with the personal-response approach also tend to be numerous and related to a wide range of topics. In addition, each of these tasks may also be solved independently of the others (Applebee, 1993; Hirvela, 1996).

2.2 Reader-response theory

The Reader-response Movement emerged in the 1930s as a reaction to New Criticism. In reader-response theory, the reader's relationship with the text was paramount. According to the reader-response theorists, a text cannot be examined objectively. This was because the reader inevitably plays an important role in determining meaning, since the reader's perception of the text is inextricably linked to that particular individual's context, background and other frames of reference (Church, 1997; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994). Reader-response theory thus rejected New Criticism's exclusive preoccupation with the text and its treatment of the text as authority (Beach, 1993; Church, 1997; Tompkins, 1980).

It is, however, important to note that there are several tiers or positions within reader-response theory (Beach, 1993; Chase & Hynd, 1987; Sullivan, 1995; Tompkins, 1980). As Tompkins (1980) writes: "Reader-response criticism is not a conceptually unified critical position, but a term that has come to be associated with the work of critics who use the words *reader*, *the reading process*, and *response* to mark out an area for investigation" (p. ix).

Although reader-response criticism encompasses a wide variety of opinions and attitudes towards these topics, the foundation of reader-response theory can, among others, be found in the works of the American literary critic Louise Marie Rosenblatt (1904-2005). Even though several other prominent literary critics and theorists have made important contributions to the development of reader-response theory, one of this movement's main tiers is first and foremost associated with the work conducted by Rosenblatt (Applebee, 1993; Beach, 1993; Church, 1997; Holbrook, 1987; Paran, 2008; Tompkins, 1980).

Rosenblatt published her first book, *Literature as Exploration*, in 1938, and her second, *The Reader the Text the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, in 1978. Although it took several decades before the relevance of Rosenblatt's theories were recognized, these have been vastly influential to teachers and students in the US and around the world, and continue to be highly relevant today (Booth, 1995; Church, 1997). As we will see below, Rosenblatt offered "a compelling intellectual rationale for returning the student to the center of the instructional enterprise, and for recognizing that each reader's individual response could be a legitimate part of classroom discourse" (Applebee, 1993, p. 117).

2.2.1 Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading

Tompkins (1980) writes that, whereas the New Critics promoted the view that the literary text had to be separated from its effect on the reader, the reader-response critics argued that the text in itself did not have an inherent meaning apart from the reader. This was because they regarded the effect that the text had on the reader as “essential to any accurate description of its meaning” (Tompkins, 1980, p. ix).

Furthermore, Rosenblatt (1938/1995) writes that “There is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work; there are only the potential millions of individual readers of the potential millions of individual literary works” (p. 24). This is due to each individual reader being unique in terms of background, past experiences, present concerns, mood and other frames of reference, as well as in terms of his or her context. The reader then brings all of this with him to the text, and since reading involves a transaction between the text and the reader, the outcome or meaning of a text will necessarily be unique and to a certain extent subjective (Church, 1997; Karolides, 1992; Sebesta, Monson, & Doces Senn, 1995).

Rosenblatt (1938/1995) describes this process in the following manner:

The reader, drawing on past linguistic and life experience, links the signs on the page with certain words, certain concepts, certain sensuous experiences, certain images of things, people, actions, scenes. These special meanings and, more particularly, the submerged associations that these words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him. The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine his interfusion with the peculiar contribution of the text. (p. 30).

Both the reader and the text are, in other words, essential to any reading event, and the two have an equal relationship in the literary transaction (Galda, 1988, as cited in Sebesta et al., 1995; Karolides, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1938/1995, 1978/1994). This transaction is also described as a recursive one, involving “the to-and-fro, spiraling, nonlinear, continuously reciprocal influence of reader and text in the making of meaning” (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995, p. xvi).

Moreover, the transaction is described as momentary, as an event or an experience in time. Therefore, the outcome of each reading will necessarily be different, since the reader's context and other frames of reference are continually changing, and this, in turn, influences the reader's experiences with the text. This means that the outcome of a reading event not

only differs between individuals, but that successive readings by the same person will produce different results as well (Church, 1997; Dias, 1992; Karolides, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994).

Although the outcome of reading is necessarily subjective, this does not mean that all readings are equally valid (Dias, 1992; Karolides, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994). Rosenblatt (1978/1994) specifies that there are two validity criteria that a reader's response must fulfill, the first being "that the reader's interpretation not be contradicted by any element of the text" and the second "that nothing be projected for which there is no verbal basis" (p. 115).

2.2.2 The aesthetic and the efferent modes of reading

According to Rosenblatt (1978/1994), our experiences with different texts are also influenced by the kind of reading that is employed. She differentiates between two modes of reading, namely the aesthetic and the efferent modes. Although the reader is regarded as active in both modes, in the sense that he or she carries out some sort of activity in relation to the text, that which differentiates the two is "the difference in the reader's focus of attention during the reading-event" (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994, p. 23). According to the author, the difference between the two modes is similar to that of the focus on the journey itself, or on the outcome of the journey.

When reading in the efferent mode, the reader focuses on acquiring information or solving a problem. The reader's focus is consequently on that which will remain after the reading is completed, or on the outcome of the journey or reading event. When reading in the aesthetic mode, however, the reader is focused on his or her experiences during the reading event. Rosenblatt (1978/1994) writes that, while reading in this mode, "*the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text*" (p. 25). In the aesthetic mode, the reader's focus is consequently on the feelings, ideas and other experiences as they emerge from his transaction with the text (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994).

Moreover, Rosenblatt (1978/1994) specifies the aesthetic and the efferent modes of reading are to be regarded as the two ends of a continuum with "*a series of gradations between the nonaesthetic and the aesthetic extremes*" (p. 35), since there is no clear distinction between these two modes of reading. According to her, most reading tends to hover near the middle of this continuum, rather than falling into one of these two categories.

Although the characteristics of a text may influence the mode of reading adopted by the reader, the same text may be read and experienced in more ways than one, depending on

the mode(s) adopted by the reader during a single reading, or from one reading to another. Furthermore, the focus of the reader's attention will also influence the meaning that he or she perceives (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994).

2.2.3 Reader-response theory in practice: The reader-response approach

There are several scholars who have written about the pedagogical implications of reader-response theory. Whereas Pike (2003) uses the term responsive teaching, scholars such as Chase and Hynd (1987), Christenbury (1992), Hirvela (1996) and Karolides (1992) simply refer to this approach as the reader-response approach.

In the following, I will refer to teaching based on the above-mentioned theory as the reader-response approach. In the sections below, I will describe its features, the role assigned to the teacher and the classroom activities that are commonly used in relation to this approach.

The characteristics of the reader-response approach

As explained above, the reader-response approach regards the act of reading as a transaction involving both a text and a reader. During this transaction emerges the outcome of reading, referred to as an evoked work, to which each pupil is to respond. Because each evoked work is a unique hybrid of the stimulus provided by the marks on the page and each pupil's "past experiences and current circumstances, regional origins and upbringing, gender, age, past and present readings" (Karolides, 1992, p. 23), each pupil's interpretations or reactions to a text will necessarily vary from those of others. Reading is, moreover, regarded as a productive activity, since the pupil actively contributes to the creation of meaning that takes place during this transaction (Chase & Hynd, 1987; Dias, 1992; Hirvela, 1996; Karolides, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994).

Furthermore, Hirvela (1996) writes that the reader-response approach is a task-based methodology, in which the goal is to facilitate learner production of English language discourse through the use of tasks. Hirvela (1996) provides an example of a set of tasks that is characteristic of this approach, which I have reproduced on the following page (p. 133):

Reader-response approach

- 1** As you moved from one reading of the poem to another, how did your approach to reading it change? What did you do differently? And what did these changes in approach contribute to your understanding of the poem?
- 2** Did your interpretations and/or reactions to the poem change in each of your readings of it? If so, in what ways? Why?
- 3** In your readings of the poem, what circumstances did you picture? E.g. what do you think caused this situation? What relationship between the writer and the plums' owner did you picture? Why?
- 4** Based upon your interpretation of the poem, which of its three stanzas do you think would most upset the owner of the plums? Why?

From this example, we see that the tasks used in relation to the reader-response approach tend to be few and narrow, in the sense that each task is intended to gauge rather specific aspects of the pupils' evoked works. Nevertheless, each of these exercises will require a relatively long response from each pupil. Furthermore, each task is designed to form a part of a logical sequence in which the answer to the following task is a natural follow-up to the previous one. This is done to stimulate the pupils to reflect on their transaction with the text in a way that will lead them to perceive their evoked works as coherent (Hirvela, 1996).

In the reader-response approach, discourse production is also treated as the means through which tasks are solved, rather than the outcome of these. In order for work with such exercises to be successful, it is therefore not sufficient to have the pupils generate discourse in the target language, since the point of the exercises is to further develop the individual pupils' evoked works through the production of connected discourse (Hirvela, 1996).

The role of the teacher

Since the reader-response approach emphasizes the individual pupils' responses to literature, teaching in accordance with this approach tends to be student-centered rather than teacher-centered (Christenbury, 1992; Karolides, 1992; Pike, 2003). Although the emphasis is on the pupils' experiences, Karolides (1992) writes that the teachers are to:

provide opportunities for them to identify and reflect on their transactions and invite them to compare reactions by questioning themselves and others. [...] Teachers will provide guidance—thoughtful questions, personal responses, and compelling information—so as to encourage a deeper consideration, a clarification, of the literary work being evoked by the students. (p. 31).

Karolides (1992) thus expresses that the teacher is to actively guide the pupils during this process by giving them opportunities to explore and compare their responses, and by posing questions or providing additional input to encourage them to examine their responses further. According to Christenbury (1992), teachers working in accordance with the reader-response approach are to encourage the pupils to “converse: speak at length, pause, argue, question” (p. 36). This is commonly done through the use of open-ended questions (Small, 1992).

Furthermore, the teacher must not pretend to have the answers. Instead, the teacher is to be “a fellow reader and questioner” (Christenbury, 1992, p. 33) who encourages the pupils to create the meaning themselves and to explore multiple interpretations. The teacher is consequently to encourage the pupils to interact with each other, as well as him- or herself. Moreover, the teacher is supposed to affirm the pupils’ ideas and responses by, for instance, referring to their comments in discussions. When faced with a question from one of his or her pupils, the teacher is to turn to the other pupils and explore potential answers together with them (Christenbury, 1992).

Teaching in accordance with the reader-response approach

As indicated above, teaching in accordance with the reader-response approach is based on the pupils’ responses to literary texts and is consequently student-centered. Since the pupils’ responses to a text will vary, classroom activities do not involve a search for answers that are perceived as correct (Applebee, 1993; Christenbury, 1992; Hirvela, 1996; Pike, 2003). Instead, Christenbury (1992) writes that the aim of such activities is to explore and exchange multiple interpretations, and to reflect on these. Moreover, activities that involve having the pupils make links between a literary text and their personal experiences are also common in this approach (Christenbury, 1992).

According to Chase and Hynd (1987), the reader-response approach is compatible with any activity that “allows for multiple correct responses and the sharing of ideas and information” (p. 532). Lessons based on the reader-response approach commonly include various oral activities, such as small group or whole class discussions of the pupils’ responses

(Applebee, 1993; Beach, 1993; Chase & Hynd, 1987; Karolides, 1992; Liaw, 2001; Paran, 2008). Applebee (1993) writes that, although such discussions tend to encourage pupils to reflect on their own responses, these may also aim to foster critical thinking by having the pupils reflect on the responses of others as well. According to Karolides (1992) and Paran (2008), other oral activities, such as role plays and dramatization, are also common in lessons based on the reader-response approach.

Furthermore, teaching in accordance with the reader-response approach may also include various types of writing, such as journals, project work, reading logs and free responses (Beach, 1993; Karolides, 1992; Liaw, 2001; Paran, 2008). Based on her own experiences with the reader-response approach, Berger (1996) argues that the prompts that most effectively promote this approach are those that encourage the pupils to notice, question and relate to different aspects of literary texts, or that aim to gauge the pupils' emotional reactions. Moreover, Beach (1993) writes that he sometimes has his pupils make story boards or drawings based on one or more of the texts they have read in class.

Since the reader-response approach is a task-based methodology, classroom activities commonly involve the use of written tasks. As explained above, the written exercises associated with the reader-response approach tend to be relatively few and narrow in scope. Furthermore, these tasks are intended to explore the pupils' evoked works by facilitating long responses in the form of connected discourse (Hirvela, 1996). In accordance with the central tenets of reader-response theory, these tasks allow for multiple correct responses (Applebee, 1993). In addition, the pupils may also be encouraged to make their own questions in relation to the text (Thomson, 1984, as cited in Holbrook, 1987).

As for the consideration of the relevant historical, biographical and formal aspects of a literary text, Karolides (1992) and Pike (2003) argue that these may be used to develop the pupils' responses and their understanding of these. Nevertheless, these materials are not to be studied as ends in themselves, as this would shift the focus away from the pupils' responses (Karolides, 1992).

2.3 A comparison of the two approaches

Although the personal-response and reader-response approaches are both task-based approaches that aim to facilitate the pupils' production of English language discourse, these two approaches have several differing characteristics.

First of all, they have different views on reading, which also influences their view of text. In the personal-response approach, reading consists of the passive act of decoding the meaning located in the text itself. This approach consequently emphasizes the examination of the meaning found in literary texts, or the authorial intentions that are reflected in these. In contrast, the reader-response approach views reading as a transaction between the text and the pupil, in which the latter contributes much of the meaning that emerges from this process. Consequently, this approach to literature focuses on the individual pupil's responses to a literary text.

Second, the number of tasks that are used and the nature of these tend to vary significantly. In short, the reader-response approach uses few and narrow tasks, each of which requires a longer answer, while the personal-response approach uses a large number of exercises related to a wider variety of topics, each of which requires a fairly short answer. In addition, the exercises associated with the personal-response approach are intended to be solved independently of each other, while the tasks in line with the reader-response approach tend to be connected.

Third, the goals of the tasks associated with these two approaches differ. Whereas the production of English language discourse is regarded as the goal or the end of the exercises in accordance with the personal-response approach, this production of discourse is viewed as the means through which the tasks are solved in the reader-response approach.

The differing features of these two approaches also have implications for the role of the teacher in relation to each of these, and for the activities used in the classroom. In teaching based on the personal-response approach, for instance, the teacher has a more prominent role, since he or she determines the meaning of the literary texts. Furthermore, the teacher is also to teach the pupils the skills associated with close reading and to lead them to the accepted interpretation of texts through the use of activities such as lectures, written tasks and teacher-led discussions. In lessons based on the reader-response approach, however, the teacher has a less prominent role, since the meaning of the text is to be determined by the pupils themselves. The teacher is consequently to encourage and guide them to explore their own and others' responses to literary texts, by having them interact with each other at length.

Even though the two approaches may be associated with similar learning activities, such as discussions, the personal-response approach appears to comprise a rather limited selection of activities. In contrast, the reader-response approach is compatible with a large array of activities, as long as these enable the pupils to respond to their evoked works.

2.4 Related research

Below, I will give a brief overview of some of the research that has been conducted on the teaching of literature. Since a large portion of the empirical research that has been conducted into the role of literature in foreign language teaching has focused on university settings, rather than on primary and secondary schools, I will refer to relevant studies conducted in first-language contexts as well (Paran, 2008). First, I will review studies into the teaching of literature and the factors that influence the manner in which this topic is taught, outside Norway. Then I will provide a summary of three recent studies that have been conducted in a Norwegian context.

2.4.1 Research on the teaching of literature

A study by Cox and Zarrillo (1993, as cited in Sebesta et al., 1995) supported the claim that most of the teaching done in relation to literature requires pupils to adopt an efferent mode of reading. These findings were in accordance with those of Davis (1989), who argues that: “What has been lacking in much foreign language literature teaching, particularly at less advanced levels, is a more active role for the individual reader” (p. 420). It would therefore seem that the reader-response approach has had little impact on the teaching of literature in foreign language contexts. This might particularly be the case with lessons that mainly focus on the linguistic and cultural aspects of texts, since the pupils are less likely to be encouraged to reflect on their responses to texts in these lessons (Davis, 1992).

Moreover, Applebee (1993) conducted four interrelated studies into the content and approaches to literature in American secondary schools that, to a certain extent, overlap with the concerns in the present study. According to Applebee (1993), the overall results of these studies suggested that teachers consider both text-centered and student-centered goals as important. This dual emphasis was also reflected in the way that this topic was taught, since teaching comprised an eclectic mix of activities that reflected both New Critical and reader-response theories. The teachers’ approaches to literature also appeared to remain consistent across different literary genres (Applebee, 1993). Moreover, the teachers regarded the goals and activities associated with these two theories as complementary, rather than contradictory. Nevertheless, Applebee’s (1993) findings also indicated that teaching reflecting a truly student-centered approach was still less common than text-oriented approaches.

Furthermore, when the teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which various critical approaches to literature influenced their teaching, Applebee (1993) found that:

Some 38.5 percent of the teachers gave high ratings to the influence of reader-response and New Criticism approaches on their teaching with a specific class, and another 41.1 percent reported at least moderate influence of both approaches; 3.3 percent stressed New Criticism and not reader-response; 12.3 percent stressed reader-response and not New Criticism; and 4.8 percent stressed neither. (p. 122).

In this quote, Applebee (1993) reports that a clear majority of the participants stated that their teaching was either moderately or highly influenced by both reader-response approaches and New Criticism, while a minority reported that their teaching was informed by only one of these. The author consequently remarks that “However much the professional literature may term these approaches as being in opposition to one another, in practice they coexist in the great majority of classrooms” (p. 195). Furthermore, Applebee’s (1993) findings also indicated that other approaches to literature, such as structuralism or feminist criticism, did not have much influence on teaching.

As for the exercises that accompany literary texts in a popular anthology series, the results of Applebee’s (1993) analyses indicated that “an average of 65 percent of the study activities tapped students’ knowledge of textual detail or of accepted interpretations” (p. 146). Since only about one-third of tasks allowed a variety of responses, Applebee (1993) concluded that an overwhelming majority of the study activities found in these anthologies were text-oriented. Moreover, this pattern appeared to be consistent across grade levels and genre (Applebee, 1993).

In relation to assessment, Applebee (1993) found that the participants used activities such as “class discussion, group or individual projects, journal-writing, brief written exercises, and role playing or dramatization” (pp.132-133) to assess the students’ performances. But while there was a sizable correlation between the goals that the teachers sought to promote and the teaching techniques they used in the classroom, Applebee (1993) writes that the means of assessment appear to be more neutral, since these seem to be adaptable to a variety of emphases.

In relation to the findings of his four studies, Applebee (1993) writes that:

The eclectic melding of reader- and text-centered traditions that was apparent in teachers’ goals and approaches raises a variety of questions about the consistency

and coherence of the approaches teachers are adopting. It is clear that at the theoretical level, reader- and text-centered orientations offer incompatible visions of what matters in the teaching and learning of literature. Though each approach makes room for both the reader and the text, there are fundamental differences in criteria for adequacy of response and interpretation, [...] and in what is considered of primary and of secondary importance in discourse about literature. (p. 137).

In other words, Applebee (1993) argues that the differences between the text- and reader-oriented approaches are too large to be reconciled, and that this may negatively affect the consistency and the coherence of the manners in which literature is taught.

Moreover, research has also suggested that classroom practices influence the way that pupils read literature (Agee, 2000; Dias, 1992). According to Dias (1992), “readers’ strategies, more often than not, develop from classroom practices” (p. 134). He also argues that there is a significant difference between the way that pupils are expected to read in school and the way that they read in the real world, and that this gap must be eliminated.

2.4.2 Research into the factors that influence teachers’ approaches to literature

A fair amount of research has been conducted into the teachers’ roles in the classroom, and their reasons for teaching literature the way that they do. According to Paran (2008), research indicates that the teacher may be important for the teaching of literature in two ways; in the types of tasks they assign the pupils, and in how the teacher directs class discussions and provides the pupils with the scaffolding that they might need.

After conducting case studies of five teachers of first-language learners in the United States, Agee (2000) found that the teachers’ models of teaching were influenced by different aspects of their life histories, their higher education and their personal experiences as readers. In a similar case study, Zancanella (1991) examined the relationships between eight American junior high school teachers’ personal approaches to literature and the way that they taught this topic. The author found that the teachers regarded reading as an imaginative experience which gave them the opportunity to enter into and become engrossed in a fictive world. Still, he writes that their personal approaches to literature were only reflected in their teaching to a limited extent, since their approaches appeared to be combined with a school approach to literature that emphasized comprehension and literary concepts. After having observed the

teachers in the classroom, Zancanella (1991) describes the resulting practices in the following manner:

the predominant modes of teaching in these five classrooms presented literature as (1) a matter of surface comprehension and (2) a matter of learning literary terms and concepts. That is to say that, despite the personal approaches the teachers brought to the classroom, the basic literature teaching procedures that took up the most classroom time focused on finding out if students knew what happened. (p. 25).

It therefore seemed that the school approach to literature usually dominated these lessons. Furthermore, these findings also appeared to support Dias' (1992) claim that there was a significant gap between the way that literary texts are read in the real world and the way they are dealt with in school, as mentioned above.

The mixing of the teachers' personal approaches to literature and that of the school was moreover found to be an often troubled process, wrought with different areas of conflict (Zancanella, 1991, p. 26). He also found that the less experienced teachers appeared to be more influenced by the school approach than the more experienced ones, who seemed to be more able to resist this pressure and teach literature in their own way. Nevertheless, Zancanella (1991) concludes that the pedagogically useful knowledge contained in the teachers' personal approaches to literature was generally not used to inform their practice, due to "[...] institutional constraints and the teachers' lack of a theoretical framework for literary studies" (p. 5).

2.4.3 Research conducted in a Norwegian context

In her master's thesis, Popova (2010) examined the way that English language literature is taught in Norwegian upper secondary school. On the basis of data collected from interviews with six English teachers, Popova (2010) concluded that English language literature is mostly used for practical reasons, "as a basis for various classroom activities aimed at the development of linguistic and cultural competence" (p. 94). The author also found that there was little focus on literary history, and that the activities in the classroom tended to emphasize the pupils' personal responses to the texts instead. Furthermore, Popova (2010) summarized the way that this topic was normally taught in the following manner:

The teachers prefer more traditional ways of dealing with literary texts, which mainly includes reading and discussing them, and then doing exercises related to the texts. The oral activities are often more preferable both for the teachers and the students. (p. 95).

It therefore seemed that the teachers Popova (2010) interviewed followed a similar procedure whenever they worked with literature, which involved reading and discussing texts, and then doing exercises, most of which tend to be done orally. According to Popova (2010), the teachers also preferred to base their teaching of literature on the textbook.

In another recent study, Fjellestad (2011) conducted a content analysis of four VG1 English textbooks in order to discover how literary texts were treated in these. The different aspects of these textbooks were also examined in relation to reader-response and New Critical theories. According to Fjellestad (2011), all of the textbooks contained aspects of both theories. Although some tended to promote one theoretical approach more than the other, none of the textbooks were completely in accordance with either of these approaches.

Similarly, Løvstuhagen (2011b) performed a content analysis of four 10th grade written examinations in English in order to examine whether the tasks related to literature reflected a personal-response approach, or a reader-response approach to this topic. The results indicated that the majority of the tasks reflected a reader-response approach, and that the tasks in line with a personal-response approach consequently were relatively few and infrequent in comparison (p. 12). Furthermore, Løvstuhagen's (2011b) findings also suggested that the tasks reflecting a personal-response approach to literature typically appeared "in the second part of the examinations, in which pupils are less likely to be given a choice of prompts" (p. 12), whereas the tasks in line with a reader-response approach tended to be optional. This is due to these tasks usually being given in a specific part of the examination, in which the pupils were to choose one of six prompts. The author consequently argues that literature should mainly be taught in accordance with the reader-response approach, but that the skills associated with the personal-response approach should be promoted as well, if the pupils are to be prepared for such tasks on the written examinations.

2.5 Chapter summary

According to New Criticism, literary texts were to be the sole objects of study in literary criticism. Moreover, texts had an inherent meaning which could be discovered through detailed analysis. This literary theory has been associated with the work of Richards who, contrary to what would become New Critical theory, stressed the importance of the author's experiences and the reader's responses to the texts as well. Nevertheless, both New Criticism and Richards' theories are reflected in the personal-response approach to literature. In contrast, reader-response theory stressed the transactional nature of reading and the importance of the reader in this process. This literary movement has, first and foremost, been associated with the work of Rosenblatt. Her theories are consequently reflected in the reader-response approach to literature.

Although both the personal-response and reader-response approaches are task-based and aim to promote the production of English language discourse, there are a number of differences between the two. Most notably, the two differ in terms of their view of text and of reading. Whereas the former views the author's text or the text itself as primary and consequently regards reading as an unproductive activity that mainly consists of decoding, the latter views the pupils' evoked works as primary and regards reading as a productive activity in which the individual pupil contributes to the resulting meaning. The two approaches are also associated with different types of tasks and posit contrasting roles for the teacher.

Based on the findings of relevant research, the teaching of literature in first-language contexts appears to be based on both New Critical and reader-response theories. In foreign-language teaching, however, reader-response theories seem to have had less of an impact on instruction. Research conducted in Norway indicates that the teaching emphasizes the pupils' personal responses to texts, and that teachers prefer to base their lessons on the textbooks. Moreover, both New Critical and reader-response theories were reflected in the tasks given on the 10th grade written examinations and in textbooks used in upper secondary school. In the following chapter, I will introduce the current curriculum and examine how the topic of literature is treated in some of these official documents.

3 Literature in the LK06

In the following, I introduce the current curriculum and examine the topic of literature from the perspective of some of these documents. As part of this examination, I explore how the Core Curriculum describes the importance of reading and literature. Next, I turn to the English subject curriculum and explore how the topic of literature is addressed in this document, before I provide an overview of the competence aims in the subject curriculum that are related to literature and that apply to pupils in lower secondary school. Towards the end of the chapter, I comment on the relationship between the English subject curriculum and teaching, and then briefly relate this to the focus of this thesis.

3.1 The LK06 and the English subject

The National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Primary and Secondary Education and Training (henceforth LK06) covers primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and training. The LK06 consists of the following five components:

- The Core Curriculum
- The Quality Framework
- The Subject Curricula
- Distribution of teaching hours per subject
- Individual assessment

In this section I will focus on the two components that are most relevant in this context, namely the Core Curriculum and the subject curricula. Whereas the Core Curriculum states the paramount objectives and value base of Norwegian primary and secondary education and training, the subject curricula contain different kinds of information pertaining to each of the subjects that are to be taught (Engelsen, 2006).

In the subject curricula, the learning goals of each subject are expressed in the form of competence aims, which specify what pupils should be able to do at different points in their education. The competence aims are ordered in a progression according to the grade level(s) in which they are to be realized, as well as grouped according to the main subject areas of the

subject in question. The competence aims in the English subject curriculum are consequently structured according to the subject's three main subject areas, which are:

1. Language learning
2. Communication
3. Culture, society and literature

The topic of literature is, in other words, a part of the third subject area.

3.2 Reading: A basic skill

Before I review the current status of literature in the LK06, I want to point to the fact that reading has a more prominent status in the current curriculum than it had in the previous L97 curriculum for lower secondary school (Hellekjær, 2007). Whereas the main focus of the previous curriculum was on the content of the different subjects, such as the learning materials and methods to be used, the LK06 is different in the sense that it is competence-based and thus specifies the learning goals that the pupils are to attain in each subject instead (Utdanningsdirektoratet, n.d.). Reading has consequently become more important than it was in the previous curriculum, since the LK06 focuses more narrowly on the skills that the pupils are to acquire, one of which is reading.

One of the ways in which the increased importance of reading is expressed is through the concept referred to as basic skills, which was introduced when the current curriculum was implemented in 2006. There are five basic skills, one of which is reading, as displayed below:

- Being able to express oneself orally
- Being able to express oneself in writing
- Being able to read
- Having skills in mathematics
- Being able to use digital tools

According to Hellekjær (2007), all of the subjects are to promote these basic skills in an integrated manner. For this reason, all of the reading that is done in relation to the different

subjects can potentially contribute to the development of this basic skill. This is also the case for the reading of English language literature within the English subject.

Although reading is considered important in the current curriculum, it is not given that literature is regarded in the same manner. It is therefore necessary to review the status of literary texts in the LK06 as well.

3.3 Literature in the Core Curriculum

In the Core Curriculum, literature is considered a part of the creative aspect of human nature. It is more specifically regarded as a part of “our *cultural tradition*, mediated by body and mind, embedded in arts and crafts, in language and literature, in theatre, song, music, dance and athletics” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2006, p. 13). As such, literature is considered to be a central part of the value base and the paramount objectives that Norwegian primary and secondary education and training is to promote.

Moreover, the Core Curriculum also states that:

Pupils must develop an appreciation for beauty both in meeting artistic expression and by exploring and unfolding their own creative powers. [...] Even more, a confrontation with creative art can wrench us out of our habitual modes of thought, challenge our opinions, and provide experiences that spur us to re-examine prevailing conceptions and break with conventional wisdom and customary modes.

(Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2006, p. 13).

The pupils are, in other words, to both develop an appreciation for the artistic works of others, as well as explore the creative powers of their own. Creative art such as literature is also supposed to provide the pupils with experiences that might challenge their current conceptions and foster independence of thought.

Furthermore, the Core Curriculum states that one of the seemingly contradictory goals of education is “to provide powerful exposure to the greatest achievements in literature and art, in work, adventure and research - *and* give each individual the opportunity to discover and develop the germs that lie in his or her own powers” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2006, p. 40). In this citation we see that literary works are considered among the greatest achievements of mankind, alongside achievements in, for instance, research. This document also states that

pupils are to be intimately familiar with such great achievements on the one hand, while being given the opportunity to develop their own potential on the other.

3.4 Literature in the English subject curriculum

In the English subject curriculum the following is written about this subject's main objectives and about literature in particular:

Literature in English, from nursery rhymes to Shakespeare' sonnets, may instil a lifelong joy of reading and provide a deeper understanding of oneself and others. [...] English as a school subject is both a tool and a way of gaining knowledge and personal insight. It will enable the pupils to communicate with others on personal, social, literary and interdisciplinary topics. (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2010, p. 1).

The subject curriculum thus seems to express that the enjoyment of literature is to be an important element in the teaching of this topic. Furthermore, the writers also emphasize that the English subject is to be a tool for the pupils, in the sense that it might promote effective communication, as well as a source of knowledge and personal insight. More specifically, the subject curriculum also states that English language literature both can and should contribute to the pupils' personal growth and development. This might be because literature can provide us with the opportunity to explore the world from multiple perspectives. Such literary experiences might enable pupils to better understand themselves, which might in turn enable them to better understand others (Duff, 1992, as cited in Fjellestad, 2011). It is also clear from the subject's main objectives that the teaching of literature is to enable pupils to communicate about literary topics.

In the description of the main subject area to which the topic of literature belongs, the subject curriculum states that:

The main area culture, society and literature focuses on cultural understanding in a broad sense. It is based on the English-speaking world and covers key topics connected to social issues, literature and other cultural expressions. [...] Working with various types of texts and other cultural expressions is important for developing linguistic skills and understanding how others live, and their cultures and views on life. Reading literature may also help to instil the joy of reading in pupils and provide the basis for personal growth, maturity and creativity. (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2010, p. 3).

This makes it clear that the English-speaking world is the main focus of this subject area, and that this part of the English subject is mainly concerned with the promotion of cultural understanding. It also states that key topics related to literature will be dealt with, and that working with such texts is regarded as important for the development of linguistic skills as well as an understanding of others, their cultures and values. The hope that reading literature will also contribute to the pupils' personal growth and instil them with a love of reading is also repeated in this section, but here with the added wish that doing so will promote the development of creativity as well.

While these goals are part of the subject's main objectives in relation to literature, these overall aims reveal very little about the ways in which literature might be taught in the English subject. In order to discover more about the ways in which teachers and pupils work with this topic, we must first take a look at the skills that the pupils are supposed to acquire in relation to literature. I will therefore examine three of the competence aims that are directly related to this topic, and attempt to discover the implications that these goals might have for the ways in which literature is taught.

3.4.1 Competence aims related to English language literature

Many of the competence aims that apply to pupils in lower secondary school can be related to literature in the sense that both literary and non-literary texts may be used to promote these aims. However, in this section I will only focus on three aims within the subject area *Culture, society and literature* which I consider explicitly related to the topic of literature.

Within the above-mentioned subject area, the subject curriculum states that each pupil is to be able to do the following by the end of lower secondary school:

- *read and discuss a representative selection of literary texts from the genres poetry, short stories, novels and drama from the English-speaking world*
- *describe theme and composition in texts and visual expressions*
- *prepare and discuss his/her own oral or written texts inspired by literature and art* (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2010, p. 7).

The first competence aim states that pupils should be able to read literary texts from the variety of genres listed. Although the word *read* is not defined, it seems reasonable to deduce that this word implies that the pupils are supposed to be able to process these types of literary texts in a manner that results in a certain extent of comprehension.

The type and amount of competence that the pupils are to acquire is, however, more clearly expressed in the word *discuss*, since the subject curriculum states that pupils should also be able to discuss the literary texts they have read. Although the exact meaning of the word *discuss* is subject to interpretation, Hornby, Wehmeier and Ashby (2000) write that this verb commonly refers to skills related to discussing something with other people, especially in order to make a decision, and to talking or writing about something in detail in a manner that deals with different ideas and opinions about the object of discussion. Even though there are many ways in which teachers might attempt to promote their pupils' abilities to discuss, the definition provided by Hornby et al. (2000) suggests that this might be done primarily through oral activities, as well as through writing. The definition also suggests that this is a skill that is best developed through interaction with others, through for instance pair or group work and class discussions. This ability is, in any case, one that requires that the pupils deal with different opinions and ideas about the text up for discussion. These might be provided by the pupils themselves, or be introduced by the teacher. Although it seems that discussion may also be done individually through writing, it might be that teachers, in accordance with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, find it necessary to demonstrate how discussion is done with others, before they have them do the same by themselves in writing (Imsen, 2005).

Furthermore, this competence aim also states that the selection of texts is to be representative, meaning that the texts dealt with should be relatively typical of literary texts from the English-speaking world. Which texts that are considered typical of the four genres listed above and the English-speaking world is, however, likely to vary. Since the subject curriculum does not give any more specific guidelines as to which literary texts the pupils are to read, the individual schools, teachers and pupils are in practice given the freedom to choose these for themselves.

The second competence aim states that pupils should also be able to describe the theme or themes found in different texts, as well as the structure or composition of these. This means that pupils in lower secondary school are to be given the practice they need in order to be able to do so. Since the subject curriculum states that the pupils are to acquire these skills, it seems reasonable to expect that theme and composition are topics that are discussed regularly in relation to literature, as well as in relation to other types of texts. There are, of course, many different ways in which teachers and their pupils might approach these topics. A simple way of working with this topic might involve a question-answer-sequence, where the

teacher asks the questions and the pupils answer, or a more dialogic classroom discussion, where the pupils address each other as well as the teacher.

As stated in the third competence aim, the pupils are to be able to use inspiration provided by literary texts when making oral or written texts of their own, and to discuss the texts they have made. There are several kinds of oral and written texts that can be inspired by literature. For instance, pupils might make literary texts such as plays and dialogues, or literary texts that are similar to the original in terms of their topic. However, oral and written texts do not necessarily have to be literary texts, even though they are supposed to be inspired by literature. The pupils might, for instance, be asked to produce a non-literary text about one or more pieces of literature that they have read, such as an oral presentation or a book report of some kind.

When it comes to the fact that pupils in lower secondary school are supposed to be able to discuss the texts they have made, it seems reasonable to assume that the term *discuss* will refer to the same skills as those listed above. When teachers and their pupils are working with this part of this particular competence aim, they might, for instance, look at and discuss the texts they have made with one or more fellow pupils, or with the teacher.

As indicated above, there are many ways of working with the three competence aims that are explicitly related to literature. Consequently, it is to a certain extent up to the teachers to decide how this will be done. I would therefore like to end this chapter with a very brief account of the relationship between the subject curriculum on the one hand, and teaching on the other.

3.5 The English subject curriculum and teaching

According to Engelsen (2006), the LK06 subject curricula aim to control teaching through measures such as competence aims, on the one hand, while still providing local authorities with a great deal of flexibility on the other. The competence aims listed in the subject curriculum influence teaching to a great extent since the aims are legally binding, which means that teachers are obligated to promote all of the aims that apply to their pupils at each stage of their education (Engelsen, 2006). Although the subject curricula aim to control teaching by providing clearly defined educational goals, they do not specify how the competence aims are to be realized. According to the LK06, such matters are to be decided locally. This means that, within the centrally given framework that is the LK06, schools and

teachers are free to decide what learning materials they will use, how teaching is to be organized, which approaches and activities are to be used, and so on (Engelsen, 2006).

Since the LK06 subject curricula allow schools and teachers such flexibility, the way that a subject such as English is taught in lower secondary school may therefore vary from school to school and from classroom to classroom, although the competence aims are the same. This also means that it is reasonable to expect that the teaching of literature in the English subject may vary a great deal. Whether this is actually the case remains to be seen. The results of the present study will be presented in Chapter 5.

4 Methodology

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the goal of this qualitative study is to examine whether the teaching of English language literature in the 9th grade is based on the personal-response approach, or the reader-response approach. In order to learn more about this topic, I chose to interview eight English teachers about how they teach literature, conduct a small content analysis of four 9th grade textbooks, and then triangulate the findings. In the following I provide an overview the methods I have used in this study.

I have structured the first half of this chapter according to what Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen (2010) refer to as the seven stages in the research process. These are:

1. Selecting a problem
2. Reviewing the literature on the problem
3. Designing the research
4. Collecting the data
5. Analyzing the data
6. Interpreting the findings and stating conclusions
7. Reporting results

In each of the corresponding sections below, I first provide a brief presentation of each stage and then give an account of the procedures involved. Towards the end of the chapter, I comment on the study's validity, reliability and transferability.

4.1 Selecting a problem

According to Ary et al. (2010), the first step in the research process involves selecting a topic for investigation. This should be expressed in the form of a research question, which will provide the framework for the researcher's work. The research question and the process through which the topic of this study was chosen were accounted for in Chapter 1. As mentioned in the Introduction, I had previously carried out a pilot study on this topic in 2011. Because I found the research question I had used in the pilot study to be useful, I chose to keep it close to its original form.

4.2 Reviewing the literature

Researchers are then to review the literature that is relevant to their topic in order to acquire more insight into the issues at hand, and to see their own research in relation to previous studies (Ary et al., 2010, p. 32). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), researchers must have a thorough knowledge of the topic for examination “in order to be able to ask relevant questions” (p. 122, my translation). I therefore conducted searches for relevant books, articles and master’s theses and familiarized myself with these before making any further decisions about the study’s design. The relevant literature is reviewed in chapters 2 and 3.

4.3 Designing the research

Next, Ary et al. (2010) write that the researcher should plan his study in terms of the kind of data he needs to gather, the method(s) he will use to do so, in addition to how, where and from whom he is to gather this information (p. 32). I will therefore provide a brief account of how I designed this study in the sections below, in which I will address these issues.

4.3.1 The data I wanted to gather

Based on my research question, and the insight I had acquired from the pilot study and the literature review, I decided to collect data about the ways in which teachers work with different literary genres, rather than with literature in general. This was mainly because I wanted to be able to investigate whether teaching might vary according to genre. Since the goal was to examine how literature is taught in a Norwegian context, I limited my investigation to the four literary genres mentioned in the LK06 competence aims that apply to pupils in lower secondary school. These are drama, short stories, novels and poetry.

In order to get a more detailed understanding of the way that literature is taught, I wanted to gather data about other aspects of their teaching as well, such as assessment, their use of textbooks and literary concepts, and the extent to which they make use of their pupils’ experiences of literature when working with this topic. Furthermore, I decided to collect some information about the participants’ backgrounds and attitudes towards reading and literature, so that I would be able to examine the informants’ teaching in relation to their backgrounds.

Finally, I wanted to collect data from a selection of 9th grade textbooks so that I could analyze some of the tasks that are given in relation to literary texts. I chose to do so because

there is research to suggest that a considerable part of the teaching of literature is based on textbooks (Popova, 2010). Since the approach or approaches inherent in the textbooks may therefore influence how this topic is taught, I wanted to examine which of the two approaches might be reflected in the tasks that are found in these. I also chose to examine these tasks so that I could compare the findings of the interviews with the results yielded by the content analysis, thereby strengthening the validity of the study through triangulation (see section 4.9).

4.3.2 Procedure

For the purposes of the present study, I decided to collect my data through a combination of content analysis of textbooks and semi-structured interviews with teachers, so that I could triangulate the findings provided by the two. I decided to use content analysis for the examination of the textbooks, since this is a method that is commonly used to examine the characteristics of written materials (Ary et al., 2010). As for the semi-structured interview, this is an interview “in which the area of interest is chosen and questions are formulated but the interviewer may modify the format or questions during the interview process” (p. 438). I found this format suitable because it was likely to be structured enough to allow me to gather data about a number of given topics, while still being sufficiently flexible to allow me to collect more detailed information and pursue different aspects of the informants’ responses.

Furthermore, Ary et al. (2010) write that qualitative interview formats tend to involve the use of open-ended questions, which cannot be answered using one-word responses, and that “are designed to reveal what is important to understand about the phenomenon under study” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 438). I therefore decided to use such questions, since these would require the informants to express themselves in their own words and talk about different aspects of their teaching in the order in which it occurred to them. In this way I also hoped to reduce my influence on their answers and gain a better understanding of the topic from their perspective. As for the settings in which these interviews were to take place, I wanted to conduct these at the informants’ workplace, whenever this was possible.

4.3.3 Developing the interview guide

I then designed an initial interview guide based on my experiences from the pilot study and the data that I wanted to gather. Next, I piloted this document with a fellow student teacher

and an experienced English teacher, improving the interview guide after each trial. Finally, I devised two versions of the finished document – one in Norwegian and one in English, so the informants would be able to answer in the language that they felt most comfortable with (see Appendix 2 for a copy of the interview guide).

4.3.4 Sample – the informants

For the first part of my study, I decided to interview eight informants from different lower secondary schools. Most of these were to have had at least five years of English teaching experience, but I also decided to include two less experienced teachers. This was, if possible, to be able to explore potential differences related to their amount of experience.

Based on my previous experiences with qualitative interviews, I knew that it might be difficult to get a hold of this many informants. I therefore decided to start the search for informants in the lower secondary schools that were listed as partner schools of the University of Oslo, most of which are located in Oslo and Akershus counties. If I were unable to acquire the desired number of informants from these schools, I would make inquiries elsewhere. Since the selection process was based on a combination of ease of access and the researcher's requirements, the sample used in this study is a combination of a convenience sample and a purposive sample (Ary et al., 2010, pp. 428-431).

Once I had made a list of all the relevant lower secondary schools, I sent each of these a letter of introduction, in which I asked that my letter be forwarded to all the English teachers at that school. The teachers who wanted to participate then replied to my email and we arranged to meet for an interview. By following this procedure I got in touch with five of the eight informants who participated in this study. Since I was having difficulties getting hold of the last three informants, I contacted an acquaintance who put me in touch with the last three by forwarding my letter to teachers she knew. Two of these teachers worked at lower secondary schools in Oslo, both of which were partner schools of the University of Oslo. The last informant, however, was working at a lower secondary school in Vest-Agder county.

4.3.5 Sampling of textbooks

As already mentioned, I wanted to examine a selection of textbooks intended for use in the 9th grade, in order to examine the extent to which the data collected from these are in agreement with the data collected from the informants (see section 4.9 below). More specifically, I

wanted to examine two standard editions, one easily read edition and one textbook intended for in-depth studies in English so that I could compare these. I chose to include different types of textbooks in my sample, because I wanted to explore whether one of the two approaches was more common in some of these than in others. Since I wanted to ensure that different types of textbooks were included in the sample, the four textbooks were selected using stratified purposeful sampling (Ary et al., 2010, p. 430).

First, I accessed the websites of major textbook publishers in Norway and examined the selection of English textbooks that they provide. According to my examination, there were eleven textbooks available for the 9th grade at the time of writing. I then compiled a list of the different textbooks and, keeping the above-mentioned subgroups in mind, selected the first textbooks on my list that belonged to one of these, until the desired number of units from each subgroup had been found.

The textbooks that were included in the sample were *Searching 9: Learner's book – Engelsk for ungdomstrinnet*, published by Gyldendal Norsk Forlag AS in 2007, 1st edition; *Crossroads 9A: Elevbok Lettlest – Engelsk for ungdomstrinnet*, published by Forlaget Fag og Kultur AS in 2007, 1st edition; *Crossroads 9B: Elevbok – Engelsk for ungdomstrinnet*, published by Fagbokforlaget Vigmostad & Bjørke AS in 2007, 1st edition; and *On the Move 2: Student's Book*, published by Cappelen Damm AS in 2009, 1st edition. Of these four, *Searching 9* and *Crossroads 9B* are standard editions. *Crossroads 9A*, however, is an easily read edition in which the texts have been simplified, while *On the Move 2* is intended for in-depth studies in English for pupils in lower secondary school.

4.4 Collecting the data

I will now describe the manner in which I collected the data. I will first give an account of the way that the interviews were conducted and the structure of the interview guide. Next, I will briefly describe the eight informants as a group and evaluate the quality of my interviews. Finally, I will give an account of how I collected the tasks that were to be analyzed.

4.4.1 The interview sessions and the interview guide

Following Kvale's (1997) guidelines for qualitative interviews, I started the interviews with a short briefing session, in which I introduced myself and told the informant a bit about the study. At this stage I also addressed any questions or concerns that they might have had, for

instance regarding anonymity. Next, I let them choose whether they wanted to do the interview in Norwegian or English. I then asked each informant for permission to record the interview and gave them an overview of the interview's structure.

The interview itself was based on the questions in the interview guide, although the order of these questions varied from time to time (see Appendix 2 for a copy of the interview guide). Throughout the interviews I also used a combination of probes and pauses in order to elicit as much information as possible. A probe is a comment that the interviewer can use to obtain more detailed information, for instance by asking the interviewee to say more about a particular topic, while pauses require the interviewer to be silent for longer than the interviewee in order to encourage him or her to keep talking (Ary et al., 2010, p. 441).

The interview guide comprised 20 questions grouped thematically into seven categories. I normally started the interviews with questions one to three, related to the informant and his or her educational background and teaching experience. I would then go to the topic of literature in question four and ask the informants about the kind of fictional texts that they read with their pupils in the 9th grade. After that, in questions five to eight, I asked them about how they normally work with these different genres.

However, when it came to the way that the informants worked with short stories, in question five, I chose to give the informants a task in relation to a specific short story. This was "Skin" by Roald Dahl², which I sent to the informants a few days before the interview was scheduled to take place. I had asked them to read through this text before the interview, because I wanted them to be able to do so at their own pace. During the interview, they were asked to imagine that they were going to work with this short story in a 9th grade English lesson, and then invited to talk about how they and their pupils would prepare, as well as about how they would work with this short story in class. This task was intended as a warming-up exercise that would help them focus on the topic at hand and set the tone for the interview.

The next section of the interview guide comprised questions nine through 9.10, which

² There were several reasons why I chose this particular short story for the start of the interview. First of all, I chose it because an excerpt of this short story had been given as part of the preparation booklet for the 10th grade written exam in English in 2010. It therefore seems that this is the kind of short story that 10th graders are expected to be able to read according to the curriculum. Secondly, I also thought that this particular text was short enough to be suitable to use in relation to an interview situation. It was also my hope that the informants might perceive this task as less intimidating if they were to comment on a text by an author that most of them were likely to be familiar with. By choosing this short story, the informants would also be able to make use of their knowledge of this writer if they wanted to do so. I was, however, unable to find a copy of the excerpt given for the 2010 exam in time for the interviews. I therefore used another shortened version of the short story. A copy of this text can be found in Appendix 3.

I used to elicit more detailed information about specific activities or different aspects of their teaching on a more general level. Although these probes could be used at any time during the interview, I normally dealt with these questions after we had talked about the way the informants worked with the different types of literary texts.

The fourth group of questions, namely questions 10 to 14, was related to five specific aspects of the way that the informants work with literature on a general basis. In this part of the interview I asked the informants how often they used different elements in their textbook and how they made use of one of these elements. I also elicited information about how the topic of literature was assessed, and about the extent to which they made use of different literary concepts and the pupils' own experiences of literary texts in their teaching.

Next, I moved on to questions 15, 16 and 17 and asked the informants whether they felt that the 10th grade written examination influenced their way of teaching literature, and about how they work to promote one of the competence aims in the subject curriculum. I then normally ended the interview with questions 18, 19 and 20, which are related to the informants' attitudes towards literature in this subject and their reading habits.

When the interview was over, I held what Kvale (1997) calls a debriefing session, in which I asked the informants if they had any concerns regarding the study or the interview. I then asked them if there was anything else they would like to add. Finally, I informed them about the member checks I wanted to perform, and I thanked them for their time. After each interview, I also spent ten to fifteen minutes taking notes about the setting, the informant and his or her body language throughout the interview. I also made notes about my immediate thoughts and impressions of the informant and his or her way of teaching literature.

4.4.2 The informants

Of the eight teachers that I interviewed, two were male and six were female. Since the interviews were conducted anonymously, the informants have been assigned the following fictional names: Anna, Bernard, Britt, Elizabeth, Deborah, Kirsten, Philip and Sandra. More detailed information about the individual informants is provided in Appendix 1.

All of the informants except Elizabeth worked at one of the University of Oslo's partner schools. The schools where Anna, Deborah, Philip and Sandra worked were located in Oslo County, while the schools where Bernard, Britt and Kirsten worked were located in Akershus County. The interviews with these seven informants were conducted in person at

their workplace. Since Elizabeth was working in a school in Vest-Agder County, I interviewed her by phone.

4.4.3 Evaluation of interview quality

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) write that the quality of interviews can be assessed in relation to six criteria. The first two are related to the extent to which the interviewer is able to elicit “spontaneous, comprehensive, specific and relevant answers” (p. 175, my translation) from the interviewee, and the extent to which the interviewer follows up on the questions and clarifies the meaning of the interviewee’s answer. According to the third and fourth criteria, the interviewer should ideally be able to interpret the interview as it progresses and verify his or her interpretations consecutively. The fifth criterion is that the interviewer should be able to elicit long answers in response to short questions. Finally, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) write that the ideal interview should be self-communicating, in the sense that the message conveyed by the interviewee should require as little explanation as possible.

In relation to the first criterion, I feel that I was able to elicit answers that were spontaneous as well as comprehensive and specific at the same time. This was due to the teachers having had little opportunity to prepare for the interview, since they had only been informed about its main topic and given a short story to read. The open-ended questions also produced comprehensive answers. The amount of details in their answers, however, varied throughout the interviews. When I thought that their answers were lacking in detail, I was often able to elicit more specific information using the pre-formulated probes.

The extent to which the informants’ answers were relevant, however, also varied throughout the interviews. Although the informants’ replies were highly relevant most of the time, some teachers did bring up a few topics that were not related to this study. When that happened, I usually listened politely for a while, before posing the question again, in a different manner. In this way I was able to get relevant answers from all my informants.

As for the extent to which the questions are followed up by the interviewer, I feel that I was able to do this well, because I followed up their answers using probes and more detailed questions whenever I felt that this was necessary or desirable. I also feel that the interviews were successful in relation to how the meaning of the informants’ answers was clarified, and the extents to which the interviewer verified his interpretations and interpreted the interviews as they progressed. This is because I, throughout the course of the interviews, always tried to interpret as much of the informants’ answers as possible to know when I needed to ask for

more information. Whenever I was in doubt about my interpretation, I would repeat my understanding back to them, so that they could confirm or refute my interpretation.

When it comes to the extent to which I was able to elicit long responses using short questions, I feel that my interviews were largely successful. This is because I felt that my informants did most of the talking, whereas I rarely talked, except for the instances where I was introducing a new topic, asking a question or probing for more details. I also feel that the interviews were self-communicating and in accordance with the sixth criterion, since the teachers were able to express themselves at length using their own words, and because I was able to acquire additional information when I felt that it was needed.

Nevertheless, I do not think that these interviews were conducted in an ideal manner. After conducting the analysis, I feel that I should have probed for additional information a bit more often. I also feel that I should have interrupted some of the irrelevant replies earlier than I usually did. Nonetheless, judging by the criteria put forth by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), I think the quality of my interviews was reasonably good.

4.4.4 Collecting data from the textbooks

Once the four textbooks had been selected using stratified purposeful sampling, as explained in section 4.3.5 above, the specific tasks that were to be analyzed were selected using criterion sampling. According to Ary et al. (2010), this means that all of the cases that meet one or more of the researcher's criteria are included in the sample (p. 431). In this case, I decided to analyze all the tasks given in connection with literature that require the pupils to do something in relation to one or more literary texts. In practice, this meant that all of the tasks that require pupils to analyze, illustrate, discuss, role play, write texts of their own and so on, were included in the sample. However, tasks that mainly focused on grammar, or that did not contain any reference to a literary text, were excluded from the sample.

4.5 Analyzing the data

When I had collected the data from the informants and the textbooks, the information was analyzed using two types of analysis. I will elaborate on both of these in the following sections.

4.5.1 Analyzing the interview data

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that, although there is no universal procedure for transcribing qualitative interviews, the researcher needs to establish procedures for how this will be done. Furthermore, they also write that the manner in which this should be done depends on how the transcriptions will be used. Once the data had been collected, I therefore made a set of guidelines as to how I would deal with different aspects of the interviews in the transcriptions. Since six of the interviews had been conducted in Norwegian and would have to be translated as well, I also devised a few principles for the translation process.

First of all, I decided that the transcriptions were to reflect the interviewer and the interviewees' spoken language as much as possible on the one hand. This meant, for instance, that commas and full stops were to be placed whenever shorter or longer pauses occurred in speech. But on the other hand, I wanted the transcriptions to be readable as well. I therefore decided that the hesitations and floor-holding devices that did not contribute to the meaning of an utterance were to be omitted. Furthermore, all translation was to be done in chunks, in order to reflect the original utterances as much as possible.

Once these guidelines were in place, I transcribed the interviews by computer. In the transcriptions I included everything except irrelevant responses and information related to the informants' identity, their colleagues or others that were not involved in the study. The former was left out to save time, the latter to help preserve the informants' anonymity.

When I had finished transcribing the interviews, I prepared two sets of codes that I would use in the actual analysis of these data. All of the codes were clearly defined, and care was also taken to make sure that none of these overlapped. The first set of codes was derived from the characteristics of the two approaches that were listed in Chapter 2.³ By applying these codes to selected parts of the interviews, I was able to identify aspects of the informants' teaching that were in line with the personal-response approach, or the reader-response approach, or both. This first set of codes was divided into two columns, with the codes serving as indicators of the former approach to the left and the latter on the right. The

³ The reader will note that the features related to the teacher's role, and the activities that are associated with each of the two approaches, were not used as a basis for the coding of the interview data. There were two reasons for this. First, I did not want to make inferences about the teachers' roles in the classroom based on this data. In my opinion, this kind of analysis should be based on data collected through observation. Second, I had noticed that some activities, such as discussions, could be used in relation to both approaches. Consequently, it seemed not to be the activity itself, but rather its focus and the manner in which it was conducted that determined its theoretical orientation. So, instead, I chose to use the codes based on the two approaches' overall characteristics to determine the theoretical orientation of the activities described by the informants.

second set of codes was derived from the collected data. I wanted to include these in the analysis as well, in order to avoid loss of potentially relevant information.

Next, I analyzed the collected data one informant at a time. First, I familiarized myself with the transcriptions and other notes. I then selected some of the informant's most central utterances in relation to each question or topic, most of which were descriptions of different activities they use in the classroom. These quotations were then copied and pasted into a new document and divided into several sections, one for each question or topic.

While analyzing the data, I coded one utterance at a time. Throughout this process I was careful to make as few inferences as possible, in the sense that I only applied the codes that could be based on the collected data. I then counted the codes applied to each activity or utterance and classified it according to the clear majority of the codes. If the codes indicated that an activity mainly consisted of elements associated with one of the two approaches, it was labeled accordingly. If the distinction between the two approaches was not clear-cut, I classified the utterance based on my theoretical knowledge and overall impression of the activity. If the codes indicated that an activity contained elements associated with both approaches, and I was unable to classify it based on theory, it was classified as a mixture of the two. Once I had analyzed the data provided by an informant, I plotted the results into two documents: one for each individual informant and one for all of the participants.

4.5.2 Analyzing the textbooks

All of the tasks that had been selected from the four textbooks were analyzed according to four coding categories: *Location of authority*, *Aim of task*, *Required length of answers* and *Scope*. Each of these will be explained below. Based on its characteristics in relation to each category, a task was coded as reflecting the personal-response approach or the reader-response approach, or as being a mixture of these two if it displayed mixed characteristics. Once a task had been coded in this manner, it was classified as being in line with the personal-response approach, the reader-response approach, or both of these approaches, depending on the majority of the codes that it had been assigned. For each textbook, the number of tasks placed within each of the three categories was then counted, and the numbers converted into percentages in order to facilitate comparison.

In relation to the first category, I examined whether the wording of a task implied that the pupils were posited a passive role in the creation of meaning, since the answers were to be found in the author's text or the text itself, or if the pupils were to actively participate in this

process. Next, the second coding category was to indicate whether a task intended to explore the author's text or the text itself, or to gauge one or more aspects of the pupils' evoked works. If the pupils were assigned a passive role, or if the task was found to be mainly related to the author's text or the text itself, the task was coded as being in accordance with the personal-response approach. But, if the pupils were posited an active role, or the task was intended to explore their evoked works or their responses to these, the task was coded as being in line with the reader-response approach. As for the tasks that displayed mixed characteristics in relation to one or both categories, these were classified as mixture of the two, as mentioned above.

As for the third category, tasks that required fairly short answers were classified as being in accordance with the personal-response approach, whereas tasks that required relatively long answers were classified as being in line with the reader-response approach. Finally, in relation to the fourth category, the tasks that focused on a rather narrow topic were classified as being in accordance with the reader-response approach. In contrast, the tasks that focused on one or more wider topics were classified as being in line with the personal-response approach. As already explained, the tasks that were found to have mixed characteristics in relation to these points were classified accordingly.

In accordance with the definition of a task provided in Chapter 1, I distinguished one task from another on the basis of the numbering provided in each textbook. The tasks were therefore coded, classified and counted in accordance with the manners in which they were divided in their respective textbooks, whether this meant that a task consisted of a single prompt, or several prompts or subtasks. In the case of the latter, each task was coded based on the overall characteristics of all its prompts.

4.6 Interpreting the findings and stating conclusions

After analyzing the data, Ary et al. (2010) write that the researcher is to interpret the findings in relation to the research statement. In this stage of the process, I interpreted my results in light of the research question and the relevant theory presented in chapters 2 and 3. I also addressed potential discrepancies in the results and examined some of the implications that the findings might have for the teaching of literature (see Chapter 6). I then summarized the implications of the study's findings in Chapter 7.

4.7 Reporting results

Finally, the researcher is to make his or her “procedures, findings, and conclusions available [...] to others who may be interested” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 32). I have therefore provided a thorough account of my methodology in the present chapter, and presented the findings and conclusions in the chapters that follow. However, the reader will note that, due to the need to limit the scope of this thesis, some of the data that was collected during the interviews will not be presented.

4.8 Reliability

Ary et al. (2010) write that the term *reliability* refers to “The extent to which a measure yields consistent results” (p. 649). For interview studies in particular, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that this issue is related to the consistency of the interviews, the transcriptions and the analysis that has been conducted. I will therefore comment on the reliability of the interviews in relation to these three points, as well as the overall reliability of the content analysis.

The reliability of the interviews is first and foremost related to their quality, which I have commented on in section 4.4.3 above. As already mentioned, I chose this type of interview because it would allow me to ask each of the informants the same set of questions as well as additional questions whenever this was desirable. The pre-formulated questions may consequently have contributed to the consistency of the interviews. Moreover, I rarely changed the wording of these questions from one interview to the next. All the informants were also provided with the same information and instructions before the interview and were interviewed using the same interview guide. The settings in which the interviews were conducted were also similar for most of the informants, since seven of them were interviewed in their workplace. However, one of the interviews had to be conducted by telephone, which may have influenced the reliability of the findings.

Because all of the transcriptions were made by the same person, and according to the same sets of rules, one might argue that this is likely to have strengthened their reliability. However, the reliability of this process might have been negatively affected by the fact that six of the interviews had been conducted in Norwegian, and would have to be translated for the purposes of this study, while the remaining two were conducted in English.

As for the analysis of the interviews and the data collected from the textbooks, there is a chance that the consistency of the findings may have been affected by human error, since

the analyses were conducted by only one person. I did, however, attempt to strengthen the reliability of both of these analyses by using a coding-recording strategy, which involved coding the data collected from each informant or textbook twice, on separate occasions. Any discrepancies were then dealt with a third and final time (Ary et al., 2010). Furthermore, I also conducted member checks to confirm my analysis (see section 4.9 below).

4.9 Validity

According to Ary et al. (2010), *validity* refers to the truthfulness of a study's findings and depends on the extent to which the researcher has "established confidence in the findings based on the research design, participants, and context" (p. 498). However, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that the focus of validation should be shifted from the product or findings to the research process itself, because the validity of a study depends on its overall quality. The authors consequently argue that validity should be examined in relation to what they refer to as the seven stages of validation. These are: Thematization, planning, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, validating and reporting (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 253-254). In this section I will comment on the validity of this study in relation to the first six stages. I will also mention some of the potential sources of error whenever this is relevant.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) write that the validity of a study partly depends on the process through which the research problem is selected along with the study's research design. As for the former, I find that the connection between the relevant theory and the research question is sound, since I have simply examined two approaches to literature and seen these in relation to the way this topic is taught in the 9th grade. Furthermore, I do not claim that these approaches are mutually exclusive, since there certainly are other ways of working with literature.

When it comes to the quality of the research design, I have already given an account of my reasons for choosing semi-structured interviews and content analysis. For the reasons listed above, I regarded these methods as well-suited for the purposes of this study. Furthermore, I also planned to triangulate the findings provided by these two methods in order to strengthen the study's validity, based on the assumption "that the combination of methods results in better evidence" (Ary et al., 2010, p. 499).

From the beginning of the study, I also planned to attempt to control the influence of the researcher's bias through reflexivity. According to Ary et al. (2010), reflexivity involves

“the use of self-reflection to recognize one’s own biases and to actively seek them out” (p. 501). I therefore kept a journal as a record of my own thoughts and feelings towards the two approaches as part of the validation work. Throughout the study, I have actively tried to counteract the effect of my bias on the study’s findings, by being aware of my bias on the one hand, and constantly checking the results against relevant theory on the other.

As for other aspects of the study’s design, I should ideally have included more informants and textbooks. In relation to the interviews, I should also have avoided basing my findings on a combination of a purposive and a convenience sample. Although I had originally planned to collect additional data through observation in order to triangulate my data further, I was unable to do so, due to the need to limit the scope of this thesis.

When it comes to the informants, I do not feel that their credibility is an issue, as they are all English teachers, although they do have varying amounts of teaching experience. As for the interview itself, an evaluation of the interview quality was provided in section 4.4.3 above.

There are, however, several potential sources of error in relation to the interviews. The wording of certain questions, or my interviewing technique, may for instance have influenced the informants’ answers. Moreover, the informants might also have provided inaccurate information for different reasons. They may, for instance, have given me the answers they thought I wanted to hear, either to please me or to place themselves in a better light (Ary et al., 2010). The accuracy of the information may also have been influenced by factors to do with their mood, memory or interaction with the interviewer (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Nevertheless, I feel that I have attempted to counteract these potential effects on the findings by ensuring that the quality of the interviews was reasonably good.

During the process in which the interviews were converted from a spoken to a written form, it is possible that may I have unknowingly distorted the meaning expressed by the informants. I did, however, attempt to prevent this in two ways. First, by devising rules for how the transcription and translation was to be done, and secondly, by making sure that the meaning expressed in the written transcript was in agreement with the interpretations that had been confirmed by the informants during the interviews.

As mentioned above, the analysis of the interviews was based on two sets of codes, in order to increase the possibility that it would in fact examine the phenomenon under study. The first set was derived from theory for the purpose of distinguishing one approach from the other, while the second was based on the collected data and only had a supplementary

function, in the sense that these merely served to highlight other potentially relevant elements. I also feel that the validity of the analysis was strengthened by the process being based on direct quotes, instead of on summaries in which the information provided by the informants had been condensed.

Moreover, the validity of the content analysis will depend on the extent to which the four coding categories used in the analysis are valid. On the one hand, all of these were derived from the distinguishing features listed in Chapter 2 that could be applied to such tasks. On the other hand, these had to be slightly modified for the purposes of this study, which might have weakened the validity of the analysis.

Once the interview data had been analyzed, I conducted member checks in order to strengthen the study's validity. This is a process that involves asking the participants to review and comment on the researcher's interpretations in order to "help clear up miscommunication, identify inaccuracies, and help obtain additional useful data" (Ary et al., 2010, p. 500). I therefore sent each of the informants a copy of the sections and passages that concerned them and asked them to comment on these. Based on their feedback, the relevant passages were changed or amended and the overall findings adjusted.

Furthermore, I have also attempted to check the validity of the findings through triangulation. According to Ary et al. (2010), triangulation involves "Confirming data by using multiple data-gathering procedures, multiple sources of data or multiple observers" (p. 652). This will be done in Chapter 6, in which I compare the approach or approaches found in the textbooks with the informants' approaches to the teaching of literature, and examine the extent to which these two sets of findings are in agreement.

4.10 Transferability

The term *transferability* refers to "the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied or generalized to other contexts or to other groups" (Ary et al., 2010, p. 501). The extent to which the findings of this study may be applied to other textbooks, people and settings will first and foremost depend on their similarity with the contexts, textbooks and informants on which this study was based. It will therefore be up to the reader to judge whether and to what extent the findings of this study may be applied to other people and settings.

I have, nevertheless, attempted to help the reader determine the transferability of the

findings based on the interviews, by providing rich and sufficiently detailed information about the context of this study and its participants (Ary et al., 2010, p. 501). Still, there are several factors which may limit the transferability of these findings. One is that the findings are based on data collected from a small convenience and purposive sample comprising eight informants only. Second, the results may have been affected by the settings in which the data was collected. Third, the findings may also have been influenced by the researcher's bias, although I have attempted to counteract this effect through self-reflection, as explained above.

As for the results yielded by the content analysis, it will not be possible to generalize based on these findings. This is because I have only examined four out of eleven, that is to say 36 per cent, of the English textbooks available for the 9th grade. Although the reader may choose to apply these findings to textbooks with similar selections of tasks, the reader should be mindful of the fact that the sample consists of three different types of textbooks, as mentioned above. It is therefore likely that the reader will only be able to apply a section of the results to textbooks that he or she judges to be similar.

4.11 Summary

The present study is based on data collected from two sources: a combination of a convenience and purposive sample comprising eight teachers from the Oslo, Akershus and Vest-Agder counties, and a stratified purposive sample comprising four textbooks written for the 9th grade. While the specific tasks from the four textbooks were selected using criterion sampling, the interview data was collected through semi-structured interviews based on an interview guide. I then transcribed the interviews and analyzed the data collected from the informants and from the textbooks using the procedures described above. Next, I compared the extent to which these two sets of data were in agreement as to which approach or approaches characterizes the teaching of literature in the 9th grade. Finally, I presented the findings of the study thematically.

In this chapter, I have also commented on the reliability and validity of this study, as well as the transferability of its findings. Although I have taken steps to strengthen the study's reliability and validity throughout the entire process, the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other people, textbooks and settings will mainly depend on their similarity with the textbooks, informants and contexts on which this study was based.

5 Results and analysis

The reader will recall that the goal of this study is to examine whether the teaching of literature in the 9th grade is based on the personal-response approach, or the reader-response approach to literature. In this chapter I present the results of the eight interviews I conducted, as well as the results of the content analysis. I first provide a narrative introduction, in which I recount my own experiences during the interview process and briefly review the format of the interviews. I then provide a comparative overview of the informants who participated in this study, in terms of their backgrounds and attitudes towards literature and reading. Next, I present my findings thematically, according to the following categories:

1. What kind of literary texts do the pupils read?
2. How do they work with short stories?
3. How do they work with poetry?
4. How do they work with novels?
5. To what extent do teachers make use of textbooks?
6. How is the topic of literature assessed?
7. Teaching literature: The informants' thoughts
8. Which approach or approaches are inherent in 9th grade textbooks?

In the following, I will present these results before discussing my findings in Chapter 6.

5.1 Narrative introduction

I have spent a lot of time in schools: First as a pupil, then as a university student, a student teacher and a fully qualified teacher. But, walking into the eight lower secondary schools I visited during my work with this study, I had a new experience. Walking into these schools as an outsider come to interview teachers, I realized that schools really are small worlds of their own. Cut off from the rest of the world, each school has its own rules and conventions.

While I was making my way to the teachers' lounge, where I had usually agreed to meet my informants, I generally saw few pupils out in the halls. I assumed that they were all inside the classrooms, and as I walked past the closed doors I wondered what was happening

on the other side of those doors. And I realized that this was, in a way, exactly what I had come to find out. In relation to the small part of the English subject that is literature, I had come to conduct interviews with teachers in an attempt to glimpse the goings-on behind their classroom doors.

After a few minutes' wait in the teachers' lounge, I was met by the teacher I had come to see. Most of them then offered me a hot beverage, which I politely declined. At that point, I always got the feeling that I was disturbing the flow of their day, since most of them appeared to be between classes, as they were lugging around books, laptops and CD-players. Some of them even told me about their busy day at the beginning of the interview. At that point I remember feeling deeply grateful to them for taking the time to linger in the teachers' lounge with me for an hour or so, talking about literature.

Before we began the interview, I gave each of the informants some information about the study and the interview itself (see Chapter 4 for details). I then started the interview with questions about the informant and his or her background. Next, we would move on to talk about what kind of literary texts they read with their pupils in the 9th grade and how they typically work with these different genres.

In the second half of the interview, I would attempt to gather information about, for instance, the importance of literary concepts such as *plot* and *setting* in their teaching, and the extent to which they encourage their pupils to make use of their own experiences of the texts when they are working with literature. Next, I would steer the conversation towards the topics of textbooks and assessment, before I would round off by asking them a few questions related to their attitudes towards literature and reading in this subject, and about their reading habits.

After going through the information I collected, I am left with the impression that these data merely provide snapshots of these eight teachers at a given point in time. Most of them will probably continue to develop the way that they teach literature as they become even more experienced. In fact, most of the informants had agreed to participate in this study because they wanted to become more aware of how they teach this topic.

As mentioned, I started and ended the interview with questions about the informants, their backgrounds, reading habits and attitudes towards literature and reading in the English subject. The names of the informants and some of the answers to these questions are listed in Appendix 1. In the two following sections I will give a comparative overview of this information, in the sense that I will examine some of the differences and similarities between the eight informants in relation to these points.

5.2 The informants' backgrounds

The eight English teachers who participated in this study are between 29 and 45 years old, and their amount of experience as teachers of English ranges from three and-a-half to seventeen years. Philip, who has only taught for three and-a-half years, is the least experienced of the eight. Next, there are Deborah, Sandra and Kirsten, who have taught English full-time for four, five and nine years, respectively. Among the most experienced are Anna, Elizabeth, Britt and Bernard. Anna has 11 years of teaching experience, Elizabeth has 13, Britt 15 and Bernard 17 years.

Among the eight informants, there is one secondary education teacher with a bachelor's degree, four secondary education teachers with a bachelor's degree and additional courses, and three secondary education teachers with a master's degree. All of the informants have studied English as a subject and have completed the required practical teacher training courses. All of them have also received parts of their higher education at the University of Oslo. Otherwise, they have a wide range of educational backgrounds. There are, however, three teachers who stand out from the rest, since they have degrees related to literature. These are Deborah, who has a minor in literature, Philip, who studied literature as a part of his bachelor's degree, and Sandra, who has a master's degree in English literature.

5.3 The informants' attitudes towards literature and reading

As one might expect from teachers who have volunteered to participate in a study about literature, they all agree that this topic is a very important part of the English subject. When I asked them what they thought was the main goal of teaching literature in this subject, Anna, Deborah, Britt, Kirsten and Elizabeth replied that they believed that literature is important for the development of their pupils' English language competence. Philip and Bernard, however, thought that the main goal of teaching literature was to give pupils the opportunity to discover the joy of reading. Sandra was the only one of the informants who insisted that there were two equally important reasons for teaching literature in the English classroom. She argued that, on the one hand, this was likely to greatly promote the pupils' cultural competence in this subject, but on the other, she also wanted her pupils to become fond of reading.

When asked about their reading habits, all of the teachers replied that they were fond of reading. Their responses, however, differed when it came to the number of books they

thought they were able to finish in an average month. Bernard, Elizabeth and Kirsten stated that they read one book or less per month, and were the participants who read the least. They were followed by Sandra, Deborah and Philip, who expressed that they were able to finish one to two books per month. The two teachers who read the most were Britt and Anna, who said that they read three books or more in an average month.

I will now present the rest of my findings, starting with the kind of literary texts the pupils read in the 9th grade and how they work with these different genres in class.

5.4 What kind of literary texts do the pupils read?

When I had asked the teachers a few questions about their background, I asked them about the types of fictional texts that they normally have their pupils read in the 9th grade. As mentioned in Chapter 3, one of the main competence aims related to literature in the English subject curriculum states that each pupil should be able to: “read and discuss a representative selection of literary texts from the genres poetry, short stories, novels and drama from the English-speaking world” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2010, p. 7). As mentioned in chapters 1 and 4, I have therefore chosen to focus on these four literary genres, meaning that any reference that the informants might have made to other genres have been left out.

According to the data I collected, all of the informants read short stories with their pupils. Another feature that they have in common is that none of them have their pupils read plays, since this is a genre that they normally work with in the 10th grade. When it comes to novels, six of the teachers replied that they read one or more novels with their pupils in the 9th grade. The two teachers who did not read entire novels with their pupils at all were Anna and Deborah. According to Deborah, she prefers to work with shorter texts, since novels take up too much time compared to what her pupils tend to get out of it.

As for poetry, most of the informants stated that they read poems. Out of all the informants, Sandra was the only one who said that she did not make use of these texts. According to her, this was due to her being displeased with their textbook, and she was therefore having a hard time finding good literary texts that were suitable for 9th graders.

In short, all eight informants reported that they work with short stories. Furthermore, there were seven who worked with poems and six who worked with novels. There were, as mentioned, no informants who reported working with plays in the 9th grade.

Below I will go through the data I collected on how the eight teachers and their pupils

work with the different literary genres mentioned above. Since drama receives little or no attention in the 9th grade, I have chosen to focus on the three remaining genres.

5.5 How do they work with short stories?

Next in the interviews, I wanted the informants to give me an example of how they and their pupils work with short stories. In this part of the interview, all of the participants were given the same short story to use as their point of departure, namely “Skin” by Roald Dahl. (My reasons for choosing this short story are accounted for in the previous chapter. A copy of this text can also be found in Appendix 3). I asked each of the informants to imagine that they were going to use this short story in a 9th grade English lesson the following day. I then invited each of them to talk about how they would prepare for this lesson, if and how they would have their pupils prepare, and the tasks or activities they would use in the classroom.

I will now present three different ways of working with short stories, as reported by Philip, Anna and Deborah. These three lessons have been selected because I consider them to be fairly representative of the different ways in which the eight informants work with this genre. In this respect, Philip’s lesson will serve as an example of a lesson which consists of activities that are mostly in line with the personal-response approach, and which tend to start with activities reflecting this particular approach and end with others associated with the reader-response approach. I will then describe the class planned by Anna as an example of a lesson in which both approaches are more equally represented. In this context, her lesson will also serve as an example of a lesson that does not appear to contain any form of progression from one approach to the other. Last, I will give an account of Deborah’s lesson to describe a way of working with short stories which is mostly in accordance with the reader-response approach. After each of these accounts, I will provide a brief analysis of the activities involved. I then summarize the results in section 5.5.4.

5.5.1 Working with a short story: Philip’s lesson plan

Philip would prepare for his lesson by reading the short story and then analyzing it in terms of the literary devices the author has used. He would also have prepared some written exercises for his pupils. Philip would then have had his pupils prepare for the lesson by reading the short story at home and writing down any words or phrases that they found difficult.

As for the lesson itself, Philip would have started by reading the text out loud to his

pupils. He would then have dealt with the words in the text that they did not understand. Next, he would have had them work with the questions he had prepared, either individually or in pairs. When they had finished, Philip would have gone through the questions and answers with the class as a whole.

When I asked him to describe the sort of questions he would use, he said that:

These would be analytical questions, such as: What's the story about? Who are the main characters? What's the message? [...] Can you identify the writing tools? Did you like the short story, yes or no? And why did you or why didn't you like it?

His questions would, in other words, mostly focus on matters related to the text's plot, characters, message and literary devices, as well as the pupils' feelings about the text. Later on in the interview, Philip also said that he probably would have gone more thoroughly through the different literary devices the author has used, if there were time.

Philip's way of preparing for this lesson reflects the personal-response approach, since he focuses on the text as the object of study when examining its formal aspects. The analytical questions do, however, appear to comprise tasks which reflect both the personal-response and reader-response approaches. Moreover, these questions appear to be ordered in a progression starting with those associated with the former approach and ending with those associated with the latter. This is due to the fact the first four questions in the quotation above seem to focus on matters related to the plot, main characters, message and literary devices, which are topics that are considered to be important in the text-oriented personal-response approach. The last two questions do, however, focus more on the individual pupil and his or her opinions of the text, and therefore reflect the reader-response approach. Nevertheless, this part of the lesson is likely to be more in accordance with the former approach than the latter, since Philip's main focus appears to be on the literary devices.

A closer examination of the tasks also indicates that these are mostly in line with the personal-response approach, since these appear to be related to a wide variety of topics. Furthermore, Philip's tasks also seem to be of the type that can be solved independently of each other. Philip confirmed this assumption to me and added that he prefers to use these kinds of tasks, because he wants to give his pupils the freedom to choose the order in which they work with these questions. The pupils may therefore influence the structure of this particular part of Philip's lesson, if they choose to do so.

Philip also expressed that he mainly focuses on the more concrete and text-related

features of literary texts, since these elements tend to be less linguistically demanding for his pupils to work with. This, in turn, means that all of his pupils may be able to work with these tasks to a certain extent, regardless of their differing levels of English language competence. According to Philip, the tasks that focus on the pupils' subjective opinions of literary texts tend to be more linguistically demanding. Therefore, he rarely uses such tasks, since he thinks that it is much more important to make his lessons understandable for all his pupils. Nevertheless, Philip thinks that the more competent pupils will be able to have an emotional response to the text, even if they do not work explicitly with these issues in class.

5.5.2 Working with a short story: Anna's lesson plan

According to Anna, she would have prepared for this lesson by familiarizing herself with the text and planning the pre-reading activities that she would use in the start of the lesson. However, since "Skin" is quite a long short story, she would not have had her pupils read it as homework.

When it came to the lesson itself, Anna said that she would have started with a set of pre-reading activities related to the text. First, she would have had her pupils reflect on the short story's title. Next, she would have gone through some of the characteristics of this genre. She might then have asked them to choose one of the descriptive paragraphs in the text and draw the setting, or have encouraged them to attempt to predict what will happen in this short story.

After that, Anna and her pupils would have read through the story together. First once without stopping and then a second time, during which she would pause every now and then and ask her pupils comprehension questions, in order to make sure that they all understand the plot. Next, she would have had them examine this short story's structure and literary devices more closely, and explore its features in relation to their knowledge of the genre.

Moreover, she would have attempted to interpret the short story with her pupils. According to Anna, she welcomes different interpretations of literary texts, as long as these are plausible in relation to the text. She also told me that she prefers to have her pupils make up their own minds before they go through her opinions, or the opinions of scholars, about a specific literary text. By doing so, she believes that her pupils may be less inclined to uncritically adopt the views of others. Anna then told me that she might have had the pupils write a short reflective note in their logs "about what they thought about the short story. Whether they liked it or not, and why. And if there was anything in particular that they

reacted to or that surprised them” (My translation).

My analysis indicates that these lessons contain activities that reflect both the personal-response and reader-response approaches. Moreover, these activities do not appear to be ordered in any kind of progression, in the sense that the lesson starts with activities that mainly reflect one approach and ends with ones that reflect the other. There are, for instance, activities that are in accordance with the reader-response approach at the very start of the lesson and towards the end. These are the activities in which the pupils are to reflect on the title of the short story and predict what will happen, as well as the activities in which they are to suggest possible interpretations of the text and write a reflective note. This is because these activities require the pupils to respond to their evoked works, as opposed to the text itself or the author’s intentions. These are also activities in which the pupils themselves contribute to the meaning-making process, and which involve few tasks of a rather narrow variety. Anna also confirmed that the interpretation process tends to be based on the pupils’ thoughts and opinions.

In contrast, Anna appears to be teaching in line with the personal-response approach when she and her pupils examine the text’s plot, literary devices and genre characteristics. When working with such tasks, their focus appears to be on the text itself as the object of study, and on its inherent meanings and formal features. These are also activities in which the pupils appear to contribute little to the resulting meaning. The same applies to the part of the lesson in which Anna might have introduced the theories and opinions of literary scholars.

5.5.3 Working with a short story: Deborah’s lesson plan

When I asked Deborah how she would prepare for a lesson like this, she replied that she does not feel that she needs to prepare any pre-reading activities, since she normally bases her teaching on the pupils’ contributions. She also added that she never has her pupils read an unfamiliar text as homework. Instead, they go through new material together in class.

The lesson that Deborah described starts with two pre-reading activities. In this part of the lesson, she said that she would have talked a bit about the author and explored her pupils’ expectations in relation to this short story. She would then have encouraged them to reflect on the short story’s title in terms of what it might mean. Next, they would have read the text itself, section by section. After each section, she would have asked them questions related to comprehension or prediction of content, such as “What’s happening?” and “What do you think will happen next?” When they work with such questions, Deborah appears to be open to

the pupils' thoughts and ideas, as long as these can, at least partly, be related to the text itself. She also encourages them to give reasons for their views, before they go on to read the next section to find out what happens. Moreover, she normally also asks them questions about their opinions of the text so far and the different literary devices that can be found in the text.

Deborah then said that she would have made them read the rest of the short story as homework, and that they would deal with any difficult words and expressions the following lesson. Since "Skin" has an open ending, she would also have had them write their own version of the end later on.

When I asked her whether she prioritizes the pupils' personal interaction with the text or their understanding of the text on a more objective level, she said that she focuses on both, but that the former is more important to her than the latter. Nevertheless, she said that she attempts to combine these two concerns by weaving in references to literary concepts whenever they happen to touch upon these issues. Next, when I asked her about the extent to which she feels that she influences the interpretation process that takes place inside the classroom, Deborah replied that:

Well, I try not to influence it so much. If I give them the impression that I have the answers, then that will inhibit the pupils. Because then they'll try to give me the answer that they think I want. That's why I want them to discover these things for themselves, so that they can try to make up their own minds and then argue for their opinions. That's what's most important. (My translation).

Like Anna, Deborah said that she tries to influence her pupils' opinions as little as possible. Therefore, she normally wants them to make up their own minds about the literary texts they read. Based on this quote, she seems to regard her own interpretation as one of many possible interpretations of a text.

An analysis of Deborah's lesson plans indicates that her lessons mostly comprise activities that are in line with the reader-response approach. These are, for instance, the activities in which they explore their expectations for this particular short story, reflect on its title and write their own versions of the ending. This is due to the pupils being expected to respond to their individual evoked works, in a process in which they contribute a considerable part of the resulting meaning. The tasks involved also appear to focus on rather narrow topics and to require relatively long answers as well, which is typical for tasks associated with the reader-response approach. Nevertheless, there is one aspect of this lesson which reflects the

personal-response approach, and that is the brief presentation of the author, since this activity emphasizes the author and his or her version of the text.

Furthermore, the process through which the text is read and discussed one passage at the time appears to reflect both approaches to literature. This is because some of Deborah's questions focus on comprehension of content and formal aspects, which require the pupils to respond to the text as the object of study, thus assigning them a passive role as decoders of the text's inherent meaning and qualities. Some of her other questions, however, focus on the pupils' opinions of the text so far and their thoughts about what will happen next, which requires them to respond to their evoked works and participate in the creation of the meaning.

5.5.4 Summary: Working with short stories

The work done in relation to short stories seems to consist of a mixture of activities, some of which are associated with the personal-response approach, while others are associated with the reader-response approach. According to my analysis, this means that none of the participants work with short stories in a manner that is entirely in line with either approach. While one informant mostly makes use of activities that reflect the personal-response approach, two others mostly use activities that are in line with the reader-response approach. The remaining five participants, however, use a relatively even number of activities associated with each of these approaches.

The results of my analysis are summarized in Table 5.1 on the following page. In this table, the three different theoretical orientations of these lessons, as well as the names of the informants associated with each of these, are displayed in the left and middle columns, respectively. The structures of the informants' lessons are indicated in column to the right. Due to reasons of space, the personal-response approach is abbreviated to PRA and the reader-response approach to RRA in the tables below.

Table 5.1

Short stories: Classification of classroom activities and lesson structure

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION	INFORMANT(S)	LESSON STRUCTURE
Mainly in accordance with the PRA	Philip	From PRA to RRA
In accordance with both the PRA and the RRA	Sandra Kirsten	
	Mainly in accordance with the RRA	Anna Bernard Elizabeth
Britt Deborah		

In the table above we see that Philip wanted to teach “Skin” in a manner which is mainly in accordance with the personal-response approach, whereas the five teachers Sandra, Kirsten, Bernard, Anna and Elizabeth wanted to make use of a relatively even number of activities associated with each of the two approaches. Britt and Deborah, however, would mostly have used activities in line with the reader-response approach. As for the manner in which their lessons were structured, we see that Philip, Sandra and Kirsten’s lessons start with activities that reflect the personal-response approach and end with activities associated with the reader-response approach. In contrast, the lessons planned by Bernard, Anna, Elizabeth, Britt and Deborah do not appear to involve any particular form of progression.

5.6 How do they work with poetry?

After we had finished talking about short stories, I invited the teachers to describe how they typically work with poetry. Based on the data collected from the seven informants who work with this genre, poetry is taught in a manner that likely reflects both the personal-response and reader-response approaches, although some of the teachers may emphasize one of the approaches more than the other. The table on the next page shows my main findings in relation to poetry. The layout of this table is similar to that of Table 5.1 above.

Table 5.2

Poetry: Classification of classroom activities and lesson structure

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION	INFORMANT(S)	LESSON STRUCTURE
Mainly in accordance with the PRA	Bernard	From PRA to RRA
In accordance with both the PRA and the RRA	Philip Anna Elizabeth	
	Mainly in accordance with the RRA	Britt Deborah
Kirsten		

Although none of the informants appear to be teaching entirely in accordance with either of the two approaches, we still see that Bernard’s way of working with poetry mainly comprises activities that are in line with the personal-response approach. The opposite appears to be the case for Kirsten, whose teaching mostly reflects the reader-response approach. The distribution of activities associated with the two approaches is, however, relatively even for Philip, Anna, Elizabeth, Britt and Deborah.

Furthermore, Bernard starts his lessons with activities associated with the personal-response approach and ends with activities that draw on the reader-response approach. Philip, Anna and Elizabeth’s lessons are structured in a similar manner, although, as mentioned above, their lessons are more balanced in terms of theoretical orientation. Britt and Deborah both start their lessons with activities belonging to the reader-response approach and end with ones belonging to the personal-response approach. This is also the case for Kirsten, although the main focus of her lesson is in line with the reader-response approach.

Below I will illustrate these different approaches to poetry by providing a brief account of four of the lessons that were described to me. First, I will summarize the lesson described by Bernard as an example of a lesson that is mainly in accordance with the personal-response approach, but that may incorporate activities that are in line with the reader-response approach towards the end. Next, Elizabeth and Britt’s lessons will serve as examples of classes in which activities belonging to both approaches are used regularly. In this case, Elizabeth’s lessons will exemplify those that start with activities associated with the

personal-response approach and end with activities belonging to the reader-response approach, whereas Deborah's lesson will exemplify the opposite. Lastly, I will provide a summary of Kirsten's lesson as an example of a way of working with poetry that is mainly in accordance with the reader-response approach.

5.6.1 Bernard's poetry lesson

Bernard and his pupils start by reading or listening to the poem before they examine it more closely. Bernard describes this second portion of the lesson like this:

Then we try to analyze. I try to tell the kids that it's all about imagination, and not about what's wrong or what's right with a poem. I try to tell them to look at the whole stanza when they analyze, instead of analyzing it line by line.

The core of Bernard's poetry lesson thus appears to consist of analysis. He also emphasizes that poems are open to interpretation, in the sense that different people might understand the same poem in different ways. This statement is in agreement with the reader-response approach, which focuses on the individual reader's transaction with the text, rather than the meaning that is regarded as inherent in the text itself. When I ask Bernard for details about what this analysis involves, he says the following:

First of all, we have to look at the person who wrote it and the kind of background they have. And then you look at the words and see if these have anything to do with what this person stands for or his or her background. Then we look at the message that this person is trying to convey and how it fits into the everyday life of the kids.

However, based on these details about the analysis that takes place, the individual activities seem to be more in accordance with the personal-response approach. This is because they examine the author's background and word choices before they look at the author's message or intentions with the text. Since the pupils seem to be expected to decode the intentions or meanings that are rooted in the poem itself, they also appear to be posited a passive role in the creation of meaning.

According to Bernard, the lesson typically ends with him and his pupils attempting to make a connection between the poem's message and the pupils' everyday lives. This is an activity I have classified as belonging to the reader-response approach, since this is likely to

be a process that requires both Bernard and his pupils to go outside the text and actively create meaning in a manner that is likely to involve the pupils' responses to their evoked works.

Bernard's way of teaching poetry thus mainly comprises activities associated with the personal-response approach. Although activities that are more in line with the reader-response approach are also included in his lessons, these are usually saved for the end.

5.6.2 Elizabeth's poetry lesson

When they are working with poems, Elizabeth and her pupils usually start their lesson by reading the poem out loud. Next, they typically attempt to identify and examine some of the literary devices that the author has used. This type of analysis is mainly in accordance with the personal-response approach, since it is likely to involve a passive decoding of the author's text. Moreover, the activity seems to include a number of tasks of a rather wide variety, in the sense that they deal with a range of different topics or literary devices.

The second portion of Elizabeth's lesson is a discussion about the poem's meaning or message. When asked about the extent to which she thinks that she influences the interpretation process, she says that:

It depends on how they respond. Sometimes I feel that I guide them a lot towards what I think is the message, for instance. Because I can so clearly imagine what the answer is. Other times they might say things that I hadn't thought of. So, when some of them have really good ideas, we pursue those. (My translation).

In this quote, Elizabeth claims that her approach varies somewhat, depending on her pupils' responses. If they have little to say about the poem, her own interpretation will necessarily shine through to a greater extent than when her pupils have ideas of their own. When that happens, she says that she is willing to pursue their ideas. Since this last part of the lesson is open for the pupils' responses to their evoked works, this activity has been classified as being in line with the reader-response approach. If her pupils share their own ideas about the poem, then this part of the lesson is likely to involve the active creation of meaning in relation to relatively few and narrow tasks, which is also characteristic of the above-mentioned approach.

In sum, it seems that Elizabeth's poetry lesson comprises activities that are associated with both the personal-response and reader-response approaches. It also seems that Elizabeth

tends to start her lessons with activities that are more in line with the former approach, before ending with activities that are associated with the latter.

5.6.3 Deborah's poetry lesson

Deborah and her pupils first read the poem in question and then discuss its message, before they move on to examine its form, genre and the literary devices used by the author. When asked about the extent to which she encourages her pupils to make use of their own experiences of texts when they are working with literature, she says that she does so all the time:

I always ask them what they think. At this level, what others think is not really interesting. It's about making them think for themselves and discover how to read different types of texts. It's about building some confidence, or abilities, when it comes to reading, so that they can interpret the texts for themselves. (My translation).

Since Deborah says that she normally focuses on the pupils' experiences of literary texts in her lessons, it seems reasonable to deduce that this would also be the main emphasis of their discussion of the poem's message. If the emphasis is on the pupils' responses to their evoked works, the first part of the lesson would be in line with the reader-response approach.

In the second part of the lesson, in which they examine the poem's form, literary devices and genre, the main focus appears to have changed. These activities seem to focus on the text as the object of study and to require a careful examination of its details, which indicates that this part of the lesson is in line with the personal-response approach. It therefore seems that the first part of Deborah's lesson consists of activities in accordance with the reader-response approach, whereas the remaining time is spent on activities that are more in line with the personal-response approach.

5.6.4 Kirsten's poetry lesson

Kirsten and her pupils also normally begin their lessons by reading the poem itself. Then they start talking about and interpreting the poem. When asked to describe this interpretation process in greater detail, Kirsten put it like this:

I almost always prepare a few questions or take some notes [about the poem] myself. Then I can ask them if they are thinking the same as me or if they see the same things.

[...] But I don't want to influence them, so I would rather have them say what their thoughts are first, before I turn to that. It might be that they are way off track and then I just have to try to tell them that. But I think that, to start off, you should be open for what the pupils are thinking and what kind of associations they have. (My translation).

So, although she said that she prepares for the lesson by devising a few questions and interpreting the poem for herself, Kirsten seems to express that she is mainly concerned with her pupils' experiences and opinions of the poem. Therefore, it is likely that Kirsten and her pupils respond to aspects of the pupils' evoked works, instead of the author's text or the text itself. Kirsten also confirmed that she would accept several different interpretations of the same poem. Since the focus is on the pupils' evoked works, and because there is room for different interpretations, this part of her lesson is in line with the reader-response approach.

Furthermore, they work with comprehension questions on a regular basis. Kirsten explained that their textbook contains tasks with different levels of difficulty, so that the pupils can choose tasks according to their level of English language competence. According to my analysis, the majority of these tasks appear to be in line with the personal-response approach, since most of these require the pupils to respond to the author's text.

When I asked her if there is anything else that she expects her pupils to be able to comment on in relation to poetry, Kirsten expressed that she rarely touches on formal elements or literary devices, since she finds that pupils rarely need to know these things for the 10th grade written examinations. A lack of focus on such details implies the absence of further activities in accordance with the personal-response approach.

In short, the way that Kirsten and her pupils work with poetry seems to be mostly in accordance with the reader-response approach, since her main focus is on her pupils' feelings and opinions about the poems. But her way of teaching poetry also includes tasks that are in line with the personal-response approach on a regular basis, as seen above.

5.7 How do they work with novels?

When the informants had told me about the way that they usually work with short stories and poems, I asked them to talk about how they and their pupils typically work with novels. As mentioned above, six of the eight participants reported that they read one or more English language novels with their pupils in the 9th grade. These six were Kirsten, Bernard, Elizabeth, Britt, Sandra and Philip. When working with novels, most of these teachers seemed to follow

a specific procedure. According to the data I collected during the interviews, their methods appear to be relatively uniform.

Below is an overview of the procedures that the six informants normally follow. The order in which the activities are carried out is displayed in the left column, while the middle column contains a brief description of the obligatory activities. The right column lists the activities that are optional, and that only a few of the informants use regularly.

Table 5.3
The informants' procedures when working with novels

SEQUENCE	OBLIGATORY ACTIVITIES	OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES
1	Pupils select and read a novel	Conversations about the novels the pupils are reading
		Revision of relevant literary concepts
		Hand-outs with a variety of written tasks
2	Written book review	
3	Oral presentation	

In other words, the teachers normally start by having their pupils choose and read a novel that they find interesting. Some of the teachers also said that they would make use of one or two of the optional activities listed in the right column, while their pupils were reading their books. A few of them would have conversations with their pupils about the books they were reading, or arrange for the pupils to talk about their books in groups. One teacher would go through a selection of literary concepts with her pupils, while two others reported that they sometimes gave their pupils a hand-out with written tasks to solve. Their work with novels would then normally end with the pupils writing a book review and/or presenting their novel orally in groups, or to the rest of the class.

I will now go through each of these activities, starting with the obligatory selection and reading process, before moving on to the three optional activities, the written book review and the oral presentation. I will first describe the each of these activities and then provide a brief analysis of these towards the end of each section. Finally, I will summarize my findings in section 5.7.4.

5.7.1 Selecting and reading a novel

As already mentioned, six informants start by having their pupils select and read a novel that they find interesting. Four of the teachers, namely Sandra, Britt, Bernard and Elizabeth, also reported that their pupils normally need to have these novels approved by them first. Sandra also told me that she would provide her pupils with six sets of books that they could choose between, according to their level of competence, and that they would then work with these novels in groups. The five remaining teachers had their pupils work with their novels individually. According to all six informants, most of the reading is done at home, although they might have the pupils read at school as well, especially in the beginning.

Since the reading process takes place within the individual pupil, this part of their work with novels will not be analyzed. Instead, the analysis will be based on the activities in which the pupils are supposed to respond to these texts.

Conversations while the reading is underway

Kirsten, Sandra and Britt mentioned that they would normally have conversations with their pupils about the novels while they were reading. According to Britt, these conversations give her the opportunity to provide her pupils with the help they need while they are reading, particularly in relation to difficult vocabulary. Kirsten's conversations with her pupils appear to be similar to Britt's, but Kirsten also added that these talks are a good way of keeping track of her pupils' progress, and that they allow her to put some pressure on those who might be lagging behind. Since the conversations described by these two informants are mainly related to issues to do with vocabulary and time management, these activities will not be analyzed here, because they do not involve any form of response to the novel being read.

However, the focus of Sandra's conversations is different from that of the two other teachers. When I asked her what she and her pupils would talk about, she said that:

I'm more interested in hearing about their subjective experiences of the text. [...] I'll talk with them about what they think about the book and whether it's exciting. I'll ask whether there is a certain part of the story that they have liked more than the others so far. [...] We'll talk about how they experienced the text. (My translation).

Since Sandra mainly focuses on the pupils' responses to their evoked works, and thus their feelings, thoughts and opinions about the novel as they move through it, her conversations

with her pupils appear to be in accordance with the reader-response approach. Furthermore, the tasks or questions that she uses also seem to be rather few and of a narrow variety, in the sense that each question requires a fairly long answer in relation to a narrowly defined topic.

In addition to the conversations between teachers and pupils described above, Kirsten told me that she arranges for the pupils to talk to each other about their books. When they do this, the pupils sit in a circle and take turns presenting their novels. According to her, she lets her pupils decide how they would like to present their books, although she does encourage them to read a scene from their novel aloud for the other pupils as part of their presentation.

As it is largely up to the pupils to decide how they want to present their books, it is reasonable to assume that they would both be allowed to talk about the text in the more objective manner associated with the personal-response approach, and in the more subjective manner associated with the reader-response approach. However, because Kirsten seems to grant her pupils the opportunity to interpret the text the way that they want, and to talk about their responses to their evoked works, this activity is mostly in line with the latter approach.

Revision of relevant literary concepts

Once the pupils have started reading their novels, Sandra sometimes goes through a selection of basic literary concepts with them as well. She does so because she wants her pupils to be familiar with some of the features that characterize novels, and because she wants them to be prepared for the book review they will write later on. According to Sandra, this activity is carried out as a classroom dialogue in which she asks the questions and the pupils answer.

This activity appears to be in line with the personal-response approach, because it seems to be based on the assumption that meaning is firmly rooted in the text itself. Since the novels and their structural aspects seem to be treated as primary in relation to the pupils, the pupils are likely to be assigned a passive role as decoders of text. Furthermore, the classroom dialogue described by Sandra is also likely to involve many and a wide variety of questions.

Working with a variety of written tasks

Every once in a while, Elizabeth gives her pupils a hand-out with different written tasks for them to work with individually while they are still reading their novels. When I asked her for more details about the questions she normally gives them, she said that the pupils were to write a short summary of each chapter and a bit about their thoughts and reactions to the plot.

By doing so, Elizabeth said that she could make her pupils “work more closely with the text and develop some thoughts of their own” (My translation).

On the whole, these questions appear to draw upon both the personal-response and reader-response approaches to literature. According to my analysis, the tasks that require the pupils to summarize the novel’s content are in line with the personal-response approach. This is because the pupils are assigned a passive role in relation to the author’s text, in which the meaning is assumed to reside. In contrast, the tasks which are designed to gauge their thoughts and opinions about different parts of the plot appear to be in accordance with the reader-response approach, since these questions seem to require the pupils to respond to their evoked works in a process in which they are supposed to contribute to the resulting meaning.

5.7.2 Writing book reviews

All six teachers then have their pupils write book reviews when they are supposed to have finished reading their novels. The pupils are then usually given a list of the different points or elements that they are expected to include. All of the informants also reported that they assess and grade these book reviews.

When I asked Philip to identify some of the elements his pupils were normally expected to include in their written reviews, he said:

Well, they have to identify the setting and say something about how the setting influences the story. They have to identify the main character and two other characters in the book, and describe these characters. They have to say something about the plot [...] and how the plot develops. They have to say something about the turning point of the story. [...] They also have to say something about what it was like to read the book. Was the book easy to read or was it hard? Was it believable? Was it not believable? Did you enjoy it? Why or why not?

As we can see in the excerpt, Philip expects his pupils to comment on different elements such as setting, plot and turning point, as well as include a description of some of the main characters. He also wants them to comment on their opinions about the book and their reading experience, and thus write something about the book from their own perspective.

The information I collected from the five other teachers is fairly similar to that provided by Philip. An analysis of the elements that Philip described indicates that both approaches are represented, since some of the tasks are in line with the personal-response

approach, while others reflect the reader-response approach. In relation to the tasks associated with the former, the pupils are typically assigned a passive role, since they are expected to locate, absorb and rephrase meaning which is firmly rooted in the text. This is, for instance, the case when they are required to provide a plot summary and identify different aspects of their novel, such as its theme, turning point and setting. However, the part of the book review in which they are supposed to evaluate the novel and provide reasons for their views is more in line with the latter approach. This is because this part of the assignment requires them to respond to their evoked works. In this process, the reader is primary and the text secondary, and the pupils are expected to contribute to the creation of meaning.

However, some of these elements may also elicit a response that may be in accordance with either of these approaches, or even both. This is the case when the pupils are supposed to comment on the novel's message or provide an analysis of some of the characters. In relation to these elements, the pupils might choose to respond to the meanings considered as inherent in the author's text or the text itself. Alternatively, they may choose to respond to aspects of their evoked works. This means that the book reviews seem to contain a number of elements in accordance with one of the two above-mentioned approaches, as well as a few elements in which the pupils themselves may determine the nature of their responses.

Although the teachers' expectations in relation to the book review are fairly uniform when it comes to the different elements the pupils are to include, there was one informant whose version of this activity was slightly different from that of the others, Bernard. He mentioned that he operates with three different sets of requirements for the book review, depending on the individual pupil's level of English language competence. On the most basic level, he wants his pupils to write something about "the author, the publisher and the year the book was published. Also [about] the main characters, the plot, the climax and the ending". As for the most advanced pupils, he told me that he wants them to go deeper into the plot, comment on their opinions, and maybe include reflections about what they have learnt or suggest an alternative ending.

Bernard therefore seems to expect the less competent pupils to be able to comment on aspects associated with the personal-response approach, since these pupils are to identify different parts of the book and provide a plot summary, among other things. As mentioned, these are tasks in which the meaning is assumed to be inherent in the text and in which the pupils are consequently posited a passive role in the meaning-making process. In contrast, he wants his most competent pupils to reflect on the plot and what they have learnt from the

book, as well as provide an evaluation of the novel. These tasks appear to be related to the pupils' evoked works, and to assign them an active role in the creation of meaning, which means that these tasks are most likely in line with the reader-response approach. Bernard's requirements therefore seem to vary according to the individual pupil's level of proficiency.

Finally, four out of the six informants who reported that they normally have their pupils write a book review also said that they sometimes have them present their novel orally as well, either to the rest of the class or in smaller groups.

5.7.3 Oral presentation of the novels

The four teachers who reported having their pupils present their novels orally from time to time were Bernard, Elizabeth, Philip and Britt. When I asked them about their requirements for these oral presentations, they all replied that these were largely the same as those for the written book reviews. In addition, they said that this part of their pupils' work would normally be graded as well.

For Bernard, Elizabeth, Philip and Britt, the oral presentation therefore appears to reflect the pupils' written work. In accordance with the analysis of these requirements provided in section 5.7.2 above, it seems that this type of oral presentation is likely to elicit responses associated with both approaches to literature. Furthermore, it is also likely that the pupils will be able to determine the nature of their own responses at certain points during the presentation, since some requirements may elicit a response that may be in line with either, or both of these approaches. This may, for instance, apply to tasks related to character description and the novel's message, as mentioned above.

I would, nevertheless, like to provide an example of how one of these teachers and their pupils work towards an oral presentation such as this one. In this case I would like to use the format described by Britt, since her set-up differs slightly from those described by the other teachers, in the sense that her format seems to grant the pupils a certain extent of freedom. Britt describes her format in the following manner:

I give them a sheet which includes some points that have to be included and some other points they can choose between, based on their preference. So, they have to say something about the title and they have to say a bit about the writer and the plot. Then they can choose to focus on one of the characters, or on the topic, or they may say something about other things this person has written. [...] This means that, if you're very interested in the writer, you can say a lot about that. If it's very important for you to recommend the book, then you can talk a lot about that. (My translation).

In other words, Britt provides her pupils with a list of elements that they have to include, and another list from which they can choose. This allows her pupils to focus on the elements that interest them the most. In accordance with the analysis of these elements provided in section 5.7.2, the obligatory points appear to be in accordance with the personal-response approach. In contrast, the elements related to the reader-response approach appear to be optional, because the pupils can choose whether or not they want to evaluate or recommend the book they have read. Since the pupils can determine the extent to which they respond to the novel in accordance with the reader-response approach, the overall nature of their responses is consequently likely to vary depending on the points they choose to include or emphasize.

Moreover, Britt expressed that this particular format also allows her to tailor the requirements of the presentation to the individual pupil's level of English language competence. She explained that, in this way, the weaker pupils may be able focus more on the novel's plot, if they feel that providing an interpretation is too difficult for them.

Although Philip expressed that his format for the oral presentations was similar to that of the written reviews, he also mentioned that he usually finds that it is easier for his pupils to express themselves and use their own words when they are talking about their own experiences of a novel. It is therefore possible that the reader-response approach might play a somewhat larger role in oral presentations than it does in the pupils' written reviews.

5.7.4 Summary: Working with novels

The informants first have their pupils select and read a novel that appeals to them. While the pupils are still reading their books, some of the teachers have conversations with them about their novels, revise literary concepts or give them sets of written tasks to solve. Out of the four types of conversations described by the informants, two were related to the pupils' responses to these texts. Both of these activities were found to be in line with the reader-response approach. While the revision of literary concepts seems to be in accordance with the personal-response approach, the sets of written tasks appear to reflect both approaches.

Most of the teachers then have their pupils write a review of the book they have read and/or present it orally. While the requirements of the written review are in line with both the reader-response and personal-response approaches, there are also certain aspects of this work in which the pupils themselves may determine the nature of their responses. This is also the case for the oral presentations, since the requirements for the written reviews are reflected in this part of their work as well.

5.8 To what extent do teachers make use of textbooks?

Next, I questioned the teachers about the extent to which they make use of three different elements in their textbook(s) when they teach literature. These were the selection of literary texts in their textbook(s), and the pre- and post-reading tasks that accompany these texts. In order to make the informants' responses more comparable, I requested that they indicate the frequency of their use on a scale from one to five. Here, the number one indicates that they do not make use of an element at all, two that they do so rarely, three that they use it sometimes, four that they use it often and five that they make use of it all the time.

I chose to ask the informants about this topic, because I wanted to examine the extent to which the approach or approaches inherent in the 9th grade textbooks might influence the way that literature is taught. Table 5.4 below illustrates the informants' responses.

Table 5.4

The informants' use of textbooks when teaching literature, on a scale from one (never) to five (all the time)

INFORMANT	SELECTION OF LITERARY TEXTS	PRE-READING TASKS	POST-READING TASKS	TOTAL
Anna	4	5	5	14/15
Bernard	2	3	3	8/15
Britt	5	3	5	13/15
Deborah	3	3	1	7/15
Elizabeth	3	1	4	8/15
Kirsten	4	3	5	12/15
Philip	4	4	3	11/15
Sandra	4	5	5	14/15
TOTAL	29/40	27/40	31/40	

This overview shows that the majority of the informants make use of the textbook on a regular basis when they work with literature. Of the eight informants, Anna and Sandra seem to be the ones who use the textbook most frequently. They are followed by Britt, Philip and

Kirsten, who appear to make use of their textbooks quite often. Bernard, Elizabeth and Deborah, however, only seem to rely on their textbooks occasionally.

Since the three above-mentioned elements appear to be a regular feature in most of the informants' lessons, I therefore conducted a content analysis of a selection of textbooks for the 9th grade, to examine which of the two approaches may be found in these. The results of the analysis are presented in section 5.11 below.

5.9 How is the topic of literature assessed?

After we had addressed their use of textbooks, we moved on to the topic of assessment. In this context, the term *assessment* refers to the formative testing of the pupils' knowledge and skills in relation to literature that takes place at various points during the school year (Simensen, 1998). This type of assessment is formative because its purpose is "to provide information about the learning process to students as well as teachers" (Simensen, 1998, p. 252). I invited each of the informants to talk about how they usually assess learning in relation to the topic of literature in the 9th grade, because I hoped this might provide some additional information about the way that literature is taught.

Based on the data I collected, the majority of the activities that the informants use reflect the assessment that is done in relation to novels, which has been analyzed in section 5.7 above. As already mentioned, six of the informants have their pupils write reviews of their novels and then assess these. Four of them sometimes also have their pupils present the book that they have read orally, either in groups or to the rest of the class. These presentations are normally assessed as well.

Of the remaining activities reported by the informants, four were oral assessment situations in which the pupils were to talk about or discuss a literary text with either a teacher or one or more fellow pupils. A good example of such an activity is the one described by Kirsten in section 5.7.1, in which the pupils sit in a circle and present their books.

In addition to these four, Bernard described an activity involving role-plays that he sometimes uses in relation to short stories. According to him, he uses this activity to assess his pupils' understanding of a short story's characters and plot. When I probed him for further details, he revealed that he also welcomes different interpretations of the characters from the pupils who have the skills to do so, as long as their interpretations have some basis in the text.

Moreover, many of the informants stated that they use different types of written tests

or quizzes in relation to literature. According to my data, the types of tasks that are involved appear to vary from one teacher to another. Anna, Philip and Sandra, for instance, reported that they made use of tests which involved analyzing a text using one or more literary concepts. Some of these teachers also expected their pupils to prepare for these tests by memorizing a selection of facts related to the formal features of the literary text or texts in question.

However, the written test used by Britt appears to be different from that of the three other informants. She described her test like this:

I've given them a written test on a short story by Hemingway. For that test they were supposed to learn something about what characterizes a short story. [...] They were supposed to know a bit about the author as well. They should also be able to say something about this particular short story. Then we also tried to connect these three things. Like this 'Iceberg theory', for example. What is actually visible for the reader here? What can we read between the lines? [...] What kind of small hints does he give? What kind of people are they? What will happen later on? (My translation)

In this quote, Britt explained that her tests typically involve a number of questions related to a wide range of topics. According to her, this test would require some knowledge about the author, the formal characteristics of short stories and relevant literary devices. Some of her questions also require the pupils to comment on the short story's characters and speculate about what will happen next.

Deborah described something similar when she told me about a test that she would use in relation to the short story "Skin". However, she reported that she normally gave tests in which the pupils would be able to choose between three tasks on different levels of difficulty. Whereas the first and easiest of the three typically involved making a summary of the text, the second required them to make a summary and express their opinions of the text, while the third typically involved interpretation.

Next, Anna described an assignment in which the pupils were to produce a written interpretation of a literary text. According to her, the pupils are assessed on their interpretations, on the one hand, but on the other, they are also free to interpret the text in different ways, as long as they are able to argue for their views.

Lastly, Sandra, Deborah and Philip stated that they sometimes have their pupils write literary texts of their own and then assess these. These are normally supposed to be inspired by one or more existing texts that they have gone through in class. The three informants then

either have them write their own version of a specific part of the text, or the text in its entirety.

All of these activities will be analyzed in the sections below. For neatness' sake, I will first deal with the activities that I found to be in line with both the personal-response and reader-response approaches, before I will turn to the ones that appear to be in accordance with either of the two approaches. Finally, I will summarize my findings in section 5.9.4.

5.9.1 Assessment in accordance with both approaches to literature

As mentioned, the majority of the activities used for assessment are related to the work done in relation to novels, since most of the informants assess their pupils' book reviews and/or their oral presentations. According to the analysis provided in section 5.7, these two activities appear to be in accordance with both the personal-response and reader-response approaches to literature. However, there were three other activities which were found to reflect both of these approaches as well.

The first is the activity involving role-plays which was described by Bernard. On the one hand, this activity seems to be in accordance with the personal-response approach, since the pupils first and foremost respond to the author's text or the text itself, rather than to their individual evoked works. On the other hand, this activity appears to contain an element of the reader-response approach as well. This is because Bernard reported that he also welcomes different interpretations of the characters from the pupils who have the skills to do so, as long as their interpretations have some basis in the text. This suggests that the pupils who also want to respond to their evoked works are encouraged to do so.

The second activity is the written test described by Britt, since it appears to contain questions which would be in line with both of the above-mentioned approaches. The questions related to genre characteristics, biographical facts about the author, the Iceberg theory and foreshadowing would, for instance, be in accordance with the personal-response approach. This is because these tasks appear to require an examination of the author's text, or the text itself, as well as attention to textual details. However, the rest of the questions mentioned by Britt appear to be in accordance with the reader-response approach. The questions related to the characters in the text might, for instance, require an evaluation of the characters based on the pupils' evoked works. The last question, which invites the pupils to speculate about what happens next, is also likely to be based on their evoked works. Moreover, this test also appears to be in accordance with both of these approaches, since it

contains both many and of a wide variety of tasks, as well as a few narrow tasks which require longer answers.

The third and final activity is Deborah's written test, in which the pupils are to choose between three tasks on different levels of difficulty. An analysis of these tasks reveals that the first question is fully in accordance with the personal-response approach, since it requires the pupils to examine the text itself and then absorb and rephrase its inherent meaning. Next, the second question is in line with both approaches, because it requires the pupils to respond to their evoked works as well, since they are supposed to evaluate the short story. Lastly, the third question reflects the reader-response approach, since the pupils are free to produce an interpretation based on their evoked works, in which they would supply much of the meaning.

5.9.2 Assessment in line with the personal-response approach

Five assessment activities were found to be in line with the personal-response approach. These were the written tests or quizzes used by Anna, Philip and Sandra, in which the questions were mainly related to literary concepts such as *plot* or *setting*. Following the analysis of the first question on Deborah's written test, described in section 5.9.1 above, questions related to such formal aspects of the literary texts seem reflect the personal-response approach. This is because such tasks tend to require an examination of the authors' text or the text itself, and to posit a passive role for the pupils, who are supposed to reproduce the meaning expressed in the text.

Furthermore, the fact that some of the answers to these questions could be memorized beforehand implies that the questions were designed to elicit a particular set of responses from the pupils. This, in turn, indicates that the prompts were not intended to encourage them to respond to their evoked works, since such responses would vary from one pupil to another. The format of the quizzes, in which the answers are supposed to be quite short, is also in accordance with the personal-response approach. This format is consequently not suited for questions in line with the reader-response approach, since such tasks would require longer answers.

5.9.3 Assessment in line with the reader-response approach

Lastly, there were eight assessment activities which were classified as being in accordance with the reader-response approach. Four of these were the activities in which the pupils were

supposed to talk about or discuss a literary text with either a teacher, or one or more fellow pupils. The next three were the activities that require the pupils to write literary texts of their own, while the last was the written assignment described by Anna, in which the pupils are to produce an interpretation of a literary text.

These three forms of assessment seem to reflect the reader-response approach, because the pupils appear to be able to respond to their evoked works. They are thus given an active role in the meaning-making process, since they are able to contribute to the resulting meaning.

5.9.4 Summary: The assessment of literature

My findings with regard to assessment are summarized in Table 5.5 below. This table displays the names of the informants and the number of activities found to be in accordance with either the personal-response approach or the reader-response approach, or to contain elements from both of these approaches. The total number of activities according to the three categories is listed in the bottom row. Next to these numbers, the percentage of activities in accordance with each of the three categories is indicated in parenthesis.

Table 5.5
The theoretical orientation of the informants' assessment in relation to literature

	PRA	BOTH PRA AND RRA	RRA
Anna	1	-	2
Bernard	-	3	-
Britt	-	3	-
Deborah	-	1	1
Elizabeth	-	2	-
Kirsten	-	2	1
Philip	3	1	2
Sandra	1	1	2
SUM	5 (19%)	13 (50%)	8 (31%)

From the table above we can see that most of the assessment activities appear to reflect both the reader-response and personal-response approaches, since 50 per cent of the 26 activities

that were analyzed were classified as being in accordance with the two. Moreover, 31 per cent of the activities were classified as being in line with the reader-response approach, whereas 19 per cent were found to reflect the personal-response approach.

5.10 Teaching literature: The informants' thoughts

When the informants had described the way that they work with different types of literary texts, I asked them a few questions about the way that they work with literature in general. For instance, I asked them whether they taught literary concepts such as *plot* and *turning point*, and if they did so, I wanted to know how important these terms were in their teaching and why they chose to teach them. Next, I invited them to talk about the extent to which they felt that they made use of the pupils' own experiences of texts when working with literature in the 9th grade. Lastly, I asked them which of the following two elements was most important to them in relation to literature: the pupils' personal experiences of the texts or their understanding of the texts on a more objective level, in terms of literary concepts such as those listed above. The purpose of these questions was to obtain a better understanding of the informants' thoughts about the way that they work with literature, so that I could compare their own accounts of their teaching practices with my interpretations.

As already mentioned, literary concepts tend to be associated with the personal-response approach, whereas activities that involve the expression of pupils' thoughts, feelings and experiences of a text tend to be in line with the reader-response approach. The extent to which the informants emphasize these two different aspects might therefore give us an overall impression of the way that they teach literature on a general basis.

In the following, I will first summarize my findings in relation to each of the three above-mentioned questions, in sections 5.10.1, 5.10.2 and 5.10.3, respectively, before I provide a brief overview of these findings in section 5.10.4. I will then compare these findings with my interpretations of the way that these teachers work with short stories, poetry and novels in section 5.10.5.

5.10.1 How important are literary concepts in the 9th grade?

As stated above, I first asked each of the informants how important literary concepts were in their 9th grade English lessons. In order to make their answers more comparable, I asked them to indicate the extent to which they work with such concepts on a scale from one to five. In

this scale, the number one indicates that they never work with these concepts, two that they rarely do so, three that they do so sometimes, four that they often do so, and five that they work with these all the time. The table below illustrates the informants' answers.

Table 5.6
The extents to which the informants teach literary concepts

FREQUENCY	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
INFORMANT(S)	None	None	Deborah Kirsten Elizabeth	Britt Philip Anna Bernard Sandra	None

According to the results displayed in Table 5.6, none of the informants answered that they never, rarely or always work with such literary concepts when they are dealing with literature. Deborah, Kirsten and Elizabeth answered that they sometimes work with such terms, whereas Britt, Philip, Anna, Bernard and Sandra replied that they often work with these concepts in their lessons. It would thus seem that all of the eight informants teach such concepts and that these are also a regular part of their teaching.

Overall, the informants' responses in this part of the interview were rather uniform. There were, however, some who were of the opinion that literary concepts were important and should be taught, and some who regarded such terms as less important. Deborah expressed that she rarely deals with such literary concepts directly, but rather incorporates them into her lessons whenever her pupils' responses indicate that it might be appropriate to do so. Philip was of a different opinion. When I first asked him about the extent to which he uses such literary concepts in his teaching, he replied:

Oh, that's a tough one, because I've already told you that I try to make it available for all the students. [...] They are important, though, because I happen to believe that everyone can find examples of these writing tools. I do tend to rely on these things pretty often, but not all the time.

Here it seems that Philip senses a potential contradiction in his statements. This is due to the fact that he, earlier in the interview, had stressed that he normally focuses on the more

objective aspects of literature in order to make the content understandable for all his pupils. In this part of the interview, he therefore seems to sense that this might be at odds with his frequent use of literary concepts. Philip then expressed that still believes that all of his pupils would be able to work with these terms to a certain extent, even if these concepts might be a bit difficult for some of them.

I then asked the informants why they choose to teach these concepts to their pupils. In this part of the interview, I received a wide range of answers. Five of the informants stated that they teach these because they believe it will help their pupils become better writers, and that this may consequently promote their ability to write literary texts of their own on the 10th grade written examination. There were, however, only two participants who believed that their pupils would need to analyze literary texts using such terms on these examinations.

Furthermore, there were three participants who thought that working with these concepts would add to their pupils' experiences of literature, and two who believed that their pupils enjoy analyzing literary texts in this manner. Three informants were also of the opinion that pupils will need to know these concepts with regard to their continued education. Moreover, there were two teachers who believed that they worked with these concepts because they themselves had been taught to work with literature in this manner. Lastly, two informants also told me that they prefer to start the work with a literary text by examining it in terms of different literary concepts. This is because doing so helps their pupils get into the text and gives them the instruments they need to examine it further.

5.10.2 How important are pupils' own experiences of literature?

After I had explored the informants' use of literary concepts in their lessons, I examined the extent to which they encourage their pupils to make use of their own experiences of texts when working with literature. Once again, I asked them indicate the extent that they did so on a scale from one to five, as described above. In this part of the interview, Britt replied:

It's probably not every time. But the discussion part has to be there, so I keep it in the back of my mind. How do you understand it? Is it possible to interpret this differently? If I understand it this or that way, do you agree or disagree? Why? [...] I say that many times, but I think that there are many pupils who are reluctant to share their ideas. Not just with their fellow pupils, but with me as well. (My translation).

According to Britt, she sometimes encourages her pupils to express their opinions and ideas

about literary texts. She also seems to express that doing so can be difficult at times, because the pupils might be reluctant to share their ideas in class. Kirsten said something similar when she answered this question:

I think I do that very often. But you know, it happens that no one feels that they have anything to say. Then you just have to control it more yourself, and maybe suggest an interpretation to try to get them to say something. (My translation).

Kirsten thus mentioned that she, on the one hand, often encourages her pupils to express their feelings and experiences about literary texts. But, on the other, there are also times when her pupils have little to say and when she consequently has to do most of the talking as she attempts to get them to participate.

Among the eight informants, Elizabeth had the most unusual answer to this question. She argued that her pupils' experiences with a text would influence the work that they do with it in the classroom, even if they were conducting an objective analysis:

Well, there are fewer feelings involved when we analyze a text. [...] But they are still bound to understand things differently. For instance, when they are supposed to describe the main character, some of them might experience him differently from the others. Then they have to give their reasons for this and find out why that is. So it's personal in that way. [...] I cannot see how they can possibly work with a text without basing it on their experiences. (My translation).

According to Elizabeth, all literary analyses are necessarily based on the individual pupil's experiences of the text. She therefore argues that most of the work they do with literature involves the pupils' experiences of the texts to a certain extent.

An overview of the teachers' responses in relation to this topic is displayed below.

Table 5.7

The extents to which the informants make use of their pupils' own experiences of literature

FREQUENCY	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
INFORMANT(S)	None	None	Philip Sandra Bernard Britt	Kirsten Elizabeth	Anna Deborah

Based on the results presented on the previous page, none of the informants indicated that they never or rarely make use of their pupils' experiences, while four of them, namely Philip, Sandra, Bernard and Britt, said that they sometimes do so. Moreover, the two informants Kirsten and Elizabeth indicated that they often do this, whereas Anna and Deborah replied that they always make use of their pupils' experiences of literary texts in their lessons.

5.10.3 Which of the two elements do teachers prioritize?

As stated above, I also collected information about which of the following two elements was most important to the informants in relation to literature: the pupils' personal experiences of the texts, or their understanding of the texts on a more objective level? The teachers' answers are presented in Table 5.8 below. In this table, their emphases have been divided into three categories displayed in the top row, namely *Objective understanding of author's text or the text itself*, *Both objective understanding and the pupils' experiences* and *The pupils' experiences of literary texts*. The names of the informants who were placed within each category are listed in the bottom row.

Table 5.8
The informants' main emphasis when teaching literature

EMPHASIS	Objective understanding of the author's text or the text itself	Both objective understanding and the pupils' experiences	The pupils' experiences of literary texts
INFORMANT(S)	Philip	Elizabeth Bernard Britt	Sandra Kirsten Deborah Anna

As can be seen from this table, Philip was the only one of the informants who answered that he thinks it is most important that the pupils are able to understand the text objectively. Elizabeth, Bernard and Britt expressed that they did not want to choose, because they think that both aspects are equally important in their teaching. Four of the informants, namely Sandra, Kirsten, Deborah and Anna, replied that they think that their pupils' personal experiences of literary texts is the most important element in their teaching.

5.10.4 Summary of the informants' accounts

The findings from Tables 5.6 and 5.7 have been cross tabulated in Table 5.9 below. Here, the extent to which the participants work with literary concepts is indicated horizontally, whereas the extent to which they work with their pupils' own experiences of literature is indicated vertically. The importance of each factor is indicated on a scale from one to five similar to that mentioned above. The name of each informant then marks the relative importance of these two aspects.

The main emphasis of each informant's teaching has been indicated in brackets behind their name, based on the findings displayed in Table 5.8. The informants who reported that an objective understanding of the text was most important have received the label *PRA*, whereas the informants who indicated that they emphasized their pupils' personal experiences of literary texts have received the label *RRA*. The informants who indicated that these two elements were equally important have received the label *BOTH*, since their way of teaching literature is likely to comprise elements associated with both of the above-mentioned approaches.

Table 5.9
The relative importance of literary concepts and the pupils' own experiences of literature

	USE OF LITERARY CONCEPTS				
	1: Never	2: Rarely	3: Sometimes	4: Often	5: Always
1: Never					
2: Rarely					
3: Sometimes				Bernard (BOTH) Britt (BOTH) Philip (PRA) Sandra (RRA)	
4: Often			Elizabeth (BOTH) Kirsten (RRA)		
5: Always			Deborah (RRA)	Anna (RRA)	

The table summary on the previous page shows that all eight participants work with both literary concepts and their pupils' experiences of literary texts, although they may prioritize somewhat differently. When it comes to literary concepts, three of the informants work with these on an occasional basis, whereas the remaining five often work with these. We also see that four teachers draw on their pupils' experiences of literature occasionally and that two often make use of these, while the remaining two teachers draw on these all the time when they are working with literature.

Based on the results displayed in Table 5.9, it would also seem that the teaching of literature is rather comprehensive, since both of the main elements associated with the personal-response and reader-response approaches are included in the teaching of this topic. In other words, the teachers' responses to these three questions indicate that their teaching is in accordance with both of these approaches.

5.10.5 Comparison of the informants' accounts and the researcher's interpretations

Some of the main findings of the interviews are summarized in Table 5.10 on the following page. This table presents the names of the informants and the ways in which they work with the three different genres, as well as their overall impression of how they teach literature. In Table 5.10, the label *BOTH* indicates that the informants' way of teaching a particular genre was found to be based on both the personal-response and reader-response approaches. Next, the label *Mainly PRA* indicates that their teaching was found to mostly reflect the former approach, although it also seems to contain elements associated with the latter. Furthermore, the label *Mainly RRA* indicates that their way of working with a particular genre was found to be mainly in line with the reader-response approach, although it also appears to contain aspects of the personal-response approach. In the cases where an informant has stated that he or she does not work with a specific type of literary text, the genre in question has been given the label *Genre not taught*.

For neatness' sake, the informants are ordered according to the main characteristics of their teaching, starting with those who seem to be more influenced by the personal-response approach and ending with those who appear to be more influenced by the reader-response approach.

Table 5.10

The researcher's interpretations compared to the informants' accounts

INFORMANT	LITERARY GENRE			INFORMANT'S OVERALL IMPRESSION
	Short story	Poetry	Novel	
Philip	Mainly PRA	BOTH	BOTH	PRA
Bernard	BOTH	Mainly PRA	BOTH	BOTH
Elizabeth	BOTH	BOTH	BOTH	BOTH
Britt	Mainly RRA	BOTH	BOTH	BOTH
Anna	BOTH	BOTH	Genre not taught	RRA
Sandra	BOTH	Genre not taught	BOTH	RRA
Kirsten	BOTH	Mainly RRA	BOTH	RRA
Deborah	Mainly RRA	BOTH	Genre not taught	RRA

Based on this comparison, there appears to be some discrepancy between the researcher's interpretations and some of the informants' overall impression of the way that they teach literature. As displayed above, Philip and Bernard's ways of working with two of the three genres were found to be in accordance with both approaches, while Philip's way of working with short stories and Bernard's way of working with poems were found to be more in line with the personal-response approach. Philip, however, described his way of working with literature as reflecting the personal-response approach, while Bernard described his as being in line with both. In contrast, Elizabeth's way of working with literature and her description of her own teaching appear to be identical, in the sense that these were all found to reflect both approaches.

As for Britt, her way of teaching literature appears to be in accordance with both approaches in most cases, although her way of working with short stories was classified as being mostly in accordance with the reader-response approach. Moreover, Anna and Sandra's ways of working with the two genres that they teach were classified as being in accordance with both approaches, although they themselves described the emphasis of their lessons as

being more in line with the reader-response approach. As for Deborah and Kirsten, their ways of teaching were found to reflect the reader-response approach in relation to one of the literary genres that they teach, while their ways of working with the remaining genre(s) were classified as being in accordance with both approaches. However, Kirsten and Deborah described the main emphasis of their teaching as reflecting the reader-response approach.

5.11 Which approach or approaches are inherent in 9th grade textbooks?

As mentioned in section 5.8 above, the informants appear to use the literary texts and the tasks given in connection with these on a regular basis. The approaches used in these textbooks may consequently influence the way that the topic of literature is taught. Therefore, I chose to quickly analyze the tasks given in relation to literary texts in four 9th grade textbooks, in order to examine which of the two approaches may be found in these books (see Chapter 4 for details). The results of the content analysis are illustrated below.

Table 5.11
The theoretical orientation of the literary tasks in four 9th grade textbooks

	SEARCHING 9	CROSSROADS 9B	CROSSROADS 9A	ON THE MOVE 2
Tasks associated with the PRA	18 (30%)	46 (52%)	13 (52%)	20 (44%)
Tasks associated with both approaches	16 (27%)	8 (9%)	3 (12%)	13 (28%)
Tasks associated with the RRA	26 (43%)	34 (39%)	9 (36%)	13 (28%)
TOTAL	60 (100%)	88 (100%)	25 (100%)	46 (100%)

According to the results, all four textbooks contain tasks that reflect either the personal-response approach or the reader-response approach, as well as a small number of tasks that appear to be in line with both. The approaches that are found in the textbooks thus appear to be in agreement with the informants' teaching. However, the majority of the tasks in the three textbooks *Crossroads 9A*, *Crossroads 9B* and *On the Move 2* seem to reflect the personal-

response approach. In contrast, the tasks associated with the reader-response appear to constitute the majority of the literary tasks in *Searching 9*.

5.12 Chapter summary

The interviews with my informants show that the teaching of literature appears to be based on both the personal-response and reader-response approaches. Although some of the teachers appear to emphasize one of these approaches more than the other in relation to certain genres, none of them work with literature in a manner that is completely in line with either of these approaches. Furthermore, this dual focus seems to be reflected in the way that they assess their pupils' work with literature, since 50 per cent of the activities that they use in relation to assessment appear to contain elements associated with both approaches. The remaining activities were more in line with either the personal-response approach, or the reader-response approach. A small majority of these remaining activities were, however, in accordance with the latter.

All the informants make use of both their pupils' experiences of literature and literary concepts in their lessons, although the extent to which the different informants do so varies somewhat. When asked to describe the main emphasis of their lessons in relation to the two above-mentioned approaches, only one teacher expressed that his emphasis reflected the personal-response approach. Three teachers described their emphasis as being in line with both approaches, while the remaining four expressed that their teaching was mostly in accordance with the reader-response approach. However, a comparison of the informants' overall impression of their teaching and the researcher's interpretations suggests that there are some discrepancies between the two.

When it comes to the use of textbooks, most of the informants appear to make use of these on a regular basis when teaching literature. A content analysis of four 9th grade textbooks indicated that all of these contain tasks that reflect either of the two approaches, or both of these. However, a closer examination of the results suggested that the majority of the tasks in three of the textbooks are in accordance with the personal-response approach, while the majority of the tasks in the fourth are associated with the reader-response approach.

6 Discussion

I start the present chapter by reviewing the research statement and commenting on whether or not I have answered it. I then compare and contrast the manners in which the three literary genres are taught and discuss some of the possible implications that the results of this study might have for the teaching of literature. After that, I discuss manner in which the topic of literature is assessed. Next, I address the informants' own perceptions of the way they teach literature and discuss the discrepancy between some of these views and the results of my analysis. Then I discuss possible connections between the informants' backgrounds and how they teach. In relation to this topic, I also address the possible influence of the pupils on the teaching of literature, as well as a tendency among some of the informants to regard one approach as more demanding than the other.

Following this I discuss the extent to which the informants make use of the textbooks, and the results yielded by the content analysis as to which of the two approaches may be reflected in these. After that, I compare the approaches found in the textbooks with the informants' approaches to the teaching of literature, and examine the extent to which these two sets of data are in agreement. Finally, I provide a summary of some of the main points that are presented.

6.1 Research statement

As stated in the introduction, my research statement is as follows: "Is the teaching of literature in the 9th grade based on the personal-response approach, or the reader-response approach?" In order to answer this question, I wanted to examine the activities that teachers use in relation to poetry, short stories and novels, as well as their views on the relative importance of elements associated with the two approaches. Furthermore, I also planned to explore how the topic of literature is assessed, and the extent to which teachers make use of their textbooks. Finally, I wanted to examine which of the two approaches might be inherent in a selection of 9th grade textbooks, and the extent to which the results of the content analysis are in agreement with the findings based on the interviews.

Based on the results presented in the previous chapter, I would claim that I have been able to answer the above-mentioned research statement. As explained in Chapter 5, the findings indicate that the teaching of literature in the 9th grade is based on both the reader-

response and personal-response approaches to literature. In the sections below, I will discuss the findings of the present study according to each of the six secondary goals listed above.

6.2 How is literature taught in the 9th grade?

I begin this section by discussing the activities that the informants use when they teach literature, starting by examining the differences and similarities between the ways in which short stories, poems and novels are taught. Next, I discuss some of the possible implications that the findings of this study might have for the teaching of this topic, before I briefly compare the teaching in lower and upper secondary schools.

6.2.1 Three genres: Different activities, similar approaches

As presented in Chapter 5, short stories and poetry appear to be taught in a relatively similar manner, while novels seem to be taught somewhat differently. For instance, the lessons that focus on the two former genres seem to be built around activities related to pre-reading tasks, the actual reading of the text, analysis and interpretation. If desirable, the teachers have the pupils write a text of their own, inspired by the one they have worked with, towards the end of the lesson(s). Moreover, the work that is done in relation to the analysis and interpretation of these texts tends to be based on the tasks in the textbook, the teacher's experience, or the pupils' responses to the text.

In contrast, the lessons in which the pupils work with novels appear to comprise a different set of activities. The reader will recall that the pupils are to select and read a novel and then review it, either orally or in writing. In addition, some of the teachers arrange for their pupils to discuss their books, or have them solve tasks or revise literary concepts.

The lessons that focus on novels differ from those related to poetry and short stories in several ways. First, these lessons do not seem to incorporate any pre-reading activities. Second, these lessons appear to involve very little use of the textbook. Third, the pupils' work does not seem to be arranged around the distinction between analysis and interpretation. Instead, the activities are presented as either oral or written, even though both of these tend to involve analysis and interpretation. Finally, these lessons seem to involve a somewhat larger extent of freedom for the pupils, since there are several instances in their oral and written work in which they appear to be able to determine the nature of their own responses.

Furthermore, the teaching that is done in relation to the three genres seem to be

structured somewhat differently. In relation to short stories and poetry, for instance, the majority of the lessons appear to start with activities associated with one of the approaches, and end with activities in line with the other. In the lessons in which the pupils are working with novels, however, the distinction between the two approaches is likely to be much less evident, since each of the main activities reflects both the personal-response and reader-response approaches.

Despite these variations, the findings of this study suggest that the teaching of literature is based on both the reader-response and personal-response approaches, regardless of genre. Furthermore, the data indicate that the teaching tends to alternate between the two. The results of the present study consequently appear to be consistent with those of Applebee (1993), who found that the teaching of literature in American secondary schools comprises an eclectic mixture of activities reflecting both New Critical and reader-response theories. According to Applebee (1993), this eclectic approach was also consistent across the different genres taught.

6.2.2 Teaching is comprehensive and varied: Implications for practice

As mentioned, the findings of the present study thus indicate that the informants' teaching of literature is based on both the reader-response and personal-response approaches, and that the teaching tends to alternate between the two. In accordance with the relevant theory presented in Chapter 2, teaching is therefore likely to be student-centered some of the time, and teacher-centered at other times. While this seems to be the case for the teaching of this topic as a whole, the data presented in the previous chapter indicate that this dual focus is reflected in individual lessons as well. As such, each lesson is likely to involve a certain number of shifts between the two approaches.

In accordance with Applebee (1993), I am of the opinion that this dual or eclectic approach may have consequences for the coherence and the consistency of these lessons. I argue that the more or less frequent shifts of approach might create some confusion among the pupils, since the two approaches involve different and even conflicting roles and requirements for both teachers and pupils.

As explained in Chapter 2, the pupils are, for instance, expected to passively locate, absorb and reproduce information related to the author's text or the text itself when working in accordance with the personal-response approach. In contrast, they are expected to

participate in the creation of meaning, actively explore their responses to their evoked works and share these when working in line with the reader-response approach. Furthermore, the former approach requires the teacher to act as an authority who is to lead the pupils to an accepted understanding of the text, while the latter requires the teacher to act as a fellow reader, who is to encourage the pupils to determine the meaning of the text themselves (Applebee, 1993; Beach, 1993; Chase & Hynd, 1987; Christenbury, 1992; Dias, 1992; Karolidis, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994; Small, 1992).

While I agree with Applebee (1993) that the differences between these two approaches probably cannot be reconciled, I still believe that the two may co-exist in the classroom if certain conditions are met. First and foremost, teachers need to be made aware of the eclectic nature of their teaching and of the basic differences between the two approaches on which their teaching appears to be based. Once made aware, teachers must communicate their expectations in relation to different activities clearly, especially if an activity marks a shift from one approach to another. By doing so, the shifts may become less confusing for the pupils. Over time, the pupils may even grow accustomed to these transitions, and not only acquire the skills associated with both approaches, but also a sense of the basic differences between them.

According to the data collected in this study, some of the informants do not seem to communicate their expectations clearly, and apparently create some confusion among the pupils as to what is expected of them. In the second part of the poetry lesson described by Bernard, for instance, he expressed that he often tells his pupils that there is no right or wrong way to interpret a poem. However, when I probed him for details about this part of his lesson, he emphasized the author's text and the message conveyed by the poet. This indicates that the range of interpretations that he is likely to accept may be more limited than he claims. Bernard thus seemed to communicate expectations in line with the reader-response approach, although in practice his requirements might be more in line with the personal-response approach. This may, as already mentioned, consequently be somewhat confusing for the pupils if they do not understand what is expected of them.

A similar source of confusion may be found in the structure of the lesson reported by Anna in relation to short stories. After reading through the text twice, she said that they normally worked with a selection of comprehension questions and then analyzed the text in a manner I classified as being in accordance with the personal-response approach. Afterwards, she usually interpreted the short story with her pupils.

On the one hand, Anna told me that she accepts different interpretations, as long as these have some basis in the text. She also said that she prefers to let her pupils make up their own minds first, before they deal with her opinions or the opinions of scholars. On the other hand, her lesson does not appear to be structured in accordance with these views. This is because Anna and her pupils start with activities in which the answers are determined by the author's text or the text itself, before they turn to the pupils' evoked works.

This means that the way that Anna structures her lessons may be at odds with her wishes. The order of the activities may also create some confusion among the pupils, unless the transition from one approach to the other is communicated clearly. If the pupils do not perceive the shift from the objective analysis of the personal-response approach to the more subjective focus of the reader-response approach, they may continue to search for answers in the text itself, instead of exploring their responses to their evoked works.

By ensuring that the lessons are structured in a logical manner, teachers may further prevent the development of confusion among the pupils. If the pupils understand what is expected of them, they might be more likely to respond to the texts in the desired manner, thus increasing the likelihood that the activities will promote the desired goals or skills.

However, if the teacher structures his or her lesson in an illogical manner, or does not communicate these shifts clearly, this might create some extent of uncertainty among the pupils as to what is expected of them at different points in the lesson. If or when this happens, I believe that the pupils may either become reluctant to respond at all, or respond to the text in a manner which may be different from that which the teacher had in mind. This may, for instance, explain why some of the informants sometimes found that it could be difficult to get their pupils to share their experiences of literary texts. Although it is possible that pupils simply cannot think of anything to say from time to time, they may also be reluctant to share their opinions if they feel uncertain about how they should respond.

Furthermore, I argue that teachers have to be able to combine the two approaches in a suitable manner. This is due to the nature of the competence aims in the LK06 English subject curriculum, which state that the pupils are to be able to both describe the theme and composition of literary texts and discuss these (see Chapter 3 for details). While the personal-response approach may be used to promote both of these aims, working exclusively within this approach would only teach the pupils to discuss the author's text or the text itself. In contrast, instruction in line with the reader-response approach would be more suited for teaching the pupils to discuss literary texts from their own point of view. It would, however,

be less suited for working with the texts' formal features.

Moreover, the subject curriculum also states that pupils are to be able to make their own texts inspired by literature and discuss these. Of the two approaches to literature, the reader-response approach appears to be the most appropriate in relation to this goal, since the pupils' texts and discussions are more likely to be based on the evoked works which have emerged from their transaction with the original one, instead of their knowledge of the author's intentions or the text's features. The subject curriculum does, after all, state that the pupils' texts are to be *inspired* by literary texts, as opposed to being written *about* these.

Taking these three competence aims into consideration, it seems that the topic of literature needs to be taught in accordance with both of these approaches if the teaching is to promote all three aims, and the findings of the present study show that this is largely the case.

6.2.3 Comparing the teaching of literature in lower and upper secondary school

A comparison of the findings of the present study and the results reported by Popova (2010) may serve to highlight some of the potential differences and similarities between the ways in which literature is taught in Norwegian lower and upper secondary schools. Although most of the differences may be caused by differing sets of competence aims, there are a few variations that may be worth mentioning.

According to Popova (2010), the teaching of literature in upper secondary school tends to emphasize the pupils' personal responses to these texts. In contrast, my results indicate that the teaching of literature in lower secondary is more comprehensive, since both the personal-response and reader-response approaches tend to be involved in these lessons.

Moreover, Popova (2010) reports that the teaching of literature in upper secondary school seems to comprise three main elements, namely reading, discussions and working with tasks from the textbook. On the one hand, the findings of the present study suggest that these activities might constitute the main components of the teaching that is done in lower secondary school as well. On the other, these activities appear to be more common in relation to poetry and short stories than for novels, as none of the informants reported that they have their pupils do tasks from the textbook as part of their work with this particular genre (see section 6.2.1 for details).

6.3 How is the topic of literature assessed?

As for the manner in which the topic of literature is assessed, the findings indicate that the majority of the activities used reflect aspects of both the personal-response and reader-response approaches. Activities that are in line with only one of these approaches only appear to be used less frequently. There consequently appears to be a logical connection between the way that literature is taught and the formative assessment of this topic, because the informants seem to teach and assess literature in line with both approaches. However, it is important to note that, whereas the teaching tends to alternate between the two approaches, most of the assessment activities or tasks seem to require skills associated with both the personal-response and reader-response approaches.

Based on the collected data, there appears to be several activities that may be used to assess the skills associated with either of the two approaches, or both of these. These are, most notably, the written test and the oral or written book reviews, which seem easily adaptable to individual pupils' or teachers' wishes and needs. This lends some support to Applebee's (1993) claim that the means of assessment are more neutral, since these may be adapted to suit a variety of emphases. Nevertheless, there are a few activities that seem to be less flexible than others. As mentioned in the previous chapter, due to its format a quiz may not be suited to assessing the skills associated with the reader-response approach. In contrast, the assessment of written literary texts inspired by other pieces of literature may not serve to assess the skills associated with the personal-response approach, since such texts may have to be based on the pupils' evoked works.

When it comes to how literature is assessed on the 10th grade written examinations, Løvstuhagen (2011b) concluded that the majority of the tasks related to literature reflect the reader-response approach, while a minority reflects the personal-response approach. Nevertheless, the author argues that this topic should be taught in a manner that is likely to promote the skills associated with both approaches, since the tasks that reflect the reader-response approach tend to be optional, whereas the tasks that reflect the personal-response approach tend to be obligatory, whenever these are given (Løvstuhagen, 2011b). However, since the results of this study indicate that the topic of literature is indeed taught in accordance with both of these approaches, the way that this topic is taught therefore appears to be in agreement with the way that it is assessed on the 10th grade written examinations.

6.4 What are the informants' views on the relative importance of elements associated with the two approaches?

According to the results presented in the previous chapter, all of the informants expressed that they consider literary concepts and their pupils' experiences of literary texts of equal importance, even though they prioritize these somewhat differently. For instance, there appears to be more variation in relation to the use of the latter than of the former, as can be seen in Table 5.9 in Chapter 5.

Consequently, the informants' views of the relative importance of these two elements seem to support my analysis of their teaching, since the views expressed by the informants also suggest that they teach in accordance with both the reader-response and personal-response approaches. Furthermore, the findings of the present study on this point seem to support the results reported by Applebee (1993).

However, when I asked the informants which of the two above-mentioned elements they regarded as the most important, their answers indicated that one of them emphasized the element associated with the personal-response approach, while four prioritized the one associated with the reader-response approach. The remaining three teachers, however, answered that they regarded both elements as equally important. Therefore, there appears to be a discrepancy between the overall results of my analysis and some of the informants' own perceptions of their teaching.

Nevertheless, the remainder of the study's findings appears to be internally consistent. This is due to the fact that the results of my analyses of a selection of 9th grade textbooks, the informants' work with different genres and with assessment all indicate that literature is taught in accordance with both the personal-response and reader-response approaches. As already mentioned, these results were also corroborated by the informants' own descriptions of their use of literary concepts and their pupils' experiences. I therefore believe that the above-mentioned discrepancies have most likely been caused by factors related to the design of the interview guide, or a lack of insight on the part of some of the informants.

In my opinion, the discrepancies were most likely caused by the wording of the interview question that was used to elicit information about the informants' own impression of the way that they teach literature (see Appendix 2 for a copy of the interview guide). Since this question was worded in a manner which could give the informants the impression that

they had to choose between the two elements, some of them might have thought that they were not allowed to answer that they found the two to be equally important. Although one may argue that the teachers should have been allowed to choose both alternatives, I chose to keep this question in its original form because I needed a probe that could help me locate each teacher's emphasis with the least amount of inference. Moreover, the wording of this question might still have influenced the results, whether I had made it easier for the informants to avoid taking a stand, or given them the impression that they had to do so.

The above-mentioned discrepancies between the bulk of my results and some of the informants' reported emphasis in relation to this topic may also have been caused by a lack of insight on the part of some of the informants. According to a study by Zancanella (1991), teachers' personal approaches to literature are not always reflected in their teaching, since their teaching is also influenced by what he calls a school approach to literature. The author writes that this school approach tends to emphasize comprehension and literary concepts, which, as we have seen in this study, are typically associated with the personal-response approach. It is therefore possible that some of the informants' answers reflect their personal approaches to literature rather than their teaching practice, that is to say if they have underestimated the influence that the school approach to literature may have on their teaching. In that case, comprehension and literary concepts might play a greater role in their teaching than some of them may be aware of. However, as we will see in the following section, the extent to which the participants are aware of how they teach literature may also be related to their amount of teaching experience.

6.4.1 Possible connections between the informants' backgrounds, teaching and views on their own practice

Based on the data collected in this study, there seems to be a connection between the informants' amount of teaching experience, the way that they teach literature and the extent to which they are aware of how they do so.

If we compare the results presented in Table 5.10 in Chapter 5 with the informants' amounts of teaching experience, presented in section 5.2, there appears to be a tendency for the four most experienced teachers to teach in accordance with both the reader-response and personal-response approaches. These teachers might also be more aware of how they teach literature, since three of them described their teaching practice in a manner which was supported by the results of my analysis. However, the four less experienced informants appear

to be more inclined to describe their teaching as being more in accordance with either the personal-response approach or the reader-response approach, although my analysis indicates that their teaching is based on both approaches. Some possible reasons for these discrepancies were accounted for in the previous section.

Furthermore, there appears to be a connection between the informants' teaching of literature and their educational backgrounds. First of all, there seems to be a tendency for the teachers with bachelor's or Cand. Mag degrees to be more influenced by the personal-response approach than their colleagues with master's degrees. This is apparent if we compare the informants' educational backgrounds with the results presented in Table 5.10 in Chapter 5. In this table, the informants who were found to teach more in accordance with the personal-response approach were listed towards the top, while those who were found to teach more in line with the reader-response approach were listed towards the bottom. If we compare the order of the informants with their degrees, we see that four out of the five informants with bachelor's or Cand. Mag degrees have been placed on the top of the list, while the three informants' with master's degrees have been placed in the bottom half.

Moreover, these findings are also supported by those reported by Agee (2000) and Zancanella (1991) in Chapter 2. The former claims that there appears to be a connection between teachers' education and the way that they teach literature, while the latter posits that teachers' approaches are influenced by their amount of experience.

6.4.2 The pupils' influence on the teaching of literature

While it may be that the teachers' approaches to literature are affected by their educational background and their amount of teaching experience, several of the informants indicated that their teaching was influenced by the pupils as well. Kirsten, Elizabeth and Deborah, for instance, expressed that the manner in which they teach literature tends to depend on how the pupils respond to the text up for discussion. While Deborah explained that the nature of the pupils' responses largely determined the topics that they would discuss and the activities that they would use in relation to a text, Elizabeth expressed that her teaching was sometimes affected by the pupils' level of participation. If she was unable to elicit much response from her pupils, Elizabeth said that her teaching often became teacher-centered. But, if her pupils wanted to contribute their ideas or responses, her teaching tended to become student-centered instead. She might thus adopt a personal-response approach if the pupils have little to say, and a reader-response approach when they have something to contribute. It consequently seems

that both the amount and nature of pupils' responses may have an impact on how literature is taught in the classroom.

Furthermore, the majority of the informants explained that their teaching was affected by the pupils' level of competence in the English subject, and most notably by their English language competence. As can be seen in the previous chapter, Bernard said that he sometimes operated with different requirements and tasks for pupils with differing levels of competence. According to my analysis, this meant that the less competent pupils were assigned tasks in line with the personal-response approach, while the more competent ones were given tasks in accordance with the reader-response approach. Moreover, Philip expressed that he wanted his teaching to be understandable for all of his pupils and that this consequently shaped his teaching, in the sense that he therefore often focused on the less linguistically demanding aspects of the literature. In practice, this meant that he tended to emphasize the concrete features of the author's text or the text itself, and thus the personal-response approach.

6.4.3 Different approaches – differing levels of difficulty?

Based on the data collected from the informants, it would seem that some of the teachers associate the two approaches to literature with differing levels of difficulty. In short, it seems that some of the informants regard tasks and activities associated with the personal-response approach as less demanding than those in accordance with the reader-response approach. This might explain why some of them choose to start their lessons with activities associated with the former, before moving on to activities associated with the latter.

As mentioned in Chapter 5 and indicated in the section above, Bernard expressed that sometimes wants the less proficient pupils to focus on aspects of the novels associated with the personal-response approach, such as the author and the book's structure and plot. In contrast, he may have the more proficient pupils evaluate and reflect on the novel and its plot, which are activities in line with the reader-response approach. Similarly, Britt expressed that, although she allows her pupils to choose some of the elements they are to work with in relation to novels, the more proficient pupils tend to attempt to interpret their novels, while the less proficient ones generally choose to focus on the plot.

Nevertheless, I noticed what appears to be an internal inconsistency in the data collected from Philip. While he generally seemed to agree with the other informants on this point, as indicated above, he appeared to be of a different opinion in relation to the oral part of their work with novels. When I asked him about these oral presentations, he said that he wants

the pupils to focus on their own experiences and thoughts about the book, rather than on retelling the plot, since he finds that it is easier for them to express themselves from these particular perspectives. Since commenting on one's thoughts and experiences is in line with the reader-response approach, whereas retelling the plot is more in line with the personal-response approach, Philip's views appear to be reversed when it comes to this particular part of their work with novels. I therefore argue that the distinction between the two approaches in terms of difficulty may not be as clear-cut as some of the informants may think.

In my opinion, this apparent contradiction indicates that the tasks or activities associated with one approach may not necessarily be more difficult than the ones associated with the other. In some contexts, it might be easier and more natural for the pupils to start by exploring their responses to their evoked works, while in others it might be easier for them to start by exploring the language, plot or formal features of the text itself. I therefore argue that the relative level of difficulty associated with the two approaches mainly depends on the nature of the literary text itself, and the goals of the particular task or activity. In that case, this might explain why some of the informants structured their lessons in a manner opposite to some of their colleagues.

For instance, if the pupils were to read a linguistically demanding short story such as "Skin", one might find it necessary to sort out some of its formal features, such as its plot and themes, before moving on to discussing the pupils' responses to their evoked works. But, if the goal of the lesson was to promote the pupils' ability to discuss a short story, one might want to focus on the pupils' opinions of the text first, before analyzing its formal features.

6.5 To what extent do teachers use textbooks?

Since the informants appear to make regular use of the literary texts and the tasks that accompany these in their English textbooks, these findings appear to be in line with those of Popova (2010), who found that the upper secondary school teachers she interviewed preferred to base their teaching on the textbooks. Although the extent to which each informant makes use of the three different elements in the textbooks appears to vary somewhat, there seems to be few differences in relation to the frequency with which each of these elements are used by all of the informants (see Table 5.4 in Chapter 5 for details).

Because the textbooks seem to be a fairly regular part of teaching, the approach or

approaches that are found in these may consequently influence how this topic is taught. The extent to which this might be the case is discussed in the section below.

6.6 Which of the two approaches are inherent in the textbooks?

According to the results of the content analysis of four 9th grade textbooks, all of these appear to contain tasks that are likely to promote either the personal-response approach or the reader-response approach, or both of these. Nevertheless, there seems to be a tendency for the tasks associated with the personal-response approach to constitute the majority of the tasks given in relation to literature, in particular in three of the textbooks. In the fourth textbook, however, the tasks in line with the reader-response approach seem to be the most common.

Furthermore, there do not appear to be any apparent differences between the easily read edition, the two standard editions and the textbook intended for in-depth studies in English when it comes to the theoretical orientations of the literary tasks. In contrast, the results suggest that the two editions of the textbook *Crossroads* are quite similar compared to the two other textbooks, despite the fact that one of these is an easily read edition and the other a standard edition. Moreover, these were also the two textbooks with the highest percentages of tasks associated with the personal-response approach.

Nevertheless, there is one problematic aspect of the analysis which must be taken into consideration when interpreting the results for the textbook *Searching 9*. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the tasks were classified and counted in accordance with the numbering provided in each textbook. While the tasks in the three other textbooks tended to consist of single prompts, regardless of theoretical orientation, there was a marked difference between the tasks that were classified as belonging to the two approaches in *Searching 9*. In this particular textbook, the tasks that reflected the personal-response approach often consisted of several subtasks, whereas those that were in accordance with the reader-response approach typically consisted of a single prompt. The reader should therefore be mindful of the fact that the tasks classified as being in line with the personal-response approach in this particular textbook probably constitute a somewhat larger share of the literary tasks than the results indicate. The theoretical orientation of *Searching 9* might consequently not be as different from those of the three other textbooks.

On the one hand, the results of the content analysis appear to be in accordance with the

results of Fjellestad's (2011) study from upper secondary school, since all of the textbooks appear to contain tasks that reflect both New Critical and reader-response theory. On the other, the findings of this study also lend support to Applebee's (1993) claim that the majority of tasks that are given in relation to literature are text-oriented.

As for the extent to which the textbooks may influence teaching, it is possible that these influence teaching to a rather large extent, since all of the informants use the textbooks on a fairly regular basis. Moreover, the approaches that the informants use also appear to be quite similar to the ones reflected in the textbooks. As such, it is possible that the informants' answers reflect the approaches inherent in their textbooks, rather than the approach or approaches they might otherwise have applied.

Still, the manner in which the informants work with novels appears to be quite similar to how they teach short stories and poetry, even though the lessons which focus on the former tend to involve very little use of textbooks (see section 6.2.1). Furthermore, the findings in relation to how they teach literature are also largely consistent with the data collected about their views on the relative importance of elements associated with the two approaches, as explained in section 6.4 above. I therefore argue that the findings that were based on the interviews first and foremost reflect the informants' teaching as a whole, as opposed to the approaches found in the textbooks.

In my opinion, the similarities between the approaches inherent in the textbooks and those used by the informants are more likely a result of the nature of the English subject's competence aims in relation to this topic. As already mentioned, certain aspects of these goals may necessitate the use of tasks and activities associated with the personal-response approach, while others may require teachers and textbook writers to adopt a reader-response approach. These underlying requirements may consequently have affected the choices of teachers and textbook writers alike.

6.7 To what extent are the results of the content analysis in agreement with the findings of the interviews?

A comparison of the information collected from the textbooks and the informants indicates that there is a sizable corroboration between the two sets of data, since both of these suggest that literature is taught in accordance with both the personal-response and reader-response

approaches. At the same time there appears to be a tendency for the personal-response approach to be more common in the textbooks than in the informants' teaching.

This might be quite logical, since the pupils, after having read the literary text in the textbook, may need to examine certain aspects of the text itself before they will be able to explore their own responses further as a part of other teaching or assessment activities. Moreover, tasks in accordance with the personal-response approach might be a necessary part of any English textbook, since these may contribute to the development of different skills related to literature that are required by the subject curriculum (see Chapter 3).

Since some of the assessment activities used by the informants are in line with the personal-response approach, such tasks may also serve to prepare the pupils for these forms of assessment. As already indicated, the pupils may also need skills associated with the personal-response approach on the obligatory part of the 10th grade written examinations (Løvstuhagen, 2011b). Nevertheless, one might also argue that the pupils should not spend too much time on tasks associated with this approach in class, because the tasks in which such skills are needed are rarely given on the written examinations (Løvstuhagen, 2011b). Moreover, if teaching were to be based on the selection of tasks found in the textbooks, and thus mainly comprise tasks in accordance with the personal-response approach, the pupils might find themselves inadequately prepared for the tasks given on tests or examinations that require skills associated with the reader-response approach. As mentioned above, tasks in line with the reader-response approach seem to appear quite regularly on the 10th grade written examinations (Løvstuhagen, 2011b).

In other words, the comparison of the two sets of data indicates that the approaches found in the textbooks are largely in agreement with those reflected in the teaching and assessment of this topic. Although the theoretical orientation of the textbooks differ somewhat from that of the teachers', there may be logical explanations for this, as explained above. In my opinion, it seems that both the tasks in the textbooks and the informants' teaching reflect the requirements of the subject curriculum, but that the textbooks tend to emphasize matters related to the texts, while the teaching is more oriented towards the pupils.

6.8 Chapter summary

In the present study, the findings of the interviews and the content analysis indicate that the teaching of literature appears to be based on both the reader-response and personal-response

approaches. Nevertheless, the results of the content analysis suggest that the personal-response approach is adopted much more frequently in the textbooks than in relation to other classroom activities. Furthermore, the manner in which literature is taught appears to be consistent across the three literary genres examined in this study. In addition, there appears to be a logical relationship between the ways in which literature is taught and assessed, both by the informants themselves and on the 10th grade written examinations.

Although there seems to be a discrepancy between the overall results of this study and some of the informants' own views on their teaching, I argue that the results of my analyses are reasonably valid, first and foremost because the majority of the findings appear to be internally consistent. As all eight informants seem to make use of their textbooks regularly, I also discussed the possibility that the textbooks may influence teaching to a rather large extent, and that the findings of this study may consequently reflect the approaches found in these. In conclusion, however, I argue that the approaches that are adopted in the classrooms and that are inherent in the textbooks are similar due to the nature of the competence aims related to this topic.

Finally, I have argued that literature seems to be taught in a fairly comprehensive and varied manner. In my opinion, teachers need to be aware of the dual focus of their teaching and strive to make the transitions from one approach to another much more transparent to avoid creating a sense of uncertainty among the pupils. Furthermore, teachers should take this into consideration when they are planning their lessons as well.

7 Conclusion

In this final section I discuss the implications of the study's findings, provide some suggestions for further research and make a few conclusive remarks.

7.1 Implications of the findings

In the present study, I have examined whether the teaching of literature in the 9th grade is based on the personal-response approach, or the reader-response approach. According to the findings of this study, the teaching is based on both of these approaches and alternates between the two. This might well be due to the nature of the competence aims related to literature, as these seem to necessitate the use of both approaches. In any case, literary texts appear to be taught in a comprehensive and varied manner, which has several implications for practice.

As explained in Chapter 6, I argue that teachers need to be aware of the dual focus of their teaching, and the fact that the shifts between the two approaches are likely to involve a change in the pupils' and teachers' roles, as well as the teachers' expectations of their pupils. Since such shifts may create a sense of confusion among the pupils, I therefore argue that teachers need to make these shifts much more transparent, so that the pupils may understand what is expected of them at all times. The findings of this study also indicate that doing so may increase the pupils' level of participation. Furthermore, I argue that teachers need to take the dual focus of their teaching into consideration when planning their lessons as well, so that they may structure these lessons in a manner that is likely to promote the desired skills.

Moreover, I find that teachers need to understand that, although the literary tasks in the textbooks reflect both the personal-response and reader-response approaches, the majority of these tasks are in line with the former. Since the aims in the subject curriculum appear to require the use of both approaches, teaching should therefore not be based solely on the textbooks. Even if this is not the case, the tasks in the textbooks still need to be supplemented with activities that are more in line with the reader-response approach, if the teaching is to promote the whole range of competence aims related to this topic.

Next, I claim that teachers need to know that the amount and nature of the pupils' responses may influence the approach that is adopted in relation to different activities. While one might argue that the teachers' ability to adapt to their pupils' responses may provide for

flexible teaching, I am of the opinion that the choice of approach(es) should not depend on the pupils' responses. This is because the pupils may respond in accordance with the approach that they are most familiar with, rather than the one with which they have the least experience. Instead, this should be a conscious decision made by the teacher, in relation to the skills that are to be promoted and the texts that are to be studied. Moreover, teachers also need to ensure that both approaches are adopted on a regular basis, since the pupils are to acquire both sets of skills.

In addition, teachers of English need to be aware that the distinction between the two approaches with regard to difficulty may not be as clear-cut as it may seem. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the relative difficulty of tasks in line with the two approaches may depend on the nature of the specific literary text and the skills that are to be promoted in connection with each activity. Indeed, teachers need to ensure that all of their pupils, regardless of their level of competence, will be able to acquire the skills associated with both the personal-response and reader-response approaches, since this is required by the subject curriculum.

7.2 Suggestions for further research

In Chapter 4, I stated that the extent to which the findings of this study can be generalized to other settings is somewhat limited for several reasons. For instance, the results of the interviews were based on a small convenience and purposive sample comprising only eight informants. Moreover, I have only examined four out of the eleven textbooks that were available for the 9th grade. Although I considered conducting a quantitative survey, so little was known about how this topic may be taught in lower secondary school that I decided to conduct a qualitative study instead.

It is therefore my hope that future studies will examine how literature is taught on a larger scale. It might, for instance, be useful to conduct a survey based on a sample of teachers from different parts of the country. Given that the required time and resources are available, one might interview or observe a selection of the participants as well, to collect more detailed data.

Furthermore, future research may explore the teaching of literature from the perspective of the classroom and the pupils. For instance, it would be interesting to examine how the pupils and their teachers interact in these lessons, how the teachers handle the shifts

from one approach to another, and whether, and to what extent, these transitions may affect classroom interaction.

7.3 Concluding remarks

After working on this master's thesis, I feel that I no longer have to rely on the textbooks, or revert to teaching literature in the manner that I was taught. In my opinion, this project has given me the knowledge and the confidence that I need to teach literature in a way that I feel will better promote the pupils' interest in reading and literature as well as the competence aims related to this topic. In my future teaching-career, I hope to use my knowledge of the two approaches to plan interesting and varied lessons that are tailored to the needs and interests of my pupils. I also feel that I know how I may combine the two approaches in a responsible manner, to create an approach to literature that I might be proud to call my own.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Presentation of the informants

Appendix 2: Interview guide

Appendix 3: "Skin" by Roald Dahl

Appendix 1: Presentation of the informants

Below the eight informants who participated in the study are described in terms of their educational background, amount of English teaching experience, reading habits and attitudes towards literature and reading in the English subject. Since the interviews were conducted anonymously, all of the teachers have been given fictional names. A comparison of the eight informants is provided in Chapter 5, sections 5.2 and 5.3.

Philip

Philip describes himself as a passionate reader and says that he reads up to two books per month. He holds a bachelor's degree in English language and literature from the University of Stavanger and has also taken practical teacher training courses at the University of Oslo. At the time that the interview was conducted, he had worked as an English teacher for three and-a-half years. Philip thinks that literature is a very important part of the English subject, mainly because he wants to inspire his pupils to read literature for themselves. For him, working with literature is also an important part of his work to help his pupils improve their English writing skills.

Sandra

Sandra has five years of experience teaching English. She is fond of reading and reads up to two books per month. As part of her higher education, she studied English literature and Social Geography at the University of Oslo and took practical teacher education courses. Sandra has a master's degree in English literature and thinks that literature is an important part of the English subject for two reasons. One is that it can provide valuable insight into other cultures and thus promote the pupils' cultural competence. The second is that she wants to give her pupils the opportunity to discover the joy of reading.

Britt

Britt has taken courses in Geography, English, Western European studies and practical teacher training at the University of Oslo and holds a Cand. Mag degree from this institution. She has taught English for fifteen years. According to her, she reads quite a lot in her spare time and is able to get through about a book per week. She thinks that literature is a very important part of the English subject, mainly because she believes that working with literature

will promote her pupils' English language competence. Britt also believes that reading literary texts will help her pupils become better writers themselves.

Kirsten

Kirsten has studied English, French and History at the University of Oslo and the University of Stockholm. She started teaching while she was doing her practical teacher education courses and has since then worked as a fully trained English teacher for nine years. Although she likes to read in her spare time, she rarely finds the time to read as much as she would like. When asked about the extent to which she thinks that literature is important in the English subject, Kirsten said that she thinks it is very important. She thinks that literature can play an important role when it comes to motivating pupils to learn the English language and making them interested in reading.

Bernard

Bernard has a Bachelor of Arts degree with Education from the University of Zambia, with a major in geography and a minor in English. He has also studied English and taken courses in practical teacher training at the University of Oslo. With seventeen years of English teaching experience, Bernard is the most experienced of the informants. According to him, literature is a very important part of this subject, because he wants his pupils to develop an interest for books and reading. Bernard also believes that reading will promote his pupils' English language skills. Although he is fond of reading, he rarely has time for it due to his busy schedule.

Deborah

Deborah has a major in English from the University of Oslo and has also taken courses in French, Literature and practical teacher training at this institution. In terms of teaching experience, she has only worked as a full-time teacher for four years, although she has also spent several years teaching part-time. Deborah is of the opinion that working with literature is a very important part of the English subject, because she firmly believes that her pupils will be able to improve their language skills dramatically by reading such texts. Deborah enjoys reading English literature in her spare time and says that she reads about two books per month.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth has worked as an English teacher for thirteen years and holds a Cand. Mag degree.

Her educational background is quite diverse, since she has a minor in English and has studied Athletics as well as taken teacher education courses at the University of Oslo and the Hedmark and Volda University Colleges. Elizabeth thinks that literature is a highly important part of the English subject, since working with literary texts is a good way to expand the pupils' vocabulary and promote their English language competence. Personally, Elizabeth loves to read literature whenever she has some time off, even though she finds that she is unable to get through as many books as she would like.

Anna

Anna has a major in English from the University of Oslo and has taught English for eleven years. She has also studied Economics and Social Anthropology at the same university. Anna enjoys reading literature in her spare time and says that she is normally reading up to four English books simultaneously. She thinks that literature is a very important part of the English subject, since these texts give her pupils the opportunity to encounter authentic English language. She also believes that this part of the English subject is important for motivating her pupils to read more English language literature for themselves.

Appendix 2: Interview guide⁴

Background information about the participant:

1. In which year were you born?
2. Please describe your higher education.
 - Which subjects did you study?
 - At which institution(s) did you receive your education?
 - Did your education result in a degree, and if so, which degree?
 - Did your education result in a title, and if so, which title?
3. How many years of English teaching experience do you have?

Teaching in relation to different literary genres:

4. What kind of fictional texts do you read in the 9th grade?
5. How would you teach this short story?

The short story “Skin” by Roald Dahl was sent to you in advance and I requested that you please read through it. I would like you to imagine that you are going to use this short story in a 9th grade English lesson tomorrow and that you are now going to prepare for that lesson. The class I want you to picture that you are going to teach consists of 26 pupils in the 9th grade who are average skills-wise and cooperative. So, what I want you to do is to please say something about the following:

- a) How you would prepare
 - b) How you would have the pupils prepare, if you would have them do so
 - c) The activities or tasks you would use in the classroom
6. How do you and your pupils in the 9th grade typically work with poems?

⁴ As explained in Chapter 4, I had a translated copy of the interview guide available for the informants who preferred to do the interview in Norwegian.

7. How do you and your pupils in the 9th grade typically work with novels?
8. How do you and your pupils in the 9th grade typically work with plays?

A closer look at the teaching or specific activities:

9. What does the teaching/a specific activity involve?

- 9.1 What are the pupils expected to do?
- 9.2 What is your role as a teacher?
- 9.3 What is the main topic of this activity?
- 9.4 How many tasks does this activity involve?

If more than one: Are these tasks connected by a kind of progression or are the tasks fairly independent of each other?

- 9.5 Do the pupils get the opportunity to express their feelings about the text?

If no: Why not?

If yes: How do they get to express their opinions?

When is this done? Early, mid-way or towards the end?

Which aspects of the text are they expected to comment on?

- 9.6 Is interpretation one of the goals of this activity?

If no: Why not?

If yes: How do you and your pupils arrive at an interpretation?

How do you, as a teacher, influence this interpretation process?

- 9.7 How does this activity end?
- 9.8 What do you want the pupils to take away from this activity in terms of knowledge?
- 9.9 What kind of skill(s) does this activity promote?
- 9.10 Which of these two elements is most important in relation to this activity: the pupils understanding the text on an objective level, or the pupils' personal

engagement with the text?

Teaching on a more general level:

10. On a scale from one to five, in which one signifies *not at all*, two *rarely*, three *sometimes*, four *often* and five *all the time*, please indicate the extent to which you use the following elements in your textbook(s) when teaching literature in the 9th grade:

10.1. The provided fictional texts?

10.2. The pre-reading tasks that accompany the fictional texts?

10.3. The post-reading tasks that accompany the fictional texts?

10.4. Factual texts or passages related to the fictional texts? (Background information about the author, relevant literary periods or concepts, etc.)

11. How do you use these factual texts or passages in your teaching, if you use these at all?

12. When teaching literature in the 9th grade, do you teach literary concepts such as *plot*, *turning point*, *setting*, *point of view* and the like?

If no: Why not?

If yes: How important are such terms in your teaching?

Why do you choose to teach these concepts?

13. To what extent do you feel that you encourage your pupils to make use of their own experiences with texts when working with literature in the 9th grade?

14. How do you usually assess learning in relation to literature in the 9th grade?

Teaching in relation to the 10th grade exams:

15. Does the 10th grade written examination in English influence the way you teach literature in the 9th grade?

If yes: How?

If no: Why not?

Teaching in relation to the curriculum:

In the English subject curriculum we find the following competence aim for pupils in lower secondary school: *“The aims are that the pupil shall be able to [...] read and discuss a representative selection of literary texts from the genres poetry, short stories, novels and drama from the English-speaking world.”*

16. How do you work to promote the pupils’ ability to discuss literary texts?

17. In your opinion, what does it mean to be able to discuss a literary text?

The participants’ attitudes towards literature and reading:

18. In your opinion, what is the main goal of teaching literature in the English subject?

19. To what extent do you think that the teaching of literature is important in the English subject? Why do you think this is important/not important?

20. Please tell me about your own reading habits.

Appendix 3: “Skin” by Roald Dahl

That winter was a long time going. A freezing wind blew through the streets of the city, and overhead the snow clouds moved across the sky.

The old man who was called Drioli shuffled painfully along the sidewalk of the Rue de Rivoli. He was cold and miserable. He moved glancing without any interest at the things in the shop windows – perfume, silk ties and shirts, diamonds, furniture, books. Then a picture gallery. He had always liked picture-galleries. This one had a single canvas on display in the window. He stopped to look at it. Suddenly, there came to him a slight movement of the memory, a distant recollection of something, somewhere, he had seen before. He looked again. It was a landscape, a group of trees leaning over to one side as if blown by wind. Attached to the frame there was a little plaque, and on this it said: CHAIM SOUTINE (1894 – 1943).

Drioli stared at the picture, wondering vaguely what there was about it that seemed familiar. Crazy painting, he thought. Very strange and crazy – but I like it... Chaim Soutine... Soutine... “By God!” he cried suddenly. “My little friend, with a picture in the finest shop in Paris! Just imagine that!”

The old man pressed his face closer to the window. He could remember the boy – yes, quite clearly he could remember him. But when? The rest of it was not so easy to recollect. It was so long ago. How long? Twenty – no, more like thirty years, wasn’t it? Wait a minute. Yes — it was the year before the war, the first war, 1913. That was it. And this Soutine, this ugly little boy whom he had liked – almost loved – for no reason at all that he could think of, except that he could paint.

And how he could paint! It was coming back more clearly now. Where was it the boy had lived? The Cite Falguiere that was it. Then there was the studio with the single chair in it, and the dirty red sofa that the boy had used for sleeping; the drunken parties, the cheap white wine, the furious quarrels, and always, always the sad face of the boy thinking over his work.

It was odd, Drioli thought, how easily it all came back to him now, how each single small remembered fact seemed instantly to remind him of another.

There was that nonsense with the tattoo, for instance. Now, that was a mad thing if ever there was one. How had it started? Ah, yes – he had got rich one day, that was it, and he had bought lots of wine. He could see himself now as he entered the studio with the parcel of bottles under his arm – the boy sitting before the easel, and his (Drioli’s) own wife standing in the centre of the room, posing for her picture.

“Tonight we shall celebrate,” he said. “We shall have a little celebration, us three.”

“What is it that we celebrate?” the boy asked, without looking up. “Is it that you have decided to divorce your wife so she can marry me?”

“No,” Drioli said. “We celebrate because today I have made a great sum of money with my work.”

“And I have made nothing. We can celebrate that also.”

The girl came across the room to look at the painting. Drioli came over also, holding a bottle in one hand, a glass in the other.

“No!” the boy shouted. “Please – no!” He snatched the canvas from the easel and stood it against the wall. But Drioli had seen it.

“It’s marvellous. I like all the others that you do, it’s marvellous. I love them all.”

“The trouble is,” the boy said, gloomily, “that in themselves they are not nourishing. I cannot eat them.”

“But still they are marvellous.” Drioli handed him a glass of the pale-yellow wine.

“Drink it,” he said. “It will make you happy.”

Never, he thought, had he known a more unhappy person, or one with a gloomier face.

“Give me some more,” the boy said. “If we are to celebrate then let us do it properly.”

“Tonight we shall drink as much as we possibly can,” Drioli said. “I am exceptionally rich. I think perhaps I should go out now and buy some more bottles. How many shall I get?”

“Six more,” the boy said. “Two for each.”

“Good. I shall go now and fetch them.”

“And I will help you.”

In the nearest cafe Drioli bought six bottles of white wine, and they carried them back to the studio. Then they sat down again and continued to drink.

“It is only the very wealthy, who can afford to celebrate in this manner.”

“That is true,” the boy said. “Isn’t that true, Josie?”

“Of course.”

“Beautiful wine,” Drioli said. “It is a privilege to drink it”

Slowly, methodically, they set about getting themselves drunk. The process was routine, but all the same there was a certain ceremony to be observed.

“Listen,” Drioli said at length. “I have a tremendous idea. I would like to have a picture, a lovely picture – ... It is this. I want you to paint a picture on my skin, on my back. Then I want you to tattoo over what you have painted so that it will be there always.”

“You have crazy ideas,” the boy said.

“I will teach you how to use the tattoo. It is easy. A child could do it.”

“You are quite mad. What is it you want?”

“I will teach you in two minutes.”

“Impossible!”

“Are you saying I do not know what I am talking about?”

“All I am saying,” the boy told him, “is that you are drunk and this is a drunken idea.”

“We could have my wife for a model. A study of Josie upon my back.”

“It is no good idea,” the boy said. “And I could not possibly manage the tattoo.”

“It is simple. I will undertake to teach you in two minutes. You will see. I shall go now and bring the instruments.”

In half an hour Drioli was back. “I have brought everything,” he cried, waving a brown suitcase. “All the necessities of the tattooist are here in this bag.”

He placed the bag on the table, opened it, and laid out the electric needles and the small bottles of coloured inks. He plugged in the electric needle, then he took the instrument in his hand and pressed a switch. He threw off his jacket and rolled up his left sleeve.

“Now look. Watch me and I will show you how easy it is. I will make a design on my arm, here. ... See how easy it is ... see how I draw a picture of a dog here upon my arm ...”

The boy was intrigued. “Now let *me* practise a little – on your arm.”

With the buzzing needle he began to draw blue lines upon Drioli's arm. “It is simple,” he said. “It is like drawing with pen and ink. There is no difference except that it is slower.”

“There is nothing to it. Are you ready? Shall we begin?”

“At once.”

“The model!” cried Drioli. “Come on, Josie!” He was in a bustle of enthusiasm – now arranging everything, like a child preparing for some exciting game. “Where will you have her? Where shall she stand?”

“Let her be standing there, by my dressing table. Let her be brushing her hair. I will paint her with her hair down over her shoulders and her brushing it.”

“Tremendous. You are a genius.”

“First,” the boy said, “I shall make an ordinary painting. Then if it pleases me, I shall tattoo over it.” With a wide brush he began to paint upon the naked skin of the man's back.

“Be still now! Be still”

His concentration, as soon as he began to paint, was so great that it appeared somehow to neutralize his drunkenness.

“All right. That's all,” he said at last to the girl.

Far into the small hours of the morning the boy worked. Drioli could remember that when the artist finally stepped back and said, “It is finished,” there was daylight outside and the sound of people walking in the street.

“I want to see it,” Drioli said. The boy held up a mirror, and Drioli craned his neck to look.

“Good God!” he cried. It was a startling sight. The whole of his back was a blaze of colour - gold and green and blue and black and red. The tattoo was applied so heavily it looked almost like an impasto. The portrait was quite alive; it contained so much characteristic of Soutine's other works.

“It's tremendous!”

“I rather like it myself.” The boy stood back, examining it critically. “You know,” he added, “I think it's good enough for me to sign.” And taking up the machine again, he inscribed his name in red ink on the right-hand side, over the place where Drioli's kidney was.

The old man who was called Drioli was standing in a sort of trance, staring at the painting in the window of the picture-dealer's shop. It had been so long ago, all that – almost as though it had happened in another life.

And the boy? What had become of him? He could remember now that after returning from the war – the first war – he had missed him and had questioned Josie.

“Where is my little painter?”

“He is gone,” she had answered. “I do not know where.” “Perhaps he will return.”

“Perhaps he will. Who knows?”

That was the last time they had mentioned him. Shortly afterwards they had moved to Le Havre where there were more sailors and business was better. Those were the pleasant years, the years between the wars, with the small shop near the docks and the comfortable rooms and always enough work.

Then had come the second war, and Josie being killed, and the Germans arriving, and that was the finish of his business. No one had wanted pictures on their arms any more after that. And by that time he was too old for any other kind of work. In desperation he had made his way back to Paris, hoping vaguely that things would be easier in the big city. But they were not.

And now, after the war was over, he possessed neither the means nor the energy to start up his small business again. It wasn't very easy for an old man to know what to do, especially when one did not like to beg. Yet how else could he keep alive?

Well, he thought, still staring at the picture. So that is my little friend. He put his face closer to the window and looked into the gallery. On the walls he could see many other pictures and all seemed to be the work of the same artist. There were a great number of people strolling around. Obviously it was a special exhibition.

On a sudden impulse, Drioli turned, pushed open the door of the gallery and went in.

It was a long room with a thick wine-coloured carpet, and by God how beautiful and warm it was! There were all these people strolling about looking at the pictures, well-washed dignified people, each of whom held a catalogue in the hand. He heard a voice beside him saying, “What is it you want?” Drioli stood still.

“If you please,” the man in a black suit was saying, “take yourself out of my gallery.”

“Am I not permitted to look at the pictures?”

“I have asked you to leave.”

Drioli stood his ground." He felt suddenly, overwhelmingly outraged.

“Let us not have trouble,” the man was saying. “Come on now, this way.” He put a fat white hand on Drioli’s arm and began to push him firmly to the door.

That did it. “Take your goddam hands off me!” Drioli shouted. His voice rang clear down the long gallery and all the heads turned around as one – all the startled faces stared down the length of the room at the person who had made this noise. The people stood still, watching the struggle. Their faces expressed only an interest, and seemed to be saying. “It’s all right. There’s no danger to us. It’s being taken care of.”

“I, too!” Drioli was shouting. “I, too, have a picture by this painter! He was my friend and I have a picture which he gave me!”

“He’s mad.”

“Someone should call the police.”

With a twist of the body Drioli suddenly shook off the man and before anyone could stop him he was running down the gallery shouting, “I’ll show you! I’ll show you! I’ll show you!” He flung off his overcoat, then his jacket and shirt, and he turned so that his naked back was towards the people.

“There!” he cried, breathing quickly. “You see? There it is!”

There was a sudden absolute silence in the room, each person arrested in what he was doing, standing motionless in a kind of shocked, uneasy surprise. They were staring at the tattooed picture. It was still there, the colours as bright as ever.

Somebody said, “My God, but it is!”

“His early manner, yes?”

“It is fantastic, fantastic!”

“And look, it is signed!”

“Old one, when was this done?”

“In 1913,” Drioli said, without turning around. “In the autumn of 1913.”

“Who taught Soutine to tattoo?”

“I taught him.”

“And the woman?”

“She was my wife.”

The gallery owner was pushing through the crowd towards Drioli. He was calm now, deadly serious, making a smile with his mouth. “Monsieur,” he said, “I will buy it. I said I will buy it, Monsieur.”

“How can you buy it?” Drioli asked softly.

“I will give two hundred thousand francs for it.”

“Don’t do it!” someone murmured in the crowd. “It is worth twenty times as much.”

Drioli opened his mouth to speak. No words came, so he shut it; then he opened it again and said slowly, “But how can I sell it?” He lifted his hands, let them drop helplessly to his sides. “Monsieur, how can I possibly sell it?” All the sadness in the world was in his voice.

“Yes!” they were saying in the crowd. “How can he sell it? It is part of himself!”

“Listen!” the dealer said, coming up close. “I will help you. I will make you rich. Together we shall make some private arrangement over this picture, no?”

Drioli watched him with worried eyes. “But how can you buy it, Monsieur? What will you do with it when you have bought it? Where will you keep it? Where will you keep it tonight? And where tomorrow?”

“Ah, where will I keep it? Yes, where will I keep it? Well, now ... It would seem,” he said, “that if I take the picture, I take you also. That is a disadvantage. The picture itself is of no value until you are dead. How old are you, my friend?”

“Sixty-one.”

“But you are perhaps not very healthy, no?” The dealer looked Drioli up and down,

slowly, like a farmer examining an old horse.

"I do not like this," Drioli said moving away. "Quite honestly, Monsieur, I do not like it." He moved straight into the arms of a tall man who put out his hands and caught him gently by the shoulders.

"Listen, my friend," the stranger said, still smiling. "Do you like to swim and to lie in the sun?"

Drioli looked up at him, rather startled.

"Do you like fine food and red wine from the great chateaux of Bordeaux?" The man was still smiling, showing strong white teeth with a flash of gold among them. He spoke in a soft manner, one gloved hand still resting on Drioli's shoulder. "Do you like such things?"

"Well – yes," Drioli answered, still greatly puzzled. "Of course."

"Have you ever had a shoe made especially for your own foot?"

"No."

"You would like that?"

"Well..."

"And a man who will shave you in the mornings and trim your hair?"

Drioli simply stood and stared.

"And a plump attractive girl to manicure the nails of your fingers?"

Someone in the crowd giggled.

"And a bell beside your bed to call a maid to bring you breakfast in the morning? Would you like these things, my friend? Do they appeal to you?"

Drioli stood still and looked at him.

"You see, I am the owner of the Hotel Bristol in Cannes. I now invite you to come down there and live as my guest for the rest of your life in luxury and comfort." The man paused, allowing his listener time to digest this cheerful prospect.

"Your only duty – shall I call it your pleasure – will be to spend your time on my beach in bathing trunks, walking among my guests, sunning yourself, swimming, drinking cocktails. You would like that?"

There was no answer.

"Don't you see – all the guests will thus be able to observe this fascinating picture by Soutine. You will become famous, and men will say, "Look, there is the fellow with ten million francs upon his back." You like this idea, Monsieur? It pleases you?"

Drioli looked up at the tall man in the canary gloves. He said slowly, "But do you really mean it?"

"Of course I mean it."

"Wait," the dealer interrupted. "See here, old one. Here is the answer to our problem. I will buy the picture, and I will arrange with a surgeon to remove the skin from your back, and then you will be able to go off on your own and enjoy the great sum of money I shall give you for it."

"With no skin on my back?"

"No, no, please! You misunderstand. This surgeon will put a new piece of skin in the place of the old one. It is simple."

"Could he do that?"

"There is nothing to it."

"Impossible!" said the man with the canary gloves. "He's too old for such a major skin-removing operation. It would kill him. It would kill you, my friend."

"It would kill me?"

"Naturally. You would never survive. Only the picture would come through."

"In the name of God!" Drioli cried. He looked around terrified at the faces of the people watching him, and in the silence that followed, another man's voice, speaking quietly

from the back of the group, could be heard saying, "Perhaps, if one were to offer this old man enough money, he might consent to kill himself on the spot. Who knows?" A few people laughed. The dealer moved his feet uneasily on the carpet.

"Come on," the tall man said, smiling his broad white smile. "You and I will go and have a good dinner and we can talk about it some more while we eat. How's that? Are you hungry?"

Drioli watched him, frowning. He didn't like the man's long flexible neck, or the way he craned it forward at you when he spoke, like a snake.

"Roast duck and Chambertin", the man was saying. "And perhaps a soufflé aux marrons, light and frothy."

Drioli's eyes turned up towards the ceiling, his mouth watered.

"How do you like your duck?" the man went on. "Do you like it very brown and crisp outside, or shall it be..."

"I am coming," Drioli said quickly. Already he had picked up his shirt and was pulling it hurriedly over his head. "Wait for me, Monsieur. I am coming." And within a minute he had disappeared out of the gallery with his new patron.

It wasn't more than a few weeks later that a picture by Soutine, of a woman's head, painted in an unusual manner, nicely framed and heavily varnished, turned up for sale in Buenos Aires. That – and the fact that there is no hotel in Cannes called Bristol – causes one to wonder a little, and to pray for the old man's health, and to hope strongly that wherever he may be at this moment, there is a plump attractive girl to manicure the nails of his fingers, and a maid to bring him his breakfast in bed in the mornings.