

**Between the Theatre and the Classroom:
From *Trifles* to *A Jury of Her Peers*
by Susan Glaspell**

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Introduction

The number of studies, papers, articles or books discussing the importance of literature in the foreign language classroom is impossible to count and even though they all include a few downsides they largely agree there are many more favourable arguments. There is a vast collection to choose from. Taking just one example concerning the advantages of studying literature in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom:

- It provides meaningful contexts;
- It involves a profound range of vocabulary, dialogues and prose;
- It appeals to imagination and enhances creativity;
- It develops cultural awareness;
- It encourages critical thinking;
- It is in line with CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) principles.

(Bagherkazemi and Alemi 3)

Besides facilitating learning due to students' involvement one very important factor is that literature also promotes active and critical thinking. It provides opportunities for student-centred activities and collaborative group work, boosting cognitive maturation and extending intellectual perceptions with learners becoming much more active and autonomous than would normally be the case. Teachers, on the other hand, become facilitators, guides and active planners rather than assuming the role of controllers they frequently play.

- Learning is facilitated through *involvement and joy*, which can be created by literary style.
- Moreover, reading literature makes for more *active and critical thinking* and learning.
- Learning is facilitated through *authentic communication* and active involvement. As such, literature can be particularly useful as it provides opportunities for student-centered activities and collaborative group work.
- The *role of learners* as active and autonomous participants is emphasized in CLT, and as literature reading creates individual meanings, this goal is achieved.
- The *role of teachers* as facilitators, guides and active planners is embodied in the process of literary work and analysis.

(Bagherkazemi and Alemi 3)

I came across *A Jury of Her Peers* (1917) by Susan Glaspell when attending a Feminist Studies course at Faculdade de Letras (Porto) and I loved the short story. I didn't know at the time that I would choose its comparison with *Trifles*, the play written by the same author a year earlier, as the subject of my MA thesis. Through this process I managed to embrace the areas of Feminist and Literary Studies as well as Language Teaching and Methodologies as I so much wanted to.

Aims

My main goals in the development of this work were:

- debating the issues of gender and stereotype construction: Susan Glaspell gave a voice to women and their problems, condemning patriarchal systems and the rules which discriminated and symbolically castrated the female gender, impeding women from having their own lives and opinions;
- incentivising/developing awareness to the issue of citizenship: this is another issue which runs through the whole text, making it necessary and logical to debate the problematic of domestic violence. It was vital that students became conscious that no one has the right to hurt others whether physically or psychologically. They must also

understand that we all have to take a stand when we learn about victims of this hideous crime, especially when they're not able to protect themselves;

- showing the relevance and contemporaneity of the subject: though both the play and the short story were written in the early twentieth century, in a reality and time so diverse from the one of our students, the topic is real and portrays a situation which is frequent nowadays throughout the world. The Portuguese Syllabus of English as a Foreign Language points out as one of its aims the establishment of connections between the past and the present since that may contribute to one's understanding of present-day. "[T]hough the emphasis is laid on the present time it's always possible, in any area, to establish connections with the past, inserting the subjects in their cultural and historical backgrounds, assuming the past may help understand the present" (Moreira et al. 24).¹

- developing students' interest for different literary genres: besides being a recognised literary work of art, *A Jury of Her Peers* is also a mystery tale, one of the reasons why it was expected to get the students' attention. The students, aged 16 to 18, are usually great fans of the genre. On the other hand, due to its kinaesthetic component the theatre play, *Trifles*, should lower emotional filters leading to more effective learning, even to those whose knowledge of this subject is rather poor:

The problem of mixed ability is reduced when drama activities are used. Students who are more fluent can take the main roles which require more oral communication, while the weaker students compensate for their lack of linguistic ability by paralinguistic communication e.g. body language and general acting ability (miming). (Sam 4)

Students were expected to find here the ideal moment to show other abilities thus increasing their self-esteem and motivation;

- exploiting the pluralistic dimension underneath the syllabus for English as a Second Language: in the Syllabus of English as a Foreign Language it is strongly suggested that

teachers favour the development of active methodologies, focusing on research and collaborative work. Through negotiation with their students, teachers are also supposed to organize and develop lesson plans which will facilitate group interaction, conflict management and the development of cooperation skills;²

- promoting contact with different types of texts: students worked with the theatre play, the short story and the newspaper articles, contacting with different types of texts, one of the aims specified in the Syllabus of English as a Foreign Language.
- developing the project of *staged reading*,³ thus leading to greater learners' autonomy and responsibility: doing the *staged reading* of *Trifles* was an extremely valuable project as it involved not only doing research but also the use of new technologies and Moodle Platform, which would promote students' responsibility and autonomous learning. Having to reflect upon their choices, defend them, interact and collaborate with their peers, students were supposed to have a more active role in the learning process.
- exploiting the journalistic perspective: the journalistic dimension of this work had to be addressed as well since Susan Glaspell found out about the whole story, the facts, details and follow-up while working as a journalist for *Des Moines Daily News*. She wrote about twenty articles on the subject which provided her with the basis for the theatre play and the short story. The fact that she was a journalist at a time when women were expected to stay at home and the influence of the press on people's attitudes and opinions were topics to be dealt with too.
- highlighting the importance of Susan Glaspell in the history of North American theatre: talking about the reasons to select these two literary works forcefully meant speaking about the author, Susan Glaspell, one of the founders of The Provincetown Players (1915), and a person of major interest when one discusses the changes in theatre in the USA. She frequently worked with her husband, George Cram Cook, since they aimed at creating the true American culture by using theatre plays written by Americans for Americans, without a commercial purpose whatsoever there, in Princeton.

“[I]t was the expression of a community, the creation of a new theatre that would draw the nation together in a mystical, all-comprehensive ‘I’” (Ozieblo 74). It wasn’t easy to achieve what they wanted: “Theirs was to be a theatre of ideas and exploration, of commitment and purpose, of challenge” (Gainor 263).

As for Susan Glaspell as a woman writer, Barbara Ozieblo states: “Glaspell had always grasped the didactic possibilities inherent in the theatre; she understood that a skilfully developed idea could excite an audience and lead to public discussion of the evils that plague society” (Ozieblo 241). Sensible and envisioning Glaspell insisted that the present beheld teachings for the future: “Time does not dim what is real . . . The past does not lose its voice, but is there to speak to us” (270). The Pulitzer Prize Committee recognized her ability, awarding her the so deserved award in 1931, for *Alison’s House*. Amongst so many achievements, it was Glaspell who introduced American theatre to British audiences with plays like *The Verge*, at the time compared to *Solness, The Builder*, by Henrik Ibsen, though the writer spread the scope of her drama to the whole human race.⁴

- improving students’ knowledge of English as well as fomenting their interest in the subject. They’re supposed to understand how valuable knowing other languages, namely English, will be throughout their lives. These ideas and many others are also defended in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*:

B. Specific measures aimed at policy making, curriculum and textbook development, teacher training, and assessment

4. The CEFR is a reference tool for the development and implementation of coherent and transparent language education policies; when national, regional and local education authorities decide to use it, they are invited to:

4.2. encourage language policy makers and education administrators at all levels to:

4.2.1. ensure that language instruction is fully integrated within the core of the educational aims;⁵

- 4.2.2. use a holistic approach, ensuring the coherence of objectives and attainments in all languages within a lifelong learning curriculum framework;
 - 4.2.3. promote the development of the awareness and understanding of language use and competences throughout the educational process in order to create an informed public opinion on language issues in society and as a basis for autonomous language learning throughout life;
 - 4.4.2. give due consideration to the development of the learners' plurilingual capacities; . . .
- (Committee of Ministers 3-4)

Targetted Actions in the Classroom

Teaching global and citizenship issues is not an easy task as teachers need to ponder the object of their study as well as the best way to engage their students. This process requires more commitment from students and a shift: moving the teacher away from the centre, towards the students, regarding the way to achieve knowledge rather than teaching as the key: "Teaching global issues is as much a matter of how we teach as of what we teach. This involves a shift from passive to active learning, from teacher to student-centred and more importantly to learning-centred classes" (Altan 63).

One of the most efficient ways to work on global issues, i.e. citizenship topics, is to use an approach based on intercultural communication, which greatly improves students' language skills: "There is a great need for us all to understand and tolerate each other, and one of the only ways to do this is to talk to each other, to communicate in and between cultures; to make our culture more and learn more about others" (Harmer 1). The development of speaking skills becomes vital, calling for the use of all available resources – from written texts as a starting point to communication amongst peers in the classroom to online network communication.

The work with *Trifles* was designed to bring the theatre auditorium into the classroom, thus increasing the motivation of learners who could reveal/develop abilities leading to a greater trust in their capacity to use the English language, creating or improving their taste for other forms of artistic expression, beyond just music or cinema – the most common at their age.

Drama fosters and sustains learners' motivation as it is fun and entertaining and because it engages feelings it can provide a rich experience of language for the participants. Drama as a process is inevitably learner-centred because it can only operate through active cooperation. . . . Being a collaborative and participatory teaching approach it contributes positively to the development of the learners' self-esteem and self-efficacy (one's beliefs about their capabilities in certain areas) especially to those they have rather low levels. (Zafeiriadou 5)

While not forgetting all the benefits of drama some of its more problematic areas need to be born in mind, such as the long texts to be memorized, the need for a careful and expensive investment in the production of sceneries and wardrobe, as well as the fact that I am not an expert in the area. Thus, staged *reading* came up as the most appropriate approach.

A *staged reading* is usually a form of theatre without sets or full costumes though it can be devised otherwise. The actors, who read from scripts, may be seated, stand in fixed positions, or incorporate some stage movement. A *staged reading* of a new play in development is an intermediate phase between a cold reading, with the cast usually sitting around a table, and a full production. A narrator may read stage directions aloud. The purpose is to gauge the effectiveness of the dialogue, pacing and flow, and other dramatic elements that the playwright or director may wish to adjust. Audience feedback contributes to the process. *Staged reading* is as well one of the tasks carried out by young actors for practice. Some Portuguese stage directors, such as Nuno Cardoso, are trying this out namely in plays presented in Teatro São João in Porto, directed at secondary school students. They want to take some of the classic texts to juveniles in a lighter way, increasing their interest and making them easier to grasp. It made sense that my students would use the same technique but also enriching it with details such as props, voice intonation and gestures in order to make it more appealing, challenging and innovative. It was a great opportunity to develop learners' creativity.

Students' involvement was absolutely essential in order to achieve better results and so it became clear they had to participate actively in all decisions concerning the activity. This attitude is firmly defended by Susan Stern who "stated that drama heightened self-esteem, motivation, spontaneity, increased capacity for empathy, and lowered sensitivity to rejection. All

these facilitate communication and provide an appropriate psycholinguistic climate for language learning” (Sam 4).

After having read and analysed *Trifles*, students were divided into four groups to prepare the *staged reading*. Each group received a part of the text having to decide which lines, gestures and actions they wanted to emphasize, bearing in mind the public’s understanding was going to be affected by their choices. In those groups they negotiated a subdivision of their part of the text, the props to have on stage, the way to present/represent them, the movements and gestures, if any, that would be used. Some groups chose to draw the scenery and some of the props on the board – it was an Arts class – others recreated and photographed it projecting it on the board. They reflected upon the details they wanted to add to their clothes, faces and hair in order to convey to the audience of this *staged reading* their interpretation of what they had read and they wanted to be seen on the stage. Since they had already divided their part of the text into two and made all the necessary arrangements, each group split up into two more. In each one of those eight smaller groups and still respecting the decisions made in the larger ones, they decided the role of each participant, practiced intonation, reading, gestures and so on.

The *staged reading* was an opportunity for students to deepen their knowledge of the text, *Trifles*, to analyse it more carefully, to debate, to develop critical thinking and to open the way to areas of more creativity and to the writing exercise. Some learners gave a lot of thought to how to represent Minnie’s chair on stage, others concentrated on her apron and shawl, others on the canary and its cage, amongst many, and the results varied a lot, ranging from the very classical representations to the most modern and atypical ones. Nevertheless, what was important was that all the groups could explain their reasons and how their choices reflected their interpretations. This process required from the students the use of several abilities, some connected with the learning method and others with the social skills, putting into practice strategies devised to debate, persuade, criticize and negotiate, all of them essential for their success as students and as citizens.

All this work involved the use of information, image and sound technologies, namely by using the Internet for research about the characters, time and space of the play, the author and so on. Filming the *staged reading* enabled not only the reflection upon the more and the less positive aspects of the performance but also the use of technologies the students really enjoyed and where some of them showed an expertise which certainly surprised us all and increased their confidence and self-esteem.

Despite defending that the *staged reading* must be done involving the students in every step of the process so that the teacher is a facilitator rather than a controller of the actions and decisions, many other activities were promoted, ensuring a better understanding of the play and enhancing the learners' personal and linguistic development.

The first activity aiming at motivating students to the reading focused their attention on a significant object in the play, Minnie's chair. They had to devise reasons for that object to play such a crucial role in the text. The students' mind map drawn on the board created a wide range of possibilities which were narrowed down so as to meet the subjects of domestic violence, the duty of committing to society and the existence of such characters nowadays as well, women like Minnie Foster who endure all kinds of suffering silently.

In order to introduce some of the characters to the students and to provide them a few hints on the text they were given a set of sentences, having to decide how many people were involved and their gender.

- "By the way, has anything been moved? Are things just as you left them yesterday?"
- "Well, she looked queer."
- "Well, women are used to worrying over trifles."
- "Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?"
- "And why was that? You didn't like her?"
- "It never seemed a very cheerful place."
- "My, it's cold in there."
- "Mrs. Peters?"
- "Do you think she did it?"

- “But Mrs. Hale, the law is the law.”
- “I s'pose maybe the cat got it.”
- “I don't like this place.”

They also read the first paragraph of the theatre play, rebuilding their answers if necessary. Using the information available, they tried to characterize Mr. John Wright and Mrs. Minnie Foster Wright. The results were very interesting and amazingly close to the reality of the play.

Since this is a theatre play, the learner's first contact with the text couldn't be always by reading it. Therefore, I approached two of my students, two girls, so that they would do the *staged reading* of a small dialogue between two female characters. Like these students one of them was a strong woman, a leader (Mrs. Hale), and the other was more fragile and an introvert (Mrs. Peters). None of us told the others about this little arrangement. So on the scheduled day, when these students rose from their chairs, walked to the front and started playing their roles, the others were absolutely astonished. The result was excellent because the unexpectedness made them pay closer attention, it raised their expectations about the end, facilitated their understanding of the excerpt and gave them the chance of experimenting the position of the spectators. Though they were so drawn to the scene developing in front of them, they kept an analytical mind being able to comment on their classmates' performance. They also had an inside view of how powerful criticism can be and often referred to this experience later on when planning the *staged reading*.

The journalistic dimension of this literary work was also exploited since Susan Glaspell had learned about all the facts while working as a reporter for the *Des Moines Daily News*. She wrote the first news story on the murder and as she got really interested in it she wrote about twenty articles on the subject between 1900 and 1901. She wrote about the murder, about Mr. and Mrs. Hossack, other family members and neighbours, following the first and the second trial and stating her opinion on the matter, at first clearly condemning Mrs. Hossack but then as Glaspell learned about her living conditions, more specifically the complaints of domestic abuse, she became more sympathetic and ended up defending her. This event marked her and made her write *Trifles* and *A Jury of Her Peers* years later. “Glaspell voices her concerns with the

dilemmas of womanhood; she openly condones the breaking of patriarchal codes of behaviour that strangle women and deny them self-fulfilment” (Ozieblo 83). Her job, at a time when women only had a say and a place inside the home, was a subject for discussion in the classroom, prompting the learners to establish a comparison with the present. All the issues concerning the media, their influence on people’s lives, whether famous or common citizens, moulding their minds and behaviours were also widely debated. Students considered the topic of invasion of privacy and pondered on it, recalling events of a closer past and of the present to prove their points. They all agreed that the freedom of the press has to respect certain limits and that everybody has the right to some privacy.

To handle the journalistic facet and simultaneously have learners come into contact with different types of texts, the students were given some of the news articles written by Glaspell along with some contemporary ones so they could compare the dissimilar styles. There was collaborative work, with students sitting in groups of four, having received an article by Glaspell at the time of the events and another one, a contemporary one. Students had to compare the structure of each, summarize the text and present it to the other groups. They were also supposed to keep a timeline of the different articles written by Glaspell in 1900 and 1901. This activity promoted the development of speaking skills as they had to interact in the small group first and then in the large one – the class – but there was plenty of opportunity to discuss matters and practice before getting to that second stage, which provided them with confidence.

Comparing the basic rules of writing a newspaper article with the ones Glaspell wrote, the students immediately realized that she used another style, one which was characterized by an “almost” first-person narrator, since she often used the expression “your correspondent”, gave her own opinion, talked about rumours and suppositions. According to Linda Ben-Zvi: “She is a constructed presence who invites the reader to share some privileged information, intriguing rumour, and running assessment of the case and of the guilt or innocence of the accused” (24). It was important that students understood the cultural differences between 1900 and nowadays as well as grasp the clues as to what kind of writer Glaspell would become.

The means of communication have a major role in spreading information, opinions, attitudes, frequently being used by governments and organizations to publish pictures and widely disseminate messages that must reach all citizens – the so called institutional publicity. On the other hand, it also mirrors the thoughts, the mentality of a certain time/decade. Students were divided into groups of four and given three advertisements, one of each of the following sets: institutional campaigns against domestic violence, current ads in which women are portrayed as mere objects and publicity of the 50's-70's, echoing the submission of women and the ease violence against women was faced. Learners established comparisons and reached conclusions about behaviours and mentalities and the changes, or lack of them, over the years. This was shared and debated with the whole class.

Some teachers and textbook authors may believe that such images of violence must be avoided in class but the truth is that youngsters are exposed to it every day as there are always so many reports of domestic abuse in the newspapers, on TV, radio, etc. Herbert Puchta and Michael Schratz advocate that teachers need to make language learning more relevant: “The way forward lay in making our language teaching more personally relevant, in a word, more ‘humanistic’” (1). It is also vital that juveniles learn about these terribly wrong behaviours and that they become aware that when a citizen knows of such a situation involving others he/she ought to report it to the authorities. In fact, discussing the issues of discrimination based on gender and of domestic violence also meant providing the students lessons on Sexual Education, thus following the instructions of the Portuguese Ministry of Education – Lei n. ° 60/2009, de 6 de Agosto: “The class teacher, the teacher in charge of the Health and Sexual Education Project and all the other teachers of each particular class must devise the sexual education project carrying out transversal educational activities”.⁶

Amongst its numerous aims are many of particular interest for this paper as they relate so closely to some of the objectives foreseen for the usage of *Trifles* in the classroom: to promote equality between the genders, to eliminate discrimination based on gender issues, to promote the respect for the differences and to protect youngsters against all forms of exploitation and abuse.⁷

Worldwide the issues of discrimination based on gender and domestic violence are being discussed namely at international organisations like UN. Actually, on the 3rd December 2009 – thirty years after the international treaty banning the discrimination of women – its secretary, Ban Ki-moon, recognised and alerted the world population to the fact that women and girls are still the target of continued physical and emotional abuse:

Thirty years after an international treaty banning discrimination against women came into force, women and girls are still suffering from the scourge, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned today.

“Violence against women and girls is found in all countries,” he told a session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) marking the three decades of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). “The results are devastating for individuals and societies alike: personal suffering, stunted development and political instability.

So while we recognize the Convention’s successes, we must also acknowledge the urgent need for the entire UN system to support its full implementation,” he added, calling on the few countries that have not yet ratified the treaty to do so. (“Women” n. p.)

He urged the population to act, having the organization prepared several actions to set the example.

“From Cameroon to Morocco, from Kyrgyzstan to Thailand, it has been a catalyst for legal reforms and new national laws that enshrine women’s human rights and gender equality,” he said, citing “the huge strides” made towards realizing women’s human rights on the national and international stage, including at the UN, which has registered a 40 per cent increase in women in senior posts since he assumed office three years ago.

“We must move beyond debates to concrete action that will increase the impact of the Convention,” he concluded. “Let us all work even harder to raise awareness and to work for the Convention’s full implementation worldwide”. (“Women” n. p.)

One of the tasks suggested to learners and immediately accepted was conceiving posters for an exhibition to be displayed in the school grounds alerting the population to the escalating crimes of domestic violence. Using the Internet they chose an article from a newspaper of an English speaking country reporting such a case and another from a Portuguese one. Using their skills in the areas of drawing, design, photography and arts in

general they built the cards with the news, a photograph/drawing produced by them and a slogan in English. The outcome was really excellent as they truly involved themselves in the task, showing great creativity as well as awareness of the situation.

Though the target of my thesis was the woman as a victim of gender discrimination and violence, I thought that the fact men are sometimes victims of domestic violence had to be addressed as well and so it was done, by using some institutional publicity.

Aiming at the involvement of other areas of study and thus connecting different subjects, namely the Arts, the teacher of Drawing was invited to participate in the project. She promptly accepted the request. The text was divided into small strips, one for each student, who should illustrate it according to his/her interpretation of that bit. The final product was a beautifully illustrated book, including the text of Susan Glaspell and the drawings of this class. The cover page was absolutely brilliant, a very pungent remarkable drawing from one of the learners, a girl, who truly depicted the suffering of Minnie Foster and the key symbols of this theatre play.

All the tasks, all the negotiations, all the discussions took place in English, having the students actually kept loyal to the arrangements made earlier. The fluency, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, amongst others, largely benefitted from this practice as well as from the relaxing but enthusiastic work atmosphere.

All forms of interaction take place in the target language While it is potentially inhibiting to insist on this rigidly with a monolingual group, it should be encouraged as far as possible during rehearsals and discussions of the production. If this can be achieved, most of the language acquired during a drama project will probably stem not from the actual play itself, but from the discussions surrounding the production and rehearsals. The student is learning, albeit unintentionally. (Wessels 12)

Working with these two literary works of Susan Glaspell, namely the play, enabled the achievement of the intended goals and of others like the bond created between the two teachers and the students, a connection which contributed to the improvement of students' motivation and hard work and consequently of their marks. Most of all their relationship with the English language and subject changed drastically for the better.

Conclusions

Taking *Trifles* and *A Jury of Her Peers* from the shelf of the library to my classroom was really worthwhile as all the background reading I had done proved to be true. Using the language in a meaningful situation reinforced learners' motivation, interest, self-esteem and improved their language knowledge. Students acted as active participants thus promoting self-learning, group interaction in authentic situations and peer teaching. It reinforced the feeling of belonging to a group since there was so much peer assisted work.

Many other areas and activities could be explored when studying *Trifles* and/or *A Jury of Her Peers*. John Wright, the murdered husband is absent from the stage but he is essential for the play as without him it wouldn't exist. Students' creativity could have been exploited to fill in that gap, had there been time.

With Hume's exploration of cause and effect in mind, proximate cause aptly describes the manner in which this thesis will discuss absent characters in American drama. Despite the term's specificity to the legal profession, proximate cause accurately defines the way that characters who remain offstage nevertheless "produce events" onstage that would not have occurred had the characters appeared onstage. To use Hume's logic, these absent characters represent the "no longer perceivable cause" that produces the effect(s) seen by the audience.

What the audience might not realize and what critics have thus far failed to discuss, though, is the fact that these absent characters *are* the causes – in fact, the proximate causes – for the onstage action. While the audience and the critics might infer this absence, the ways in which absent characters produce the effects or foreseeable injury seen onstage deserve attention and elaboration. (Morrow 4)

The way the story was created – as if it was a detective story – is another issue which wasn't handled but it is of major importance. That's one of the most important factors to attract the attention of teen students besides being an innovation in the theatre subgenre. It might have been extremely interesting to create a bridge to the present by having students watch an episode from, for instance, CSI (Crime Scene Investigation) and compare the gathering and analysis of evidence with the play, trying to spot all the materials that could be collected had it happened nowadays.

An interesting activity and I believe one that would thrill the students would be to open a Twitter class account – or as alternative to create a blog – so that students and teacher would share with people all over the world their findings concerning gender-based discrimination and domestic violence. Russel Stannard, a professor at Westminster University and author of many school books, makes no apology of the use of this and other Internet related resources:

If you spend 15-20 minutes a day, you can really build up an amazing network of contacts. I have around 1000 followers now and it is a very powerful way for me to direct people to my content or interesting things I have found – but also to get a constant flow of great content from other tweeters around the world. (Stannard 52)

This learning strategy would require a discussion of the risks underlying the use of the Internet and social networks, making students reflect upon the dangers of giving unknown people personal data as well as recall examples of personal situations or others reported by the media.

This paper aimed at, within the inevitable time and space conditioning, showing how important it is to bring these issues into the classroom, connecting the last with the real world. Moreover, meeting Susan Glaspell and her literary works of art, *Trifles* and *A Jury of Her Peers*, fosters her recognition as a priceless asset to literature and to a changing world ■

Notes

¹ Portuguese Syllabus of English as a Foreign Language: “Relembra-se que, embora colocando o enfoque na actualidade, é sempre possível, em qualquer domínio de referência proposto, estabelecer conexões com o passado, enquadrando os domínios apresentados nos seus contextos histórico-culturais no pressuposto de que o passado pode ajudar a compreender o presente” (Moreira et al. 24).

² Portuguese Syllabus of English as a Foreign Language: “No contexto de uma Europa plurilingue e pluricultural, o acesso a várias línguas torna-se cada vez mais valioso para os cidadãos europeus, não só como requisito para a comunicação com os outros, mas também como fundamento-base de educação cívica, democrática e humana. No contexto escolar, a aprendizagem de línguas assume, assim, um papel relevante na formação integral dos alunos, não apenas no que diz respeito aos processos de aquisição dos saberes curriculares, como também na construção de uma educação para a cidadania. Com efeito, a aprendizagem de línguas inscreve-se num processo mais vasto, que ultrapassa a mera competência linguística, englobando aspectos ligados ao desenvolvimento pessoal e social dos alunos, levando-os a construir a sua identidade através do contacto com outras línguas e culturas” (Moreira et al. 3).

³ This issue will be discussed in more detail later in the article.

⁴ See Barbara Ozieblo: “[T]he American writer made her case more difficult by applying it to the whole human race, whereas the Norwegian confined it to the individual” (2).

⁵ As also suggested by the Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe and as indicated in the various Language Education Policy Profiles.

⁶ See:

Lei n.º 60/2009, de 6 de Agosto

Artigo 7.º

Projecto de educação sexual na turma

1 — O director de turma, o professor responsável pela educação para a saúde e educação sexual, bem como todos os demais professores da turma envolvidos na educação sexual no âmbito da transversalidade, devem elaborar, no início do ano escolar, o projecto de educação sexual da turma. (“Lei n. 60/2009” 5097)

⁷ See:

Lei n.º 60/2009, de 6 de Agosto

Artigo 2.º

Finalidades

Constituem finalidades da educação sexual:

e) A capacidade de protecção face a todas as formas de exploração e de abuso sexuais;

f) O respeito pela diferença entre as pessoas e pelas diferentes orientações sexuais;

h) A promoção da igualdade entre os sexos;

l) A eliminação de comportamentos baseados na discriminação sexual ou na violência em função do sexo ou orientação sexual. (“Lei n. 60/2009” 5097)

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