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Abstract of the doctoral dissertation entitled “Common literature in the didactics of Polish studies in general secondary school after 1918.”

Keywords: general literature, literary canon, didactics of Polish studies, readings.

The aim of the dissertation was to establish and present the facts concerning the functioning of universal literature in school curriculum documents from 1918 to the present day.

The first chapter is devoted to a reflection on the shape of the general and school reading canon. The starting point was an attempt at its definition and a presentation of the factors influencing the construction and modification of canonical approaches. The dissertation points out that the literary canon should be based, first and foremost, on enduring values that will enhance its formative and formative character. It is worth emphasizing, moreover, that the masterpieces of reading that make up the general literary canon often do not appear in school canonical presentations, as the shape of the latter is influenced by a variety of factors connected, among other things, with the current educational policy of the state. The canon should be resistant to transient fashions, political and ideological expectations and economic conditions, and one of the most important aims of Polish language education should be to educate pupils' aesthetic expectations, to initiate them into Polish and world culture and to awaken in them an attachment to universal and approved values. The school literary canon should be a kind of point of reference for a young person maturing in postmodern reality.

The thesis adopts the perspective that Polish literature is born out of the universal tradition, is an integral part of it, and brings to it native values and its point of view. Talking about universal literature simultaneously triggers a discussion about Polish literature and vice versa.

The second chapter of this dissertation contains a careful analysis of the situation of Polish education after Poland regained independence, a review of documents regulating the principles of the educational system and the training of teaching staff, a discussion of the consequences of individual reforms and a presentation of sets of readings from universal literature which were included in the curricula of the time dedicated to particular types of secondary schools. Texts from universal literature were used in Polish, foreign languages and history lessons, and therefore

the practices of cooperation between teachers, who presented individual masterpieces taking into account different methodologies and points of view, were extremely important in the early twentieth century. Popular literature provided access to foreign culture, but at the same time supported the process of highlighting national distinctiveness. In the interwar period, there was a clear turn towards the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions. The foreign tradition was often filtered through the Polish experience, e.g. antique culture was learnt through contact with the works of Polish authors, who presented it to native readers.

The third chapter was devoted to presenting the educational reality after the end of the war and the takeover of power by the communist government. At that time, there was a clear shift towards socialist ideas in curriculum documents, which resulted in a clear violation of the value-based artistic canon. Attempts made after 1950 to instrumentalise the literary canon led to a situation in which popular literature, losing its original functions, began to speak with the voice of power. Reading suggestions included socialist realist works and proclamations by party activists. In the 1950s the place of Western masterpieces began to be occupied by Soviet works whose main task was to create a new citizen - a builder of a social order based on communist ideas. Only after the death of Joseph Stalin did the process of a slow softening of the tone in terms of literary education begin, as works by authors awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature began to appear on reading lists and pro-socialist works were gradually displaced and replaced by Western masterpieces.

The fourth chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the 2009 and 2018 core curricula, taking into account the context of the compulsory Polish matriculation exam. It is pointed out that if the school canon of readings is subordinated to the external exam then reading works begins to lose its meaning, as reading is then perceived as an onerous necessity. The study proposes changes in the selection of canonical texts, taking into account the increasing reluctance of students to learn about demanding high art literature.

In the teaching of universal literature, diachrony turns out to be crucial, giving young people a sense of continuity and belonging to the family of European culture. However, the role of the Polish language teacher is to functionalise texts that are intended to serve students to learn a certain axiological order and to build their own identity and humanity.