

Received: 01.11.2022
doi: 10.46763/JESPT22172070j
UDC 159.955:373.091.3]:82
Revised: 10.12.2022
Accepted: 14.12.2022

SIX THINKING HATS METHOD FOR INTERPRETING FAIRY TALES Nataša Jožič

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Abstract. Encouraging critical thinking in pupils is important as by developing this skill they learn self-reflection, evaluation, argumentation, reasoning, tolerance for different views, empathy and striving for the truth. When teaching literature in the first educational period, teachers can encourage critical thinking when dealing with literary texts. We can implement De Bono's thinking hats method adapted to lower-level pupils, in which we contemplate a problem from the perspective of six hats. The six hats method involves parallel thinking, in which all participants simultaneously think within the framework of one hat color. Each of the six hats is a different color and has its own meaning. Thinking under the hats takes place in the context of a selected fairy tale, which pupils interpret by presenting their points of view by taking into account the characteristics of the hats. By means of hats, pupils face the fairy tale, solve the problem that appears in it as a group, and thus get to know themselves, other pupils, and their way of thinking. The hat method has a positive effect on pupils' literature lessons, as they show greater reading motivation and develop critical and creative thinking. They actively discuss, and participate in what they read, evaluate the text, present their knowledge, touch upon their emotions and thoughts, and seek new ideas and solutions regarding the content of what they read. The purpose of the paper is to present an adapted six hats method in teaching literature, which is carried out in the third grade of primary school.

Keywords: lower level, literary text, critical thinking, parallel thinking, six thinking hats method.

1. Introduction

Teaching pupils to think is extremely important, because as adults they will live in a world that will require a lot of thinking and consideration from them, both in the personal sphere and on their career path. Critical thinking is a skill worth developing and can be learned. We can develop the youngest pupils' thinking through various stories. In the first educational period, we use different methods to encourage thinking while reading.

Methods for promoting critical, creative, collaborative, and metacognitive thinking while reading are also highlighted in the syllabus for Slovenian. Teachers are always on the lookout for interesting approaches to further motivate pupils and encourage them to participate in lessons. De Bono's hats of different colors are an excellent tool that motivates pupils to read and interpret literary texts, encourages creative and critical thinking, teaches strategies for solving problems that arise when reading and interpreting fairy tales. An example of good practice is presented below. In it, pupils interpret a fairy tale after reading by thinking under the six hats, which represent thinking styles.

2. Theoretical section

2.1. Defining critical thinking

There are various scientific conceptions of critical thinking characterized by similarities and differences. O'Rourke (2001, in Rupnik Vec, 2010: 173) classifies the variety of concepts into two groups. The first group understands critical thinking more narrowly, and includes authors who deal with philosophy and, within it, with rhetoric and informal logic. Critical thinking

is understood as the ability to analyze, evaluate and formulate arguments. The second group includes authors, generally from the field of education, who understand critical thinking more broadly. Their definitions express a focus on encouraging the development of thinking in general or reflection on general educational goals. Critical thinking is defined in the terminology of skills, thought processes, procedures, practicing certain activities (Rupnik Vec, 2010: 174).

Authors C. Wade and C. Tavis, who understand critical thinking in a narrower sense, define it as “the ability and willingness to assess claims and make objective judgments on the basis of well-supported reasons.” (Wade, 1995: 24; in Rupnik Vec, 2010: 174). Lipman is an author from the field of education and a representative of the broader concept of critical thinking, whose definition of critical thinking is “skilful, responsible thinking that is conducive to judgment because it relies on criteria, is self-correcting, and is sensitive to context.” (Lipman, 1988, 39; in Rupnik Vec, 2010: 176). One of the central defining characteristics of the critical thinking concept, which most authors use despite different emphases in the definition of critical thinking, is the skill of the analysis, evaluation, and formulation of arguments (Rupnik Vec, 2019: 382).

2.2. Teaching critical thinking at school

Critical thinking skills can be learnt. People who learn and apply these skills become better thinkers. Critical thinking skills as stated by Wade (1995; in Cokan, 2011: 17) are as follows:

- “Willingness to ask questions and explore.
- Defining concepts and problems.
- Differentiating evidentiary material for individual interpretations.
- Analyzing assumptions and attitudes in individual conclusions.
- Avoiding emotional conclusions.
- Avoiding oversimplification.
- Allowing and considering different interpretations of events and phenomena.
- Allowing vagueness, openness.”

This is just one of many breakdowns of critical thinking skills intended primarily for teachers in schools.

Teachers play an important role in developing critical thinking in pupils. They give pupils the opportunity to think, and encourage and enable them to:

1. Ask questions and discover: Pupils often ask questions, assess the quality of their own and other people’s questions, independently search for answers to these questions.
2. Pay attention to the precise and clear use of language: Pupils define terms, check their understanding of what they hear or read.
3. Assess and evaluate on the basis of clear and relevant criteria: Pupils independently define assessment criteria in a given situation, assess the clarity and relevance of the criteria in a given situation, assess various ideas, phenomena, events and situations on the basis of clear and relevant criteria.
4. Draw conclusions and interpret: Pupils distinguish facts from interpretations, interpret phenomena and events, adopt different perspectives, draw conclusions.
5. Argue: Pupils formulate arguments, analyze and evaluate their own and other people's arguments.
6. Solve problems and make decisions: Pupils solve open-ended problems, use various problem-solving strategies, make decisions, use a variety of decision-making techniques.
7. Contemplate their own thinking, analyze it, evaluate it and systematically improve it: Pupils become aware of their assumptions, beliefs and values, analyse their own thinking from the aspect of content and process (Rupnik Vec, 2019: 386–399).

2.3. Six thinking hats method

The author of the six thinking hats method is Dr Edward Charles Francis Publius de Bono. The six thinking hats method is a parallel thinking method, which means that we lay down ideas alongside each other, without overlaps, contradictions and preliminary judgments

about their truthfulness or falsity. The point of parallel thinking is to stem from possibilities, not to judge at every moment (De Bono, 2018: 49). Parallel thinking arranges our thinking so that we only think about one thing at a time, making purposeful time for creativity and emotion, looking for strengths, not just weaknesses, and involving everyone (De Bono, 2014: 277).

Characteristics of parallel thinking:

- dedicated to conception, creation, design;
- accepts possibilities without judging;
- accepts both sides of the opposition and wants to shape the way forward;
- encourages the creation of ideas and concepts (De Bono, 2018: 235–241).

The six thinking hats method is a method for doing a single type of thinking at a time. According to the six hats method, all participants, at some point, look in the same direction and think within the framework of one hat color. The benefit of the hat as a symbol is that it indicates a role, and hats are symbols of thinking styles. The advantage of a hat is also that every participant can easily put it on or take it off, and the hat is visible to everyone. The six colors of the hats (white, red, black, yellow, green, blue) correspond to the six thinking styles (De Bono, 2005: 15–23). A thinker uses only one hat at a time and follows the thinking style indicated by the hat. In the hat system, feelings are expressed directly without a sense of guilt or justification. This is a critical evaluation of ideas, whereby the method allows us to be creative. The six hats method uses parallel thinking in three forms (De Bono, 2018: 57):

1. “Under a certain hat, everyone in the group thinks in parallel in the same direction. Thinkers focus on a topic, not on other people thinking about it.
2. Different opinions, even if they contradict each other, are placed side by side and can be addressed later if necessary.
3. The hats ensure the parallel directions of studying the topic.”

2.4. Meaning of the six hats

The white hat means information. White represents objectivity and neutrality and brings information. The white hat deals with actual information and numbers and is aimed at seeking and preparing information. Thinking under the white hat is disciplined and focused, free of personal interpretations and opinions. The thinker strives to be neutral and objective when presenting information (De Bono, 2005: 35–37).

The purpose of the red hat is to express the feelings that exist. The red hat provides an emotional aspect. We use it to express our emotions, feelings, impressions, hunches, intuitions. With the red hat, the thinker thinks about how they feel about a certain matter, whether they feel sympathy for, or resistance to, a given question or proposal, and they think about their reactions. The thinkers do not justify their feelings when using the red hat (De Bono, 2005: 55–58).

The black hat is perhaps the most important hat, as it is the most frequently used of all hats. Nevertheless, it is important to refrain from its excessive use. The black hat is a hat of caution and avoids danger and trouble. It is attentive and cautious, and looks for weaknesses in ideas (De Bono, 2005: 79–81).

The yellow hat is optimistic and brings positive thinking. It focuses on benefits, constructive thinking and getting things done. Unlike black hat thinking, which deals with negative evaluation, yellow hat thinking deals with positive evaluation (De Bono, 2005: 95–96).

The green hat stands for creative endeavors. It is the hat of creativity and new ideas. Green hat thinking is about action, where the thinker looks for a way to achieve a new idea. Under the green hat, we propose concrete actions for how to do a certain thing. We use it to overcome obstacles (De Bono, 2005: 117–119).

Blue hat thinking is thinking about the thinking we need to perform and explore a matter. It is a control hat designed to control thinking. Blue hat thinking enforces discipline responsible for summarizing, reviewing and concluding (De Bono, 2005: 147–148).

2.5. Using the hats in a sequence

The six thinking hats can be used in two ways: the first is sporadic and the second is systematic (in sequence). The hats are most frequently used occasionally when they are used individually. We use one of the hats for two or three minutes. When used systematically, the sequence of the hats can be determined in advance, meaning that the thinker thinks according to this sequence, hat by hat.

There is no single correct sequence for wearing the hats, as it depends on the circumstances. You can also come up with your own sequence, but there are certain rules or guidelines regarding the use of hats:

1. You can use each hat in one sequence as many times as you like.
2. In general, it is better to use the yellow hat before the black one, as it is difficult to think positively after we have already been critical.
3. We use the black hat in two ways: the first way is to show the weaknesses of an idea. This should be followed by the green hat that attempts to eliminate weaknesses. In the second method, the black hat is used to evaluate proposals.
4. We always use the black hat for the final evaluation of an idea. However, the final evaluation should always be followed by the red hat to find out what we think of the idea after we have already evaluated it.
5. If the subject we are thinking about triggers strong emotions, we always begin the thinking with the red hat so that the participants (thinkers) can openly present their feelings.
6. If no strong emotions are involved, we begin with the white hat to gather information. After the white hat, we use the green one to provide alternatives. We then rate each alternative with the yellow hat followed by the black hat. Then we select an alternative and finally we assess our choice with the black hat followed by the red one (De Bono, 2014: 90–91).

3. Good practice example – workshop: Six thinking hats method

3.1. Thinking under hats with a selected fairy tale

The general objectives of the course are stated in the syllabus for Slovenian (2018: 7–8). It includes an objective that pupils develop the ability to receive, understand, experience, and evaluate as well as create texts in the standard Slovenian language. This is followed by an explanation of this objective, which is that pupils thoughtfully and critically accept and summarize, evaluate, and compare literary texts by Slovenian and foreign authors. Pupils enter a dialogue with the literary text and discuss it. The general objective refers to the development of critical thinking while reading a text, and to the evaluation and justification of one's own opinion.

When teaching literature in the third grade, I use a method to encourage critical and creative thinking while reading. To interpret the selected fairy tale, I employ the six thinking hats method adapted to the age of pupils. When conducting the workshop, in addition to general objectives, I pursue operational goals from the syllabus for Slovenian. The operational goals are for the pupils to:

- recognize the main literary character;
- recognize the literary space and time;
- recognize “good” and “bad” literary characters;
- form their own view of the literary characters' behavior;
- understand the content of the story;
- reconstruct the story;
- articulate the theme/message of the literary text (Poznanovič Jezeršek, [et. al.], 2018: 15).

Pupils know the characteristics of the hats. They know that each of the six hats is a different color and represents a certain thinking style. The meaning of the six hats in the interpretation of a fairy tale is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Meaning of the six hats in the interpretation of a fairy tale (Source: own)

3.2. Group workshop

The six thinking hats workshop is most frequently carried out in a group. After reading a fairy tale, pupils sit down and form a circle, in the middle of which I place the hats as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Placing the hats at a group workshop (Source: own)

The pupils interpret a fairy tale by putting on a hat and thinking under the hat, then taking it off and passing it to another pupil who continues thinking.

Under the white hat, the pupils state the information they learned about in the fairy tale: literary characters, literary space, literary time. They say what they know about the fairy tale. White hat thinking demonstrates knowledge.

Under the red hat, the pupils think about the emotions and feelings that arise as they read the fairy tale. They say what impression the main literary character or minor literary characters made on them, what emotions appeared while reading (joy, sadness, happiness, anger, fear, disappointment).

Under the black hat, the pupils think about the negative side of a fairy tale, about the problems and bad events that occurred in the fairy tale. They say what was bad in the fairy tale, what a literary character did wrong.

The yellow hat brings positive thinking, prompting the pupils to evaluate the fairy tale positively. They think about what was good in the fairy tale, which literary person acted positively, what inspired them, which part of the fairy tale was happy.

The green hat is about thinking about new ideas. The pupils put on a green hat and think about how they would continue the fairy tale, what they would change in the fairy tale, how the fairy tale could end differently.

We conclude the workshop and thinking under the hats with the blue hat. The pupils summarize the fairy tale and briefly reconstruct it. They say what the main message of the fairy tale is. They think about the whole thinking under the hats. They say whether they can connect the events in the fairy tale with events from everyday life, with their life experiences.

3.3. Workshop in pairs: interpretation of *The Emperor's New Clothes*

Pupils also like to do the workshop in pairs, during which the pupils decide under which hat they will start thinking and go together to the placed hats, which have slips of paper with questions or tasks, as shown in figures 3 and 4.



Figure 3: Arrangement of the hats during the workshop (Source: own)



Figure 4: Displaying hats with slips (Source: own)

The pupils each take their slip from the selected hat. A question is written on a piece of paper, which they answer to each other orally. Examples of questions when interpreting *The Emperor's New Clothes* written by Hans Christian Andersen:

- White hat: Which literary characters appear in the fairy tale? Who is the main literary character? What did the emperor value most? What magical property is the cloth supposed to have? State the literary place and time.
- Red hat: What did you think of the emperor? What were the weavers – swindlers like? Did any of the literary characters make you happy/angry, when and why? How did you feel reading the fairy tale?
- Black hat: Did anything bad happen in the fairy tale? Did any literary character do anything wrong? Which literary character was bad and why?
- Yellow hat: State what you liked best about the fairy tale. Did anyone impress you in the fairy tale? Which literary character did anything good?
- Green hat: What would you change in the fairy tale? How would you continue the fairy tale? How would you end the fairy tale if you were a writer?
- Blue hat: Did you have problems reading the fairy tale? What is the main message of the fairy tale? Briefly summarize the fairy tale. Have you ever met a swindler in your life?

It is important that the pupils think creatively and critically about the literary text, form their own opinion, and accept the (different) opinion of the other pupil. When they finish working with the slips, they form a new question for the selected hat and ask each other this question. After the workshop, the pupils report under which hat they liked to think the most and the least, which hat was difficult or easy.

4. Conclusion

Today, there are many ways to enrich lessons for pupils and make them interesting. With different forms and methods of work, we can develop various skills in pupils, thus attaining learning goals. Critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving and decision-making strategies are skills that we teach or develop during classes. Pupils like to practice the six thinking hats method adapted to them with the selected fairy tale. They know that they will think under the hats, making them all the more motivated to read. They look forward to interpreting the fairy tale under the hats. In the lower grades of primary school, it is interesting for pupils to use hats, as specific accessories mean a lot to them. As a teacher, I wanted to get feedback from pupils about working with the hats. I realized that they prefer thinking under the yellow hat, because then the thinking is optimistic, they touch upon the positive moments of the fairy tale and talk about happy events. Thinking under the black hat is the least popular, as it involves thinking about bad and negative things. For them, the black hat is sad. They cited the blue hat as the most demanding, as they think about thinking, and (self) reflection is a complex approach for them.

Using the thinking hats method, pupils can develop critical thinking skills such as judgement, evaluation, drawing conclusions, research, interpretation, problem solving, decision making and analysis (reflection). They can also develop creative thinking, which is most evident in the case of the green hat, when they continue the fairy tale, say how the fairy tale could end differently, and state what they would change in the fairy tale. The green hat is the hat of new ideas and this is where creative thinking is manifested. Third graders like doing the workshop with hats, because the interpretation of a fairy tale with hats that we put on or take off is more interesting than discussing a literary text without hats.

As teachers, we have the opportunity to teach pupils how to think, which is why teaching this skill is beneficial.

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