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Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury

Nonsense Genre in English Lessons at Secondary School

Využití žánru nonsens při výuce anglického jazyka na

2. stupni ZŠ

Diplomová práce

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Diplomová práce analyzuje žánr nonsens a získané teoretické poznatky aplikuje při výuce anglického jazyka. Práce se zaměřuje především na díla britských autorů L. Carrolla a E. Leara. Cílem diplomové práce je shrnout teoretické poznatky o žánru nonsens a jeho základních prvcích. Ty budou následně aplikovány pří výuce anglického jazyka na 2. stupni základních škol.

SEWELL, Elizabeth. The Field of Nonsense, London: Chatto and Windus, 1952 TIGGES, Wim. An Anatomy of Literary Nonsense, Amsterdam, 1988. ISBN 90-5183-019-X WOOLF, Jenny. The Mystery of Lewis Carroll: Discovering the whimsical, thoughtful and sometimes lonely man who created Alice in Wonderland, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-312-61298-6. COLLINGWOOD, Stuart Dodson. The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll: (Rev. C.L. Dodson). New York: The Century CO., 1899

Anotace:

Diplomová práce analyzuje žánr nonsens a získané teoretické poznatky aplikuje při výuce anglického jazyka. Práce se zaměřuje především na díla britských autorů L. Carrolla a E. Leara. Cílem diplomové práce je shrnout teoretické poznatky o žánru nonsens a jeho základních prvcích. Ty budou následně aplikovány pří výuce anglického jazyka na 2. stupni základních škol.

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala pod vedením vedoucí diplomové práce samostatně, a že jsem v seznamu použité literatury uvedla všechny prameny, z kterých jsem vycházela.

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Klíčová slova

žánr nonsense, Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, čtení s porozuměním, angličtina jako druhý jazyk, základní škola

Annotation

The main issue of this Diploma thesis is an analysis of nonsense genre and its usage during English lessons at secondary school. The text mainly focuses on works of British authors - Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear. The thesis summarizes theoretical knowledge about nonsense genre and afterwards gained findings will be used within English classes.

Key words

Nonsense genre, Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, reading comprehension, English as a Second Language, elementary school

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že diplomová práce je uložena v souladu s rektorským výnosem č. 13/2017 (Řád pro nakládání s bakalářskými, diplomovými, rigorózními, dizertačními a habilitačními pracemi UHK).

Datum: …………………… Podpis studenta: ………………………………

Contents

Introduction

The main focus of the present thesis is to introduce a genre of nonsense, its main pioneers and possible usage during teaching at the secondary school level. Despite the fact that the thesis discusses the topic of nonsense literature, the minor but not less important topic which is described is the crucial role of reading comprehension at secondary schools. Undoubtedly, reading is fundamental to developing and broadening imagination and creativity, besides it is a vital skill, necessary for everyday life. Having this in mind, the present thesis aims to encourage and inspire teachers to use wider range of literary texts in their ESL classes. One of these texts could be examples of nonsense genre, a charming type of literature created by masters of the written word.

The first chapter of the thesis deals with historical background of nonsense genre which helped to understand the usage and influence of the genre through centuries. Furthermore, the proofs are stated to refute a common thought about an origin of nonsense. Nonsense was not the exclusive product of the nineteenth century, which means more or less the oeuvre of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear, however, roots of the genre had been founded many centuries before.

The peak of nonsense was in the nineteenth century and these two Englishmen formed this genre greatly. That is why an emphasis is put to describe nonsense genre during this period as well as to focus on its main protagonists. The thesis proves that it is important to put both Lewis Carroll's and Edward Lear's works in the context of their childhood, education, and interests to provide apprehension of motives and inspiration for their literature.

After the introduction of main pioneers of the genre, it is necessary to identify features of nonsense literature. That is the reason why the following chapter deals with various views on nonsense genre. Above all, the chapter also provides practical examples and elements of the genre. There is a high amount of nonsensical elements throughout literature and it was difficult to describe closely only a few. However, the

chosen examples were selected by the best intention to show and provide various kinds and examples of nonsense literature.

The didactic part focuses on reading comprehension and its importance at secondary schools. General reading strategies are described in this chapter as well. The mentioned strategies have been carefully selected according to their practical usage at the secondary school level.

The final part is dedicated to concepts of possible lesson plans. Presented texts are chosen to be used in the ESL classrooms at secondary schools. All the texts have been related to the topic of nonsense, including Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Roald Dahl's fairy tale remake, Edward Lear's limericks, and David Walliams' *Billionaire Boy*. The texts consist of a student's handout, suggested procedures and tips for teachers. A list with presumably unknown vocabulary is added to some texts to ease students the reading. Handouts represent inspiration of a possible work with nonsense texts and texts including nonsensical elements at classrooms. The main aim is to encourage students to enjoy the process of reading and enlighten teachers about a potential of nonsense texts.

The main intention of the thesis is to analyse the theoretical background of nonsense genre, to evaluate its historical development and depict authors in whose works nonsense genre and its elements can be found. Above all, the purpose is also to briefly describe works of nowadays authors where the elements of nonsense genre are present. Finally, the thesis offers a possible usage of texts representing nonsense genre. The text, together with vocabulary list representing a student's handout, and a handout for teachers proposes a comprehensive teaching material.

1 Nonsense Literature

The literary genre of nonsense is considered as a style of literature where conventional rules of language and general logic do not apply. The genre is present in many forms of literature even though the most well-known form is nonsense verse. The term nonsense itself comes to be associated mainly with an endearing, imaginative type of children's literature. However, this field of literature has also been appreciated by adults as it might offer them an escape from everyday reality into imaginary lands where impossible tends to be possible.

Many historians and linguistics agreed that there is no point in framing a precise definition of nonsense. Such definition-making seems not to be necessary for practical reasons as it is not necessary for studies of lyric poetry or comedy to begin with airtight definitions of those terms. These are thighs which we, usually, recognize when we see them.

1.1 Historical Background

It can be expected that the period of English literature which lies between the major work of William Shakespeare and John Milton has been well explored and that little remained to be analyzed. However, the opposite had been truth for long time. The field of nonsense genre was ignored in general world of literature history and it can be said up to 20th century there was no overall history of nonsense in medieval and Renaissance European literature, even though specific aspects of this subject, and works by specific author, have been discussed separately in some detail. The first person who actually tried to put together history of medieval and Renaissance nonsense poetry in Europe is an English historian Noel Malcolm in his book *The Origins of English Nonsense* (1997). In his opinion it was necessary to deal with this field mainly because nonsense poetry, like any other comic genre, is part of larger literary culture which is connected in many ways, direct and indirect; understanding more about these connections can only shed light on other areas of literature. It

means that a deeper analysis of this field describes the ways in which writers and readers regarded the literary fashions, stylistics conventions, and canons of taste and diction of the day[1].

Generally, it can be said there are two common beliefs about the literary genre of nonsense poetry in England. The first states that nonsense genre was the exclusive product of the nineteenth century, which means more or less the creation of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear. Malcolm supported this argument with a quotation from Wim Tigges's book *An Anatomy of Nonsense* where Tigges suggested that "considered as a genre we cannot, indeed, trace the origins of nonsense literature beyond the nineteenth century, when it first appeared in Victorian England."[2] Another author, Klaus Reichert, considered nonsense as a passing phenomenal which both arose and disappeared with Lewis Carroll[3].

The second common belief is that nonsense is not a cultural and historical product as a timeless, universal category, which therefore has only instances rather origins. The fact that procedures of nonsense are universal, to be found in the literature and folklore of different cultures from various times and places, is clear. They can be found in English popular writings and folk traditions: nursery rhymes, drinking songs, humorous ballads, or folktales. The early practitioners and precursors of nonsense are, besides the anonymous authors of nursery rhymes and folktales, some of the greatest writers the world has seen. Aristophanes, who lampooned intellectual fashions in Classical Athens, Rabelais wrote a parody on Renaissance genre – chivalric romance, or Sterne, whose works are also satirical. These authors created sophisticated nonsense forms of Latin parodies, political satire and religious travesties.

However, nonsense poetry as an English literary phenomenon is not timeless; it wells up from folk culture. Neither is it a genre which can be only traced back to the 19th century. It is a genre with a particular history which developed by individual authors

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[1]MALCOLM, Noel. *The Origins of English Nonsense* (Kindle Edition). London: Fontana Press, 1998. ISBN: 9780007483099. Location 145.
[2]TIGGES, Wim. An Anatomy of Nonsense. In TIGGES, Wim,(ed.), *Explorations in the Field of Nonsense*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987. ISBN 9062036996. P. 23-46.
[3] TIGGES, p. 252.

and which possesses a close relationship to the high literary conventions of its day. After a brief blossoming in the later Middle Ages, literary nonsense genre was reinvented in the early seventeenth century. It then enjoyed a peak period for more than fifty years. This success of literary nonsense was mainly due to the skills and creativity of the individual poets and authors who developed this genre.

It is possible to attribute the origins of this genre to one poet in particular. The literary nonsense poetry of the seventeenth century was invented by Sir John Hoskyns, an English lawyer, rhetorician and minor poet, in 1611. Moreover, it is even possible to explain how, when and why he created it. For doing so, it is necessary to mention Thomas Coryate, a famous travel writer of his time and Hoskyns' friend who, after spending four months travelling through Europe, decided to publish a long narrative from his travel. As it was the custom of the period he wanted to ask for commendatory verses from his most distinguished literary friends. However, for incomprehensible reasons a word of what was afoot spread soon and wits set about composing mock commendatory. The striking fact is why the narrative, with its long quotations from Latin poetry and its serious and observant descriptions of European cities, caused such a storm of hilarity. Anyway, more than fifty authors sent in their commendations to be printed and Coryate did not omit a single one. John Donne, for instance, contributed with a poem in which he combined Latin, English, Italian, French and Spanish. John Hoskyns' contribution to the mock-praise of Coryate is considered as the first example of full-blown English literary nonsense poetry in the seventeenth century.

Even as the waves of brainless butter'd fish,
With bugle horne writ in the Hebrew tongue,
Fuming up flounders like a chafing-dish,
That looks asquint upon a Three-mans song:
Or as your equinoctiallpasticrust
Projecting out a purple chariot wheele,
Doth squeeze the spheares, and intimate the dust,
The dust which force of argument doth feele:
Even so this Author, this Gymnosophist,

Whom no delight of travels toyledismaies,

Shall sympathize (thinke reader what thou list)

Crownd with a quinsilltipt with marble praise.[4]

These lines of high nonsense were the only verses Hoskyns ever wrote. The genre of nonsense poetry might have died in infancy, were it not for the intervention of another minor poet, who adopted it and enriched it. He was John Taylor, the Water-poet. He wrote poetical pamphlets, using own version of gibberish[5] and many puns. Taylor became a celebrity and his nonsense poetry was one of the things that helped to make him famous. The traces of Taylor's influence can be found in many nonsense poems and poetry not only in the seventeenth century but also nearly two centuries later and we might say that Taylor's nonsense played some part in stimulation the growing fashion for nonsense in nineteenth century, which was to find its best examples in the works of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll.

The key purpose of this chapter was to support a saying that nonsense genre did not origin in the nineteenth century nor Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear cannot be considered as founders of the presented genre. Furthermore, the historical roots of the genre were described and mainly the story about the actual origin of nonsense literature. As it has been already mentioned, in spite of not being founders of nonsense genre, Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear contributed enormously in developing and enrichment of this type of literature. The following chapter introduces development of nonsense literature during the nineteenth century under the influence of its main protagonists - Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear.

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[4]*English 17th Century Nonsense Poetry* [online]. 2000 [cit. 03.11.2016]. Dostupné z: https://h2g2.com/edited_entry/A470954
[5] Unintelligible or meaningless speech or writing

2   Nonsense of the Nineteenth Century

There would have not been genre of nonsense which is known today if there had not been two Englishmen. Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll might not be fathers of nonsense genre but they are, with no doubts, its great developers and they both played crucial role in expansion and flowering of the genre.

Before discussing each of them closer as it is way easier to analyze them separately, a few words to compare them and their works must be said. They both used specific, unique style of nonsense genre. Lear's nonsense is simple, concrete, and descriptive, with far more verse than prose and there are no conversations for the most part. In contrast, Carroll's nonsense takes the form of consecutive narrative, with much more prose than verse, essentially conversational, highly complex and abstract in its language. The interesting thing here is that these two men share common elements even in their personal lives.

Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear, both Englishmen and near-contemporaries, were extremely pedant for precision in daily life, both maintained an enormous correspondence and had religious convictions, with a great mistrust of Catholicism. Admittedly, almost all of the appointed things were typical for any Victorian men and lifestyle, however, other elaborated details can be found to create a kind of alikeness between them. Neither men were married; both were afraid of dogs and felt more casually in the company of children.

There is no proof that they ever met or even were familiar with each other's work; for example John Lehman in his Edward Lear's biography states: "One of the most interesting unanswered questions of literary history is whether Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll read one another's works or were in any way influenced by one another. There is no mention of either in the other's diaries or letters, as far as we

have them."[6] Even more interesting is that they had common friends, the Tennysons, so it is rather odd that they had never met.

2.1   Lewis Carroll

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson spent his adult life in Oxford; he was a genial mathematician and logical thinker who wrote a number of books about mathematics and logic. Dodgson died in 1898, and nearly nobody knows his name in these days. However, what many people do know is his pen name, Lewis Carroll, which was not chosen randomly. It was derived by taking his names Charles Lutwidge, translating them into Latin as "Carolus Lodovicus" and retranslating them into English. Why did he need a pseudonym? As it is mentioned above, he wrote many books about logic and mathematics but he also wrote short stories and riddles. Dodgson wrote nonfiction literature, which was published in Oxford, and Carroll wrote and illustrated stories mainly for children. He created two worlds and two faces, as Dodgson he was a genial Oxford don, drinking tea in the high society and as Lewis Carroll, he spent his free time with children, playing games, and making up stories for them. One world and face died together with his body, the second one is immortal and reestablish over and over again by numbers of followers and those who were highly inspired by Carroll's imagination.

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was born in the village of Daresbury on January 27, 1832 as the eldest boy in a family of 11 children. He had close relationship with his family, as it is obvious from letters exchanged between him and family members; nevertheless, he probably had difficulty getting individual attention from his mother. According to this opinion it is noticeable in many of his books that a mother figure is omitted and replaced by an older sister (Alice also recounts her adventures to an older sister, not to a mother). Moreover, the speculation exists that the domineering and brutal female figures that occur in his work (for instance- the Queen of Hearts in the Alice books) might be based upon his mother. However, according to many of

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[6]LEHMAN, John. *Edward Lear and His World.* Oxford: Encore Editions, 1977. ISBN-13: 978-068415173. P. 50.

his relatives these bullying women have absolutely nothing like his mother was said to be.

In the early age he started to write short stories and poems and it is said that he made stories, riddles and games up to entertain his siblings. At the age of 12 he started to write and soon writing became his greatest hobby. A great example can be found in "The Rectory Magazine" which is written and illustrated completely by his hand and which he devoted to his siblings. His love of wordplay and puns, satire, and parody, as well as his interest in drawing is completely obvious.

He was considered as a clever but dreamy child who lived in his own world.

2.1.1 Education and life in Oxford

Charles L. Dodgson did not attend a primary school and was taught at home by his parents. His father, a clergyman, taught him mathematics and his mother especially literature. Robert W. Skeffington Lutwidge, Dodgson's favourite uncle, provided a positive bachelor role model. They were both deeply religious, both extremely fond of mathematics, and it was his uncle who introduced Carroll to photography- one of his greatest hobbies.

Later, he studied Rugby School and was successful not only in mathematics but also in Latin, Greek, literature and theology. At the age of 20 he followed his father footsteps when he achieved a scholarship to Christ Church College Oxford where he received first-class honour degree in mathematics in 1854. For most of the adult life, Dodgson lived the typical life of an unmarried Oxford don. He gave lectures and wrote non fictional literature for more than 30 years. The unfortunate truth is that he was not a good teacher. His stammering and high-pitched voice provoked laughter and probably added to the difficulty of dominating groups of children, the snobbish and rude young men at Christ Church. Charles L. Dodgson kept his feeling to himself and coped with his unpopularity by being curt and remote with his students

so that his teaching was described as "dull as ditchwater."[7] According to a rumour, some undergraduates even raised a petition in protest at being taught by Dodgson. Jenny Woolf, the author of one his biographies, says that "it seems puzzling that someone so imaginative, communicative and original could have so failed to inspire."[8] Nevertheless, he did extremely well as a teacher when, after his retirement, he began to teach logic at Oxford High School for girls.

His lifetime disability was stammer and because of the teasing by his students he decides to go to the speech therapist. The therapy helped him but "… my difficulties with 'p' in such combination as 'impossible,' 'them patience' (…), which combinations have lately beaten me when trying to read in the presence of others. (…) These failures have rather deferred the hope I had formed of being very soon able to help in Church again, for if I break down in reading to only one or two, I should be all the worse, I fear, for the presence of congregation."[9] In spite of this disability he was known as a good entertainer and storyteller.

Oxford gave him an opportunity to do the research of mathematics and logic. Even though he was brilliant mathematician, he is not known to have socialized with any progressive mathematician nor belonged to any of the mathematical societies of his time. Despite this fact, Carroll had many well-connected and, in that time, well-known friends. One of them, a Scottish writer and poet George MacDonald, and his three daughters had a great influence on the writing and later publishing the books about Alice.

He could also develop his various hobbies and recreations, as photography, illustrating or drawing sketches and writing in Oxford. Besides writing he created a number of quality photographs. His portraits include the actress Ellen Terry or the poet Alfred Tennyson. He also photographed children in every possible situation and costume. For his notable work, he is considered as one of the best Victorian

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[7]WOOLF, Jenny. *The Mystery of Lewis Carroll: Discovering the whimsical, thoughtful and sometimes lonely man who created Alice in Wonderland*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-312-61298-6. P. 46.

[8] ibid, p. 48.

[9] ibid, p. 76.

photographers who strongly influenced many modern photographers. Through photography he developed his fascination with human body and human beauty, particularly female. However, the most significant interest which he had developed since he was a child is his love for plays on words and numbers.

2.1.2 Carroll's interest in riddles

Dodgson always used entertaining and comical mathematical examples, also he loved puzzles and riddles, some of them were published in the children's magazine Aunt Judy's. Some of the riddles are easy and have something in common with crossword puzzle clues or Victorian cracker jokes.

Dreaming of apples on a wall,
And dreaming often, dear
I dreamed that, if I counted all,-
How many would appear? [10]

The answer is 10. The number is hidden in the text. … and dreaming of*ten*.
However, many of the riddles remain without solution, or the solution is not possible to find.
For instance:
The Dodo says that the Hatter tells lies.
The Hatter says that the March Hare tells lies,
The March Hare tells that both the Dodo and the Hatter tell lies.
The question is: Who tells the truth? [11]

It is impossible to find the answer; it makes an infinite loop. If the March Hare told the truth, the Hatter and the Dodo must both lie. But if Dodo also said that the Hatter tells lies, so this is a contradiction, the March Hare and the Dodo cannot therefore be telling the truth…

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[10] WOOLF, p. 55.
[11] *Scandal* [online]. 2011[cit. 03-13-2017]. Dostupné z:
https://www.futilitycloset.com/2011/12/26/scandal-2/

One of the easiest types of word puzzles was a game called Doublets, which involved turning one word into another of the same length, by changing a letter at a time. This game is still played today and the words must be found in a Standard English Dictionary.

Carroll's examples[12]:

Make the DEAD LIVE   Turn MICE into RATS

DEAD   MICE

lead   mite

lend   mate

lent   mats

lint   RATS

line

LIVE

These riddles are a great example of Charles' wittiness, intelligence and also proved that he enjoys teasers and loved to give people impossible puzzles and riddles. As well as playing with words, Lewis Carroll loved to play with numbers.

The fact that the numbers were always on Carroll's mind is obvious. However, there is an interesting fact about Carroll's passion for numbers; he is supposed to be interested in one number, which can be found across his works, number 42. Mathematicians have been finding examples of this through his works for years. Some of the 'findings' are clear and obvious, for example: When the King of Hearts announces in the court scene- "Rule Forty- two. All persons more than a mile high to leave the court."[13] The mathematician Robin Wilson goes so far as to say, in his book Lewis Caroll in Numberland, that he seems to have had an obsession with the

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[12] WOOLF, p. 61.

[13] CARROL, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. London: Macmillan, 2015. ISBN 978-1-4472-799-0. P. 82.

number 42, he found out for instance that Alice in Wonderland has 42 illustrations and many other examples, some of them seem to be far-fetched.

2.1.3 The time when Alice was created

Thirty years-old mathematics professor Charles L. Dodgson went on a boat trip on the river Thames with his colleague and friend Reverend Duckworth and three little daughters of the dean of the Oxford's Christ Church College, Lorina, Edith and Alice Liddell. One of the sisters, his favourite one, the golden-haired Alice, asked him to tell them a story. So he did and later also wrote it up for her. The story became an international bestseller *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). It would be a charming story if it would be like that, however, it was not. In fact, Alice had short, dark hair, cut in an unusual, boyish style, and by the time *Alice in Wonderland* was published, she was in her teens and had had little to do with Carroll for years.

The probable scenario was that on a summer day in July of 1862, Charles L. Dodgson took the Liddell girls on a picnic on the river bank and there he first began the story of *Alice's Adventures under Ground*[14]. Due to this occasion the characters at the *Pool of Tears* (Chapter II, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*) include several characters that were named after members of the boating party. Dodgson, translated into 'the Dodo', there was Lorina the Lory, Edith the Eaglet, Alice (who played herself) and also Carroll's friend Robinson Duckworth, the Duck[15].

Another fact considered as the truth is that Dodgson was very fond of the Liddell sisters, and spent with this family a lot of time, however, a few years later he probably had had some arguments with Mrs Liddell and that was about the end of the close friendship. In that time, Carroll was working on his book, after much deliberation about the title (he already rejected *Alice's Hour in Elfland* and several others titles), he finally entitled his book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In April 1864, Carroll hired John Tenniel, a major political cartoonist, to illustrate the book. It

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[14] Later he renamed it *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

[15] In fact, according to memory of Lorina Liddell, Duckworth was not there with them. On the other hand Alice said that he had been there.

was a great choice because nowadays is the name Tenniel inextricably linked to the *Alice* books.

Illustrationof Alice by John Tenniel[16]

By the end of 1965, 2 000 copies of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* had been printed. Unfortunately, the printing of the pictures was entirely dissatisfactory so both, Carroll and Tenniel, decided to withdraw the whole printing and get the book redone at a different printer. Nowadays, the few copies of the true first edition go for astronomical prices and become like the Holy Grail for book collectors. When *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the sequel *Through the Looking- glass* (1871) were published, Carroll's life would now change forever.

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[16] Alice taking „Drink Me" bottle. In: TENNIEL, John: *The Tenniel Illustrations for Carroll's Alice in Wonderland* [online]. 2008 [cit. 07.11.2016]. Dostupné z: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/114/114-h/114-h.htm

The life of Charles L. Dodgson is still shrouded in mystery and many things have not been explained and answered yet. Many rumours and legends have been said about his life. For instance, the famous story is told about him and the Queen Victoria. It tells that the Queen was so touched by the book of *Alice's Adventurous in Wonderland* that she issued a royal command that she should be the first person to receive a copy of Carroll's new book. After few years, a beautifully wrapped package arrived to the Queen. When she opened it, she found a personal copy of Carroll's next work - *An Elementary Treatise on Determinants with their application to Simultaneous Linear Equations and Algebraic Geometry.*[17] After publishing Alice's books he focused on mathematics and logic and despite the fact he kept writing short stories and riddles, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the sequel *Through the Looking- glass,* remained his most significant work.

Charles L. Dodgson lived a satisfactory life before the publishing the books about Alice. However, these books about little girl in a dream land changed his life and his pen-name became immortal. The name Lewis Carroll is well-known all over the world and his works still enchant hundreds of people, not only children but also many grown-ups get to like the books about charming Wonderland for amazing author's fantasy.

2.2   Edward Lear

Edward Lear was born in 1812 as a twentieth of twenty-one children and was raised and educated largely by his eldest sister. Just as Lewis Carroll had Lear probably closer relationship with his sisters; what is more, in his letters and diaries he is almost entirely silent about Ann and Jeremiah Lear, his parents. His father, a London stockbroker, lost a large amount of money when Lear was little, resulting in a dramatic change in their standard of living. Despite his love and talent for painting, his financial situation did not allow him to attend any art school (though he did attend the Royal Academy of Art many years later). After a brief miserable period of formal schooling, he found a job and started earning money firstly by making

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[17] WOOLF, p. 213.

anatomical drawings for doctors and commercial sketches and later as an illustrator of flowers, butterflies and birds, which were his speciality. He produced *Illustrations of the Family of Psittacidae, or Parrots* in 1830, a work which earned him immediate respect in the field, and his career had begun.

2.2.1   Edward Lear and his career as an illustrator

The precision exhibited in his professional drawing is reserved in his later nonsense illustrations and his early contact with birds provided often-used motif for them. He experimented briefly with serious poetry in his late twenties where his attraction to landscape and nature was visible. This theme and his lifetime inclination to nature arose while he worked and travelled with one of the British zoologist. During his employment as an illustrator, Lear was amused to sketched caricatures of himself usually presenting a spectacle in a menagerie he used to draw.

A caricature of Edward Lear[18]

Because of reputation he earned as an illustrator he was asked by Lord Stanley, heir to the 12th Earl of Derby, to the Knowsley estate, to draw the menagerie. During his residence there he not only became an honorary member of the upper classes, but he also began creating his 'nonsenses', not yet called limericks, for the many Stanley's

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[18]Edward Lear, depicting himself. In: *Portraits of Edward Lear* [online]. 2012 [cit. 28.04.2017]. Dostupné z: http://www.nonsenselit.org/Lear/elpictures.html

grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Later, he was asked by many Stanley's acquaintance to work for them but was forced in 1837 to leave the country due to pulmonary problems. This trip to Italy was the beginning of a long life devoted to travel and landscape painting which later became his profession that allowed him to live without financial worries for his entire life. Since that he rarely spent more than a few months in England. His painting commissions took him into many exotic locations, including Egypt, Palestine, Greece, and India, but his residence was most often in Italy.

He was also a pioneering lithographer, and illustrated his travel journals with watercolours – these skills he developed at the Royal Academy School where he also made several important acquaintances, in particular with Pre-Raphaelite painters whose vivid style of painting and close attention to nature Lear strongly admired.

2.2.2   Edward Lear's literary talent

The children fell in love with the playful and creative illustrator and Edward Lear started his explorations of the form with drawing accompanying rhymes like the "old man with a beard."
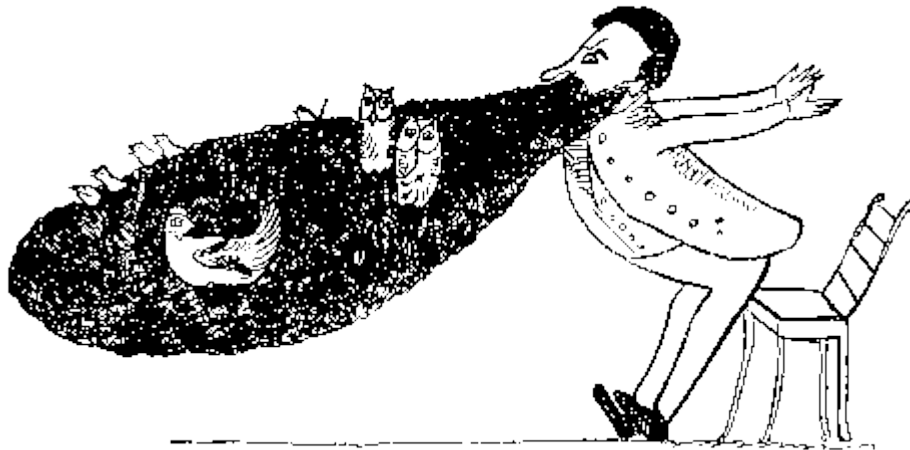
There was an Old Man with a beard,

Who said, 'It is just as I feared!

Two   Owls   and   a   Hen,

Four   Larks   and   a   Wren,

Have   all   built   their   nests   in   my

beard![19]

This poem can be considered a limerick, a form he popularized although he had never claimed it. The limerick is a short, humorous and often nonsense poem with a strict rhyme scheme (AABBA). The first line usually refers to person that the limerick is about, the second line characterizes or describes the person, and the main point is shown in the line three and four, the last line is usually a humorous variant of the first line. His first examples of nonsense genre involved parodies of at that time poets and verse-letters. He used various puns, hyperboles and an absurd sketch accompanied his texts. This interaction between visual and written nonsense is, as we can see, essential and specific to his limericks.

He did not initially plan the limericks as publishable material and they were written for amusement of the young Earl's grandchildren and it was only in 1846 that they were published under the pseudonym "Derry down Derry". The first edition of Lear's Book of Nonsense was unexpectedly successful and two reprints appeared in

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[19]LEAR, Edward. *A Book of Nonsense* [online]. 2012 [cit. 28.03.2017]. Dostupné z: http://www.nonsenselit.org/Lear/BoN/bon010.html

1855 and 1861:[20] the latter case, published under his own name, with extra 43 new limericks. His nonsense work is distinguished by his delight in the sound of words and his imagination. Lear is known for the establishing many neologisms, one of his most famous verbal inventions- "runcible spoon," is now found in many English dictionaries. This term came from his famous piece of nonsense - a poem *The Owl and the Pussycat* and means a three-pronged fork.

Later, three other volumes of nonsense were published: Nonsense Songs, Stories, Botany and Alphabets (1871), More Nonsense, Pictures, Rhymes, Botany, Etc. (1872), and Laughable Lyrics, A Fourth Book of Nonsense Poems, Songs, Botany, Music, Etc. (1877). All of these books were praised and popular, and, together with Carroll's nonsense works, made up the greater part of Victorian nonsense. However, there is much of Lear's nonsense and parody which was not published in his lifetime and has slowly become available since his death. His nonsense work is extensive, embracing many genres, and his influence on later writers, poets, and illustrators has been substantial. Some great literary figures have written on Lear, including Tennyson, Ruskin, G.K. Chesterton, George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, and T.S. Eliot[21].

Edward Lear, seemingly easy-going person, suffered from depressions and he was also afflicted by feelings of physical inadequacy caused by a carriage which ran over his legs and permanently damaged his knees. He also suffered from a feeling of unattractiveness, according to his own word ugliness of him. However, he was known as a habitual exaggerator and actually a part of his sense of humour inheres in self-parody. He wrote a poem which paints a self- portrait of him. It shows conflicting views of him and the author does not know whether or not he thinks it is a pleasure to meet Lear. The poet was also trying to put Lear in the perspective of another person from a judgmental society.

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[20] PENDLEBURY, S., Kathleen. *Reading Nonsense: A Journey through the writing of Edward Lear*, Master's Thesis, Rhodes University, 2007. P. 20. Dostupné z: https://www.researchgate.net/
[21]HEYMAN, M., Benjamin. *Isles of Boshen : Edward Lear's literary nonsense in context* [online]. 1999. P. 16 [cit. 12.04.2017]. Dostupné z: http://theses.gla.ac.uk/2822/1/1999heymanphd.pdf

How pleasant to know Mr. Lear

How pleasant to know Mr. Lear,

Who has written such volumes of stuff.

Some think him ill-tempered and queer,

But a few find him pleasant enough.

His mind is concrete and fastidious,

His nose is remarkably big;

His visage is more or less hideous,

His beard it resembles a wig.

He has ears, and two eyes, and ten fingers,

(Leastways if you reckon two thumbs);

He used to be one of the singers,

But now he is one of the dumbs.[22]

(…)

His feeling of unattractiveness naturally influenced his personal life. A subject that frequently arises in the discussion of his privacy is his supposed homosexuality and his falling in love with male friends. The evidence, however, remains inconclusive and whatever his sexual proclivities he had an effort to get married. Augusta "Gussie" Bethell, a young woman with whom he befriended during her childhood, represented his failure to marry and he was rebuffed. His wandering life was lonely and he treasured his friends. He was a likeable man who seemingly made friends easily; he had many including those from the upper classes and fashionable artistic circles. For a short period he gave drawing lessons to the twenty-seven-year-old Queen Victoria.[23] He became quite close with the Tennyson family[24] and with

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[22]LEAR, Edward. How Pleasant to Know Mr. Lear [online]. 2017 [cit. 12.04.2017]. Dostupné z: http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/how-pleasant-to-know-mr-lear/

[23]HEYMAN, p. 9.

[24] Alfred Tennyson and his spouse Emily were both highly appreciated poets. The interesting fact is that Lewis Carroll was also a close friend with them, however, there is no evidence that they, Lear and Carroll, had ever met each other.

already mentioned some of the Pre-Raphaelites, including John Millais, William Rossetti, and especially William Holman Hunt.

As it is mentioned above, Edward Lear travelled widely throughout his life and he finally settled in San Remo, in Italy. There he died in 1888 and was buried in Italy. His nonsensical work, like nonsense genre as a whole, influenced later aesthetic movements such as surrealism, and the theatre of the absurd.

It has already been claimed that nonsense did not appeared firstly in the nineteenth century, however, writes of the nineteenth century nonsense were the first ones whose nonsense work became a part of children's literature. The presented chapter offers a summary of nonsense literature in the nineteenth century and its main pioneers – Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear. It was fundamental to briefly introduce both authors' life and family background in order to understand their attitudes towards nonsense literature.

3   Identifying Nonsense Elements on Literature

What is nonsense? Many scholars, wits and authors tried to find the proper answer to it and discussed about the description of nonsense. That means there is a number of definitions from various authors and it is not being easy to choose and say which one is the one that defines the field of nonsense complexly and properly. Some of these definitions will be mentioned in the following lines; however, it is possible to try to define nonsense without using quotations of wits. Rather than giving only a theoretical definition, there is an example of nonsense literature in practise.

Jabberwocky, a poem from Alice's book *Through the Looking Glass*, written by Lewis Carroll, is considered one of the greatest nonsense poems in English language and it says about the killing of a monstrous animal "the Jabberwock."

Alice found a book, started reading and got completely confused. After a moment she realized that she is in a Looking-glass kingdom so the book is glass reversed.

JABBERWOCKY

Twasbrillig, and the slithytoves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the momerathsoutgrabe.

`Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!'

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought —
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!

He left it dead, and with its head

He went galumphing back.

`And has thou slain the Jabberwock?

Come to my arms, my beamish boy!

O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!

He chortled in his joy.

`Twasbrillig, and the slithytoves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;

All mimsy were the borogoves,

And the momerathsoutgrabe.[25]

After reading this poem, many people would be confused and would not see any logic in it. Generally, those things are called nonsense because they cannot be understood or perceived or perhaps people are not able to associate them with our social construct. They seem to be against logic and common sense. After saying this, a question that arises is what do we mean by saying that something makes sense?

Generally speaking, something that is intelligible, justifiable and understandable is coherent for us, it makes sense. In other words, before categorizing something as sense or nonsense, people always analyse it and think about it, while doing so, it invokes different ideas in our minds and we associate them with logic, language or culture that surrounds us and is familiar to us. Nonsense shakes this; it shakes with an idea of rationality. Nonsense consists of "meaningless words, fooling or absurd language, conduct, or thought."[26]

Literary nonsense is a field that scholars and readers have struggles to define and understand since its blossoming during the Victorian era. It is possible to begin, however, by differentiating nonsensical devices; tools through which a meaning is

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[25] CARROLL, Lewis. *Through The Looking Glass,* London: Penguin Group, 1994. ISBN 978-0-14062-408-3. P. 28.

[26] *Longman Family Dictionary.* Prague: Aventinum, 1991. ISBN 80-85277-30-1. P. 462.

assumed. A wordplay, logical inversions, puns, arbitrary connections and contradictions can be mentioned. They may appear as well in works which are not in essence nonsensical, but rather use the same methods towards different ends. In other words, these tools characterise the genre but are not exclusive to it. The grotesque, for example, seems to be close to nonsense genre, but distortion of reality in grotesque evokes "horror rather than laughter."[27] Wim Tigges, whose book *An Anatomy of Literary Nonsense* is the most systematic study on the subject, describes the difference between grotesque and nonsense comparing Lear's poem and Roald Dahl's work. Another common aspect of these genres, nonsense and grotesque, is also description of various physical oddities, however, meanwhile nonsense avoid beauty, the grotesque evokes ugliness, including all the emotions associated with it (disgust, fear, pity). It must be clear that it belongs to an altogether different category from that of nonsense. Tigges supports his opinion with following example[28], where he compares a limerick by Edward Lear and Dahl's account of Violet Beauregarde in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

There was on old person of Pinner,

As thin as a lath, if not thinner;

They dressed him in white, and roll'd him up tight,

That elastic old person of Pinner.[29]

[27]TIGGES, p. 114.
[28]ibid, p. 114-115.
[29]LEAR, Edward. *A Book of Nonsense* [online]. 2012 [cit. 26.03.2017]. Dostupné z:
http://www.nonsenselit.org/Lear/MN/mn090.html

No principles are offended in either text or illustration, despite the fact they both are absurd and both are distanced from reality. Event though, no 'horror' is evoked in the limerick. In Dahl's story a little girl swells up to the shape of a giant blueberry, which clearly evokes horror in characters and readers:

"Everybody was staring at Violet. And what a terrible, peculiar sight she was! Her face and hands and legs and neck, in fact the skin all over her body, as well as her great big mop of curly hair, had turned a brilliant, purplish-blue, the colour of blueberry juice!"[30]

The only person who does not seem to be greatly concerned about this metamorphosis is Willy Wonka as he knows what the outcome will be, since what happens to Violet must be regarded as a punishment. The suggestion that these events, no matter how horrifying they seem to be, are real, excludes the effect of nonsense.

Fantasy is another field characterised by playful subversions that are so similar to those found in nonsense that their categories might easily be seen to intersect. Surrealism and Dadaism involve nonsensical absurdities as well. M.R. Haight, an author whose opinions and quotation Tigges frequently used and supported by them his own, suggested that nonsense "shades gradually, in various directions, into pure

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[30] DAHL, Roald. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.* London: Puffin, 1973. ISBN 0141365374. P. 89.

fantasy, pure farce, the grotesques, the Surrealist, and so on."[31] Tigges made his opinion clear by saying that "if a text is "a nonsense" it can be also a novel, a play or a lyric, however, if something is "a nonsense" it cannot simultaneously be an allegory, a satire or a joke."[32]

Wim Tigges, the author on whom this thesis leans heavily, defines literary nonsense as:

> "a genre of narrative literature which balances a multiplicity of meaning with a simultaneous absence of meaning. This balance is affected by playing with the rules of language, logic, prosody and representation, or a combination of these. In order to be successful, nonsense must at the same time invite the reader to interpretation and avoid the suggestion that there is a deeper meaning which can be obtained by considering connotations or associations, because these leas to nothing. The elements of word and image that may be used in this play are primary those of negativity or mirroring, imprecision or mixture, infinite repetition, simultaneity, and arbitrariness. A dichotomy between reality and the words and images which are used to describe it must be suggested. The greater the distance or tension between in presented, the expectations that are evoked, and the frustration of these expectations, the more nonsensical the effect will be."*[33]*

In other words, Wim Tigges distinguishes nonsense by its irresolution and contrasts, including those between rules and anarchy, expectation and fulfillment, or common sense and meaninglessness.

Sir Edmund Strachey sees that a source of delight in nonsense is "bringing confusion into order by setting things upside down, bringing them into all sorts of unnatural

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[31] HAIGHT, M.R, Nonsense. In: CORNWELL, Neil. *The Absurd in Literature*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006.ISBN 978 0 7190 7409 7. P. 247.
[32]TIGGES, p. 51.
[33]TIGGES, p. 47.

impossible, and absurd, but not painful or dangerous combinations."[34] His definition is strongly mirrored and visible in Alice's books.

Elizabeth Sewell, an author of *The Field of Nonsense*, represents an interesting contrast to former authors' opinions when she assumes in her book that "nonsense is not merely the denial of sense, a random reversal of ordinary experience and an escape from the limitations of everyday life into a haphazard infinity, but is on the contrary a carefully limited world, controlled and directed by reason, a construction subject to its own laws."[35] She affirmed her opinion by saying that nonsense genre is a kind of art, which means that it must have its own laws of construction.

While Tigges based his description of nonsense on contrasts and irresolution, Strachey suggests that the humorous part comes from setting things upside down and a slight confusion and Sewell supposes that nonsense genre has its own laws and is controlled by reason. Three different authors, each of them spend years in researching and dipping in the field of literature, and three different opinions. Nonetheless, all of them agreed on fact that nonsense literature is a very playful genre and its works are full of puns, neologism, riddles and a reader can find a great amazement there if he broadens his imagination.

When going back to Carroll's poem, Alice after reading it said that "it seems pretty (...) but it's rather hard to understand! (...) Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas- only I don't exactly know what they are! However, *somebody* killed *something*: that's clear, at any rate."[36] The poem made Alice confused and if she had not met Humpty Dumpty, she would not have understood it. Humpty Dumpty, the smiling egg from children's nursery rhyme, was sitting (unexpectedly) on a very narrow wall. He could sit there not worrying about his falling as a king had promised him a help if he accidentally fall down. If that happened, the king would send all his men and horses to help Humpty Dumpty. Humpty Dumpty was boasting that he "can explain all the poems that ever were invented- and a good many that haven't been

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[34] Nonsense as a fine art [online]. 2012 [cit. 27.03.2017]. p. 515. Dostupné z: http://www.nonsenselit.org/Lear/pdf/nonsense.pdf
[35] SEWELL, Elizabeth. *The Field of Nonsense*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1952. P. 4-5.
[36] CARROLL, Lewis. *Through The Looking Glass*. London: Penguin Group, 1994. ISBN 978-0-14062-408-3. P. 100.

invented just yet,"[37] so Alice asked him to help her with understanding Jabberwocky. This sounded hopeful so Alice repeated the first verse:

> Twasbrillig, and the slithytoves
> Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
> All mimsy were the borogoves,
> And the momerathsoutgrabe.[38]

Many hard words can be found in the poem and Humpty Dumpty explained them all. According to him *"brilling"* means four o'clock in the afternoon because it is the time when you begin *broiling* things for dinner. "Slithy" means lithe, which is the same as "active", and slimy. "Toves" are something like badgers – they are something like lizards- and they are something like corkscrews. A verb to "gyre" is to go round and round like gyroscope and to "gimble" is to make holes like a gimblet. "Mimsy" is flimdy and miserable and a "borogove" is a thin shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round- something like a live mop. A "rath" is a sort of green pig nad "mome" probably a short from "from home" – meaning that they had lost their way. "outgribing" is something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle. Does it make a sense to you now? Humpty Dumpty did explain difficult words but the meaning itself seems to be still confusing and 'nonsensical'. Alice seemed to be satisfied with an explanation and did not ask further questions.

The interesting thing in both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* is that Alice, the main protagonist, does not really question the strangeness of things she sees. She is sometimes stuns by them but she accepts it and is open to a possibility that what she sees can in fact be real. She adapts an ideology associated with those things that most may and would question.

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[37] ibid, p. 100-101.
[38] ibid, 102.

3.1 Nonsense elements in nowadays children's literature

As any other genre of literature, literary nonsense has influenced many writers, artists and authors who have been using nonsense elements in their works through time and place. As a genre, however, nonsense literature is a product of Victorian age, which can be seen mainly in Carroll's and Lear's books and poems. The tradition spread to the United States during the period between the World Wars.

The main protagonist was Carl Sandburg and his *Rootabaga Stories*, published in 1922. Carl Sandburg, a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and biographer, is one of the great writers of nonsense. His *Rootabaga Stories*, a widely read collection of abstruse stories, is considered as children's literature. Sandburg refers to children as "anarchs of language and speech"[39] and he creates an experience to deconstruct narrative. The very term "rootabaga," a respelling of the root vegetable's name rutabaga,[40] is Sandburg's announcement that he intends to ignore proper language and convey his ideas through something else. Nonsense in his hands does not work primary as a genre but as a device that connotes a style of nursery rhymes, limerick-y sketches and defies logic with paradox and confusion. Elements of nonsense genre appeared also in famous the Marx Brothers' films of the late 20s and 30s. The feeling of nonsense, or at least an escape from the rational, literal meaning of languages, dominates in their films. Their nonsense is often expressed is elaborate, lengthy and pointless dialogue and very easily slips into parody.[41]

After the Second World War nonsense spread more to the progressing media of television and radio. Monty Python's *Flying Circus* even though their comedy show is basically parody mixed with satire and with some visible nonsense elements. There are examples of more post-war author who were influence by nonsense genre and for the purposes of the thesis there are mentioned only a few. John Lennon wrote short stories and poems, often absurd and nonsensical, which were published as *In His*

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[39]SIMONINI, Ross. Carl Sandsburg Stops Making Sense [online]. 2010 [cit. 25.05.2017]. Dostupné z:]https://www.poetryfoundation.org/features/articles/detail/69463
[40]rutabaga - is a root vegetable, a cross between the cabbage and the turnip
[41] CHARNEY, Maurice: The Comic World of the Marx Brothers' Movies: „Anything Further Father? ". New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0838641248. P. 20-25.

Own Write and *A Spaniard in the Works* in 1964 and 1965.[42] Anthony Burgess, acknowledged for *A Clockwork Orange,* is an author of fairly successful imitation of Carroll's Alice *A Long Trip to Teatime.* In the book, Edgar, the main protagonist, finds himself astray in wonderland where he experienced a bizarre adventure highlighted by nonsensical conversations with a number of curious creatures. Burgess plays with logic and language itself, using puns and above all includes verses influence by nonsense literature. Moreover, the founder and one-time front man of *Pink Floyd* Syd Barrett used nonsensical techniques in song writing. The influence of Lear and Carroll is featured heavily on Pink Floyd's first album, *The Piper and the Gates of Dawn.[43]*

The author who must not be forgotten and who has already been mentioned in the chapter above is Roald Dahl. The famous British short story writer and the author of many children's books whose work, characterized by unsentimental and often darkly comic mood with unexpected endings, is always dominated by kind-hearted characters who usually face villainous adult enemies. His children's books are also highly appreciated by adults especially for the underlying warm sentiment, vivid description of atmosphere and characters and Dahl's usage of language. The books show how much entertainment it is to play with words and language. The linguistic playfulness is a proof of elements of nonsense genre. He created hundreds of new words; however, they were rarely purely nonsensical. Most of them were created from everyday words by changing endings, blending and combination with another word as he was very profound of portmanteau words. This technique, commonly used to form words in English, means to blend two or more words together to combine their meanings. For instance, giants do not swallow and then gulp they do it all at once in a single 'swallop'.[44] In 2016, marking the centenary of Dahl's birth, *The Oxford Roald Dahl Dictionary* was compiled, including many of his invented words and their meaning. Undoubtedly, the inventive and playful use of language and prolific imaginative mind makes Dahl irreplaceable and one and only.

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[42] TIGGES, p. 45.

[43] He named the album after the charter from Kenneth Graham book, *The Wind in the Willows* - a classic of children's literature.

[44] RENNIE, Susan. What do we learn from Roald Dahl's creative use of language? [online]. 2010 [cit. 26.05.2017]. Dostupné z: https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/what-do-we-learn-roald-dahls-creative-use-language

Nevertheless, there is an author of present-day whose literary style has been compared to that of Roald Dahl. David Walliams, one of the best- selling authors of children's literature, uses playful language with puns and elements of nonsense literature.

The genre of nonsense may be the product of Victorian-era, however, various segments of it has been used since then as the examples were given above. Nonsense has caught the interest of many authors and artist mainly for its playfulness and freedom in using language and of many readers for its creative, imaginary and open thinking which is necessary to have while reading it

The paragraph above states reasons due to which nonsense literature represents a suitable teaching material. Nonsense literature work with various puns, playful word structure and creative thinking presents interesting topic for both students and their teachers. Besides the linguistic point of view on the genre, there is also a plot of majority of nonsense text which students can identify with. Students can also easily identify themselves with most of main characters in texts as they are usually in their age and facing similar problems. The task of following chapters is to introduce a possible usage of nonsense genre and literature with nonsense elements in ESL classrooms.

4   Nonsense genre and its usage in ESL classes

The genre of nonsense is a type of literature where conventional rules and logic are pushed away by various seemingly unnatural combinations of words with puns and hidden meanings. The background of the genre is set by the combination of non-words and nonce words. Non-words are a category of words out of the language lexicon as they are produced by a spelling or typographical error. Yet they are very typical for the genre of literary nonsense. The latter is especially created for a single occasion to solve an immediate problem of communication. Some of these have meaning and they become an established part of the language, while others, meaningless and disposable, are only useful for particular reason (for instance in child language testing). As it has been mentioned in previous chapters, authors of literary nonsense invented several new nonce-words. Many of them are portmanteau words dominating in Lewis Carroll's works.

A genre of nonsense has its literary creative and poetic aspects. Undoubtedly, literary nonsense is a type of literature and as so it can be practically used in ESL classrooms. Nonsense genre represents a great way to attract the students' attention by offering activities which are not monotonous and stand out in the teaching process. Actually, the ESL students deal with nonsense in classrooms, though they are probably not aware of it. The aim is not always find out the real meaning of the word, on the contrary, working with a word unknown to the student at a certain level is a natural part of language acquisition. Kaiserova mentions that as psycholinguistics demonstrates, „the process of a student learning a foreign language and bumping into words for which the child does not know the meaning but is still able to say and repeat and use is rather common at an early age."[45] It is logical to expect the same procedure in the foreign language process so facing nonsense as a part of learning process is unavoidable. However, the purpose of the thesis is to look at nonsense from a creative and literary point of view.

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[45] KAISEROVA, Stanislava. No Nonsense Nonsense in ELT. In: HAASE, C., ORLOVA, N., HEAD, C.J. *ELT: New Horizons in Theory and Application*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015. ISBN 978-1-4438-7792-3. P. 255-261.

Except for its potential as a literary genre and all the linguistic benefits it can offer, nonsense texts are also attractive for students for a different reason. As majority of main protagonists in books with nonsense elements are children usually in reader's age, they can easily identify with the problems are issues heroes are facing. Also, writers employ nonsense and word play to acknowledge children's experiences and struggles with educational methods, language, mathematics, manners, justice and their own processes of individuation. The motif which repeats frequently is a main protagonist facing some illogical and difficult situation in which his knowledge and skill are exercised, contradicted and confused. Having struggled with these situations less or more often, students can put themselves in the shoes of main character easily.

The combination of interesting and unique style of writing which stimulates students' creative thinking and attractive plot with main characters makes from nonsense literature desirable genre for students and teachers.

4.1   Reading Comprehension

The ability to read belongs to main communicative skills, as well as listening, writing and speaking. Developing these skills is a crucial task for any teacher. Undoubtedly, reading has a great contribution for developing English language. Not only is reading beneficial for vocabulary enrichment but it also shows how the vocabulary and phrases are used in a natural context. Reading can help one to understand grammatical elements naturally and probably easier than studying them only theoretically from textbooks. There may be an opinion that the main goal for ESL teachers is to teach the grammar of the language; literature, due to its structural complexity and its unique use of language, does not really contribute to this goal; in other words studying of literature will contribute nothing to help students to meet their academic goals. However, there are many literary texts focused on the particular grammatical points that are salient in the text. The most crucial is to choose an appropriate text and more importantly an appropriate method how to read and work with the given text.

Every day at school and at home students have various texts to handle. It is through reading that they acquire much of their knowledge and understanding of the different subjects, and reading often forms the basis of follow-up work such as class discussions or homework questions. Moreover, reading provides an effective way to develop a learner autonomy. Reading is, by its very nature, a private, individual activity which can be done anytime and anywhere. Readers can visualise and interpret what they read in their own way. They can ask themselves questions, notice things about the language, or simply let the story carry them along. All this can be easily done beyond walls of a classroom. Above all, the benefits of reading actually extend beyond reading as there are other language skills affected from reading competence – writing and speaking. The enrichment of mentioned language skills is influenced by extending vocabulary growth. Undoubtedly, vocabulary is not learned by a single exposure. Reading comprehension allows for multiple encounters with words and phrases in context thus making possible the progressive accretion of meanings to them. By presenting items in context, the deduction of meaning of unknown items is much easier.[46]

For these reason it is essential that ESL students are helped to develop reading skills and understand the meaning of text they are reading. Many students try to read their favourite book in the original language; however, their attempts are often linked to failure which is followed by a lack of confidence. It is not unusual that a student focuses on a text for a couple of hours with a dictionary and still not understands it very well which has highly discouraging impact. On the other hand, is it even possible for an ESL student to understand every single word in a given text? Kaiserova suggests that the mental lexicon of an average speaker consists of 50 000 words in their native language (up to nearly tripled and more with educated speakers).[47] There are many various opinions on how extends word stock an ESL student should have on an advanced level, but the number is about 8 000 - 10 000 words. Mathematically speaking, the word stock of an ESL student will not be as

[46] MALEY, Alan. *Extensive reading: why it is good for our students… and for us* [online] 2010 [cit. 23.05.2017]. Dostupné z: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/extensive-reading-why-it-good-our-students%E2%80%A6-us
[47] KAISEROVA, p. 256.

rich as the one of native speaker and an ESL student will happen to be in a situation facing some unknown words in a text.

Many teachers and linguists would say that for understanding and having a pleasure from reading done does not necessarily need to know every word. They recall the fact that if you consider the given word as major and the one which carries the meaning you should look up to a dictionary. However, if they are able to apprehend the context they should let loose the need of checking unknown words in a dictionary.

On the contrary, there are followers of the statements that to be able to understand the text properly is necessary to know at least 98% of vocabulary. One of those who promotes this opinion is Catherine Walter from Oxford University Department of Education. In her lecture called *What are we doing when we say we're teaching skills?* delivered at the ACERT Conference in 2015 in Prague, she recalls that a skilled reader does not need to use context to infer meaning because they know the words. According to Walter, teachers are supposed to teach students vocabulary, not to use context because most of those who guess the meaning of words, guess them wrong.

As it is being said the more people the more opinions and this is definitely applicable even in this problematic. However, the fact which is obvious and shared by both groups is that teaching and helping students to develop their reading skills is fundamental part of mastering foreign language.

5   Reading strategies

Reading strategies are explicit, planned actions which help with translating the printed word into sounds and meaning. Generally, we can distinguish pre-reading, those activities that take place before reading itself and post-reading activities which are used to sum the text up and to make sure that everyone understands it properly. Nevertheless, there is also a possibility to use activities while

reading the text. In the following paragraphs possible examples of these activities are discussed.

The aim of usage of various reading strategies is to help students to gain comprehension skills that can be applied to all reading situations. Among these skills can be:

- summarizing
- sequencing
- comparing and contrasting
- self-questioning
- problem-solving
- relating background knowledge
- distinguishing between fact and opinion
- finding the main idea, important facts, and supporting details[48]

These strategies are easy to implement and help to keep students actively engaged in the process of reading. They are helpful when working with any type of literary text, including nonsense genre and it is possible to connect and applied described strategies on any nonsense text. However, as every literary text is different, there is a wide range of possible application of these strategies on used text. That is the reason why the thesis does not focus on specific description of activities but rather offers general characteristic of reading strategies. Describing strategies widely and theoretically leave space for teachers' own unique and creative way of applying them on nonsense texts.

5.1   Pre-reading activities

Many ESL students have difficulty jumping into new texts without any background support. Students should know at least something about the topic before reading. Some topics may be unfamiliar to students and that is the reason why various pictures, drawings, or discussion can help develop relevant background

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[48]*Reading Comprehension Skills for English Language Learners* [online]. 2009 [cit. 24.05.2017]. Dostupné z: http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/reading-comprehension-skills-english-language-learners

information. The purpose of these activities is mainly to develop, add, delete or modify new insight to text and to activate prior knowledge. When reading a shorter text or article students should know majority of words they read if they are going to comprehend the text. Therefore, it is important to use several strategies to build background knowledge that leads to better reading comprehension.

One of the most used pre-reading strategies is discussion about the topic which is related to the given text. Group discussion, either division into groups or working with whole class, helps to share experiences. A technique that is found as beneficial is brainstorming, or usage of a mind map which are highly motivating methods.

Brainstorming is a group activity that encourages students to focus on a topic and contribute to the free flow of ideas. The teacher is the one who may begin a brainstorming session by posing a question or a problem, or by introducing a topic. The group is asked to "storm their brains" by expressing possible answers, relevant words and ideas. Highly important is the fact that contributions are accepted without criticism or judgement and preferably they are summarized on a blackboard by either the teacher or students.

Brainstorming is not only a stimulating method which generates enthusiasm and eagerness towards the topic, it also promotes spontaneity and creativity when mental power is fully unleashed but it is also beneficial to the teacher. After this activity, the teacher may know actual students' attitudes towards the topic.

Effective brainstorming does not mean random notes on blackboard on one topic. Brainstorming, as one of frequently used method, must have certain rules. The class must be explained the guidelines before the activity and both students and the teacher should follow these criteria:

a. Do not express negative evaluation of any idea presented.

b. Work for quantity, not quality--the longer the list of ideas, the better.

c. Expand on each other's' ideas, elaborate whenever possible.

e. Each idea must be recorded.

f. Set a time limit and hold strictly to it.[49]

It is crucial to evaluate students' result in terms of efficiency, strengths, weaknesses, and how to improve its use as a class.

A mind map is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop „a mind map" around it. The use of visual aids like pictures and other visual material can activate students' prior knowledge.

Another helpful activity is skimming. A short period of time is given to the learners to skim the first paragraph or page of the text, look at illustrations and subtitles, and identify the words in the text that explain the "who," "what," "where," and "when" of the text content. It is useful for learners to identify core vocabulary words that will help them work through uncertainties.

 Other strategies can be focused on mentioned vocabulary previews. A teacher can list all key words in the assignment that may be important for students to understand and then verbally quizzes them on the information before assigned reading begins.

Another useful technique used before reading itself is KWL method. This strategy consists of three steps for students to use with expository text:

What do I **K**now? What do I **W**ant to learn? What did I **L**earn?[50]

It is a very good strategy for group discussions. A three column poster with each question in a column can be written and students will list out their responses.

[49]Brainstorming Strategies. In: DUNN, R., Stafford. *Practical Approaches To Individualizing Instruction: Contracts and Other Effective Teaching Strategies* [online]. 1972 [cit. 10.05.2017]. Dostupné z: http://www2.maxwell.syr.edu/plegal/crit3/a12.html
[50]PORTER, Karla, *Pre-reading strategies*[online]. 1996 [cit. 18.05.2017]. Dostupné z: http://www.studygs.net/preread.htm

5.2   While reading activities

Activities, which take place while reading, are important for students to stay actively engaged in the reading process. Following methods and strategies require students to activate their thinking and review their understanding throughout their reading.

One of the techniques that are recommended is to write in the margins or on sticky notes underlining certain words or sentences. These writings in the margins are called "annotations".[51] To write annotations while reading can give students multiple benefits. The annotation process can help them to recognize the patterns or methods of argument used by the author in the article, which will eventually help to develop their own argumentation style. The more in-depth reading they do, the more in-depth writing they can do. The annotation process can also improve students' ability to synthesize and integrate the readings into your writing. However, this technique would be preferable by more advanced readers.

I.N.S.E.R.T (interactive noting system for effective reading and thinking) is frequently used strategy for understanding a given text. This strategy is carried out in several stages:[52]

Students are provided a system of marking text:

- 'tick' marked what they already know
- 'minus' is marked that contradicts their opinion
- 'plus' sign is marked when something is interesting
- 'question mark' put, if something is not clear, or there was a desire to learn more

While reading the text, students are making individual paragraphs and sentences. Students may be allowed to cooperate, to use technical devices, or literature to prove their information and knowledge.

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[51]MIN, Young-Kyung. ESL: Reading Strategies. In: MIN, Young-Kyung. *ESL Student Handbook* [online]. [cit. 18.05.2017]. Dostupné z: http://www.bothell.washington.edu/wacc/for-students/eslhandbook/reading
[52]RUMBESHA,E., ZELICHENKO, V., PONOMAREVA, O. *Handbook of Research on Estimation and E-Control at Educational Routes as Means of Improvement of Cognitive Interests of Bachelors and Masters*. Pennsylvania: IGI Global, 2016. ISBN 978-1466694897. P. 233-243.

One of the best strategies for students on any level is can be called *What I think will happen and what really happened?*. The text is divided into parts; paragraphs and these parts are filed as a book. The students' task is to read first part and then, before reading the second one, try to write down their ideas how the story will continue. Then they continue reading and compare their thoughts to facts which really were written in the text. This technique is great especially when reading any kind of thrilling story. Students use their imagination to think about the continuation of a story.

A similar technique is a method called 'jigsaw'. The jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy which helps students to create their own learning. The class is divided into small groups and each group member is assigned a different piece of information. Group members then join with members of other groups assigned the same piece of information, and research and share ideas about the information. Then, students return to their original groups to try to piece together a clear picture of the topic.

SQ3R is a method named for its five steps and was introduced by an American Education philosopher Francis P. Robinson in 1946. It is a comprehension strategy that helps students think about the text they are reading while they are reading.

As it has been mentioned the method includes five steps:[53]

Survey: Firstly, students review the text to gain initial meaning from the headings, bolded text, and charts.

Question: Students begin to generate questions about their reading from previewing it.

Read: While students are reading, they need to look for answers to the questions they formulated during their preview of the text. These questions, based on the structure of the text, help focus students' reading.

Recite: As students move through the text they should recite or rehearse the answers to their questions and make notes about their answer for later studying.

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[53]SQ3R: Survey-Question-Read-Recite-Review. In: *Adolescent Literacy* [online]. [cit. 21.05.2017]. Dostupné z: http://www.adlit.org/strategies/19803/

Review: After reading, students should review the text to answer lingering questions and recite the questions they previously answered.

5.3 Post-reading activities

Students often finish a reading, close the book and do not think about it again. Post-reading activities help students to analyze concepts of a deeper understanding of ideas and organize gained information. The main purpose of these strategies is to integrate and synthesize the read material into students' knowledge base of the topic.

Students can use various graphic organizers which will help them to visualize key relationships between ideas from their reading. However, it would be beneficial to show students several examples of graphic organizers and explain them. One of other possible strategies is summary writing when their task will be to sum the main ideas from the text. Summarizing requires students to determine what was important in a text and to put it into their own words. This method may help them to identify or generate main ideas, eliminate unnecessary information and most importantly it helps them remember what they read about.

Another method is testing and answering questions related to the text. A test does not have to be necessarily made by a teacher instead students can be asked to create the test which would be appropriate to the given text. The creating of tests encourages students to think like a course instructor and, at the same time, to consider what concepts in the reading are fundamental.

Besides the discussion and peer practice there is a strategy called think-pair-share, whereby students think alone for a specified amount of time in response to a question posed by the teacher. Then, students form pairs to discuss their ideas, and after this, share responses with the class. This strategy is used to help students check their understanding and provide opportunities for practice or rehearsal.

Another common way to work with the text after reading is cause and effect. This method is an attempt to understand and explain why things happen as they do as well

it encourages students to think critically and creatively. There are more possibilities how to work with this method, including answering well-chosen questions related to the text, using graphic organizers and mind maps.

The activity that does not deal with the text itself but with the characters is a hot chair. The procedure is very simple: one student, representing one of the main characters, sits on a chair in the middle of the class and is questioned by the group about his or her background, behaviour and motivation. Characters may be hot-seated individually, in pairs or small groups. Besides analyzing the character motifs, the method is also useful for developing questioning skills with the rest of the group.

Finally, KWL method, which has been described in the section pre-reading strategies, is another way for students to record what they learned from reading. The 'L' representing *What did I learn?* is relevant to the after-reading stage. This implies that pre-, while and after- reading complete each other and one would not be able to work effectively without a support from other strategies. It is needed to choose and think ahead during working with these strategies in order to achieve appropriate and wanted results.

5.4   The teacher's role

Besides providing opportunities for students to engage in the reading process, teachers, have a pivotal role in helping students to develop and maintain a positive attitude towards learning and literacy. To motivate students to read teachers should make learning meaningful, taking into consideration the age, interests, and needs of children. Students should be provided a rich and varied literacy environment that includes interesting reading material that would reflect the cultural diversity of the school and community. It would be beneficial if students have opportunities to choose their own reading material and develop a sense of control over the reading process.

Effective teachers understand the importance of working as part of a team and they provide opportunities for discussion, teamwork, and other social interaction that

make reading more interesting and amusing for students. Cooperating with colleagues, sharing teaching ideas and strategies help to work actively to involve families in children's learning and encourage reading at home. English teachers have an important role in promoting English culture and language. They should acquaint students to a rich English-speaking environment and emphasize advantages of speaking and reading in English. Furthermore, teachers should promote cultural development to ensure that students see the language and culture and relevant and consider themselves as active participants in it. Above all, teachers should act as model readers and demonstrate their passion for reading.

6   Concepts of lesson plans

Literature has been a subject of study in many countries at all school levels, but until recently has not been given much emphasis in the ESL classroom.[54]   In other words, teaching literature in the ESL classroom is mostly considered as an extra-curriculum activity. However, there have been strong intentions to prove that using literature at ESL classes is something crucial for broadening students' horizons and improving their general cultural awareness.

The key to success in using literature in the ESL class seems to be in the literary works that are selected. A text which is extremely difficult on either a linguistic or cultural level will not be beneficial and moreover it can discourage students to continue reading. The common method of solving the problem of linguistic difficulty is the simplification of the text. There could be some serious disadvantages of using this approach. The simplification of syntax and vocabulary may reduce cohesion and readability and due to that contribute little to the development of reading skills. It is needed to choose a text that would accomplish stylistic requirements. In addition, it is important to select themes of texts with which the students can identify. Certainly, one common experience of most ESL students is their struggle with a language they

[54]CLANDFIELD, Lindsay. *Teaching materials: using literature in the EFL/ESL classroom* [online]. 2017 [cit. 21.05.2017]. Dostupné z:
http://www.onestopenglish.com/methodology/methodology/teaching-materials/teaching-materials-using-literature-in-the-efl/-esl-classroom/146508.article

are unfamiliar used in a text which main topic is not suitable to either their age or interest. Thus, literature selected carefully to mirror students' level, age and interest as well as the fulfilment of stylistic requirements is highly relevant.

To summarize, following questions that should be premeditated and answered when choosing a proper literary text:[55]

1. Is the text well chosen for the given level and age of the students?
2. How complicated is the story and language?
3. Is the topic of the chosen text interesting for students?
4. Are the illustrations in the chosen book in high quality?
5. Is (and if yes how) the text exploitable in education process? Does the text fit to the curriculum?

Following paragraphs presents texts that could be used in the ESL classrooms at secondary schools. All the texts are related to the topic of nonsense which is theoretically described in chapters above. Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Roald Dahl's fairy tale remake, Edward Lear's limericks, David Walliams' *Billionaire Boy* were chosen as suitable text for children at secondary school level.

The texts consist of a handout for students, suggested procedures and tips for teachers. To some texts a list with presumably unknown vocabulary is added to ease students the reading. The handouts represent inspiration of usage of nonsense texts at classroom. The main aim is to encourage and motivate students to enjoy the process of reading as well as infuse teachers about prettiness and creativeness lying within the lines of nonsense texts.

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[55]VRAŠTILOVÁ, Olga. *Využití dětské literatury ve výuce angličtiny na 1. a 2. stupni základní školy - praktický průvodce pro student učitelství*. Hradec Králové: Gaudeamus, 2016. ISBN 978-80-7435-663-6. P. 34-35.

6.1 Lewis Carroll - Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Books about Alice represent a phenomenon nowadays and most people would say that they are familiar with the plot of *Alice in Wonderland* and with the main characters. However, the majority of them do not know that the story of Alice is originally a book and that it consists of two books with different plots and characters. The plots of Alice books make many of its readers confused so much they hardly believe these books belong to the children's classics and are famous and favourite throughout the world. These feelings of confusion can be considered as one of the reasons why many of the youth today prefer watching its movie adaptations than reading books.

The first of the Alice books, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, was published in 1865 and was immediately successful. The proceeding book, *Through the Looking Glass*, followed in 1871. The books are not connected by the plot, but in both the main protagonist is little Alice. The books were written in the Victorian Era and readers should be aware that at that time the arrival of industrialization had raised people's consciousness of children labour and exploitation. Perhaps that is why the author sees the world of children as a dangerous places and Alice's challenge is to grow into a strong and compassionate person. Lewis Carroll does not put childhood and adulthood simply in contrast; he shows the process by which a good child can become a vigorous adult.

The sample text[56] was taken from the first book about Alice's adventures and it describes a game called croquet.

6.1.1 Teacher's handout

The text has not been simplified; however, the chapter was shortened and the vocabulary list is a part of students' handout. The text is about playing croquet in

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[56]See Appendices Text 1

Wonderland and is written in past tense so it can be recommended to use this chapter when revising past tenses and practising the topic 'sport'.

<u>Lesson Plan – suggestion</u>

1. *Pre-reading activity*: Go through the vocabulary list and make sure students understand.

2. Look at the picture in the text and students if they could guess which sport Alice is playing.

3. Discussion over croquet. The class can work in small groups, and their task is to try to guess the rules of croquet. They should discuss the needed equipment, the setting of lawn and general popularity of croquet.

4. Students will probably know the story of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland- ask them about film adaptations and books. Sum up the story.

5. The text can be read either silently when each student works on his/her own or loudly together. There is almost none of direct speech so role playing is unnecessary.

6. *Post-reading* is important to sum up the story, discuss ambiguities students could have faced during reading.

7. Chain story- telling can be used for the text summary. In this speaking activity the students retell the story by saying only sentence. Each student says one sentence that would follow the previous sentence said by the classmate.

Additional Activity

The additional activity can be to create and present some sport activity. Students' task is to come up with some creative ideas about any sport activity. They can invent their own sport or edit some of already existing (as in the text above). Pupils should either describe it in a written form or draw it. The teacher may offer them large papers, scissors, crayons, etc. Their final work will be presented to the rest of the class.

6.2 Roald Dahl – Little Red Riding Hood

Roald Dahl was an Englishman with strong bonds to Norway thanks to his Norwegian parents. He was well educated in England but before enrolling to university he rather decided to work for an oil company as he wanted to be sent to some faraway places. He worked for the Shell Oil in Tanzania and when the Second World War stated he joined the Royal Air Force.

Roald Dahl was a fighter pilot, assistant air attaché and also an author of beloved children's books, including *James and the Giant Peach*, *Matilda*, *The BFG*, and well-known *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Above all, he was a screenplay writer and one of his screenplays was for the James Bond hit *You Only Live Twice*.

The text chosen for the thesis purpose is from *Revolting Rhymes*, published in 1982 as the first of Dahl's collection of comic verse for children. He took six well-known fairy tales (*Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, and The Three Little Pigs*) and rewrote them using his unique style of writing and sense of humour.

6.2.1   Teacher's handout

This text about *Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf*[57] has not been simplified but some words were omitted. The students' task is to fill the blank spaces with the appropriate words from the right column.

The students will engage in critical thinking and analysis through cooperative group activities, including research and discussions.

Lesson Plan- suggestion

1. *Pre-reading:* Brainstorming about the story of Little Red Riding Hood. What comes to students' minds after saying Little Red Riding Hood?

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[57]See Appendices Text 2

2. Divide class into small groups in which they must write down summary of story of *Little Red Riding Hood* as well as short description of main characters (Red Riding Hood, Wolf, and Grandma). What are they like? The information from brainstorming may help them. Every group presents their version of the story.

3. Ask the students of they are familiar with Dahl's work. They will probably know film adaptations of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and The BFG.

4. *While reading:* Read the story loud, preferably one student may represent the Wolf and one another Red Riding Hood, the rest of the class can change as narrators. While reading, students will also pick the correct word to the blank spaces.

6. *Post-reading:* The discussion can be opened to compare the original story with this one. Ask them if they find the story interesting and why?

Additional Activity

The additional activity can be a discussion about gun control. The class is divided onto two group and they are said whether they are for or against gun control. Their task is to prepare arguments which will merit their opinions. It is suggested to leave this activity to next lesson to give them time to prepare it.

6.3   Edward Lear – Limericks

Edward Lear, an English artist, illustrator and poet, who is well-known primary for his limericks. He created this form of poetry to entertain children of his at that time employer.

The limerick is a short, humorous and often nonsense poem with a strict rhyme scheme (AABBA). The first line usually refers to person that the limerick is about, the second line characterizes or describes the person, and the main point is shown in the line three and four, the last line is usually a humorous variant of the first line.

Despite the fact Edward Lear never initially regards the limericks as a publishable material the first edition was his *Book of Nonsense* was published in 1846 bringing him surprise success and popularity. His nonsense work is distinguished by his delight in the sound of words and his imagination.

6.3.1 Teacher's handout

The aim of the lesson is to get familiar with Lear's work but also to write own limerick. The limerick is a form of poetry that offers students the chance to explore poetic rhyme and structure by amusing and creative way. Above all, limericks are often humorous and followed by an illustration. Writing a limerick may seem easy but it can be challenge as it has a set rhythm and must tell a story.

Generally, the number of syllable to the line is eight, eight, five, five, eight and the rhyming pattern AABBA.

Lesson Plan- suggestion

1. *Pre-reading:* Ask student if they know what a limerick is. If not, explain them – but not by giving a definition but by writing one limerick on a blackboard. For instance, this one written by Edward Lear:

There is a Young Lady whose nose

Continually prospers and grows;

When it grew out of sight,

she exclaimed in a fright,

"Oh! Farewell to the end of my nose!"[58]

What do you think a limerick is? Do you know any author of limericks?

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[58]LEAR, Edward. A Book of Nonsense [online]. 2012 [cit. 23.05.2017]. Dostupné z: http://www.nonsenselit.org/Lear/MN/mn090.html

2. The teacher can briefly introduce Edward Lear.

3. *While reading*: Limericks[59] can be read either silently when each student works on his/her own or loudly together. It is not necessary to translate in word by word by it is crucial to make sure that students do understand the meaning.

4. *Post-reading:* Divide class into four groups, every group will get one Lear's limerick. Edward Lear was a skilful illustrator and majority of his limericks are added by an illustration. The students' task is to try to draw a picture illustrating the given limerick. After that, they can compare their illustration with the actual one by Lear.

4. Encourage students to attempt to write their own limerick. As it has been mentioned it is not as easy as it looks so it would be appropriate to help them. The activity that can be done to ease students writing is very simple. Offer students number of various words and they task would be to make a list of those words to rhyme with the original one.

For instance: RED – dead, bed, bread, thread, etc.[60]

Furthermore, it is recommended to get children to work in pairs or small groups to share their ideas.

6.4   David Walliams - *Billionaire Boy*

David Walliams is one of the best-selling authors of children literature. Besides, he has also been a judge of talent show *Britain's Got Talent* and an actor. Having an original style of writing, moral sense in his works and wide range of heroes with kind heart, he has often been compared to Roald Dahl.

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[59]See Apencides Text 3
[60]Writing Limericks. In: TES_Community [online]. 2006 [cit. 22.05.2017]. Dostupné z: https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/tes-primary-plus-writing-limericks-3000679

His books have been translated into many languages and are highly popular amongst both children and adults. The text[61], introduced in the present thesis, is from a book called *Billionaire Boy* and together with *Gangsta Granny*, *Grandpa's Great Escape, Awful Auntie*, and many others represent his highly appreciated literary work.

6.4.1 Teacher's handout

The text is taken from Walliams' *Billionaire Boy* and it has not been simplified. Students can find very short list of vocabulary below the text as well as the task they must fill in while reading.

<u>Lesson plan – suggestion</u>

1. *Pre- reading:* Ask students with they are familiar with the books of David Walliams (they probably are). Brainstorm about what is typical for his books. Ask them to describe a typical hero from Walliams' books, what are his books about.
2. Discussion about money. This activity is perfect for practicing second conditional. Ask students following question:
    a. What would you buy if you won 500 CZK?
    b. What would you buy if you won 5 000CZK?
    c. What would you buy if you won 50 000CZK?
    d. What would you buy if you won 500 000CZK?
    e. What would you buy if you won 5 000 000CZK?

Ask students how they understand this quote:

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[61]See Apendices Text 4

"Empty pockets never held anyone back. Only empty heads and empty hearts can do that."[62]

Students may either discuss it in pairs or then share it with the class or they can write their ideas on blackboard. The purpose of the activity is to recognize children's preferences, desires and also make them discuss about the importance of money.

3. Before reading itself, introduce the main character Joe. He is a billionaire boy. He has everything you could possibly think of. Example. However, he still misses something. What do you think it is?

4. *While reading:* The text can be read either silently when each student works on his/her own or loudly together. It would be also possible to role play the text.

5. *Post-reading:* Divide students into small groups. Their task is to write the continuing of the story with the focus on answering following questions:

      f.   Will Bob try to stand up to the Grubbs? How?
      g.   What does Joe plan to help Bob?

6.5 Lewis Carroll- Doublets

Doublets is a word game invented by Lewis Carroll which was firstly published in 1879. The main aim of the game is to link two words by creating a series of new words, changing just one letter in each step. Carroll's game is still popular today, although it more commonly goes by the name word ladders.

For example, is it possible to turn HEAD into TAIL? According to this word game it is.

HEAD- heal- teal- tell- tall- TAIL

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[62]BERGER, Rob. Top 100 Money Quotes of All Time. In: Forbes[online]. 2014 [cit. 24.05.2017]. Dostupné z: https://www.forbes.com/sites/robertberger/2014/04/30/top-100-money-quotes-of-all-time/#cbdd3fe4998d

Lesson Plan- suggestion

The purpose of the lesson is to help students study the meaning, structure, and spelling of words.

Warm up: Open the lesson with the discussion about word puzzles. Does student know any word game? Have they ever played any of mentioned game? Ask the students to describe these games.

Introduce them the word game invented by Lewis Carroll. During the following activity the class can be divided into small groups, two teams or they can work together as a class.

Ask students to try to solve these puzzles.

1. Can you evolve APE into MAN?
2. Make FLOUR into BREAD.
3. Go from SLEEP to DREAM.
4. Turn BLACK into WHITE.

Students can be offered a dictionary. There are more possible variant of solving these puzzles but exemplary results can be:

1. APE-apt-opt-oat-mat-MAN
2. FLOUR-floor-flood-blood-brood-broad-BREAD
3. SLEEP-bleep-bleed-breed-bread-dread-DREAM
4. BLACK-blank-blink-clink-chink-chine-whine-WHITE

The second part of the lesson can be focused on creating doublets. Encourage student to attempt to make their version of doublets or any other word game.

The reflection: Every student writes down a list of vocabulary which are new for them as well as definition. The high importance is also put to the teacher's feedback to students' activity. The teacher must evaluate the students' work and cooperation.

Conclusion

The thesis has concentrated on a topic of nonsense literature and the usage of texts with nonsense elements at secondary schools. The theoretical background of the topic is summarized within the first three chapters. Having found crucial to focus on theoretical evidence before working with texts themselves, the thesis offers historical development of the genre as well as it depicts authors in whose works elements of nonsense can be identified. The thesis contains a brief biography of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear in order to understand better their work which is always to a certain degree mirrored their personal life. Besides Roald Dahl, whose work and literary style has been mentioned in previous chapters as well, it has been necessary to introduce a contemporary author whose texts can get pupils' attention perhaps more easily. The English author David Walliams whose work is familiar to the majority of the target age group is considered as a great example. His books *Gangsta Granny*, *Mr. Stink*, or *Awful Auntie* have been very popular among children nowadays.

The second part of the thesis focuses on practical usage of nonsense genre. However, it has been found important firstly to marginally concentrate on reading comprehension and its strategies. Despite the fact that the main purpose of the thesis is different than proposing facts about an importance of developing reading skills, it is fundamental to put the literary texts into a wider context. The context is in this case reading comprehension and its usage at elementary schools. Above all, there are described reading strategies which were carefully chosen according to their suitability for pupils. Many of the given strategies are afterwards reflected in attached handouts. The strategies require readers to activate their background knowledge and to use that knowledge to help them understand what they are reading. Moreover, they initiate deeper, analytical and also creative thinking when reading the text and also when analyzing it.

The facts and information mentioned above provide a solid background for proposing a possible application of nonsense texts during the ESL classes. The thesis provides examples on how to work and implement nonsense genre into English lessons at secondary school level. It has not been an aim to offer copyable materials

which are ready to be printed and immediately used at classes. The main aim is to introduce nonsense genre and encourage teachers and educators to involve the genre to their schedules which the thesis hopefully fulfilled.

The topic of nonsense literature is comprehensive and there are plenty of possible ways to understand, describe and analyse it. Therefore, it might be difficult to choose the most appropriate methods and tools to handle the genre. The author of this thesis explicated the literary genre analytically and theoretically, deliberately decided to propose a potential usage of nonsense texts in the ESL classes. The theoretical background, proposed handouts and ways to work with nonsense literary text present a springboard to further practical and experimental usage.

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Appendices

Student's Handouts

Text 1- Lewis Carroll

The Queen's Croquet- Ground

… 'Get to your places!' shouted the Queen in a voice of thunder, and people began running about in all directions, **tumbling** up against each other; however, they got settled down in a minute or two, and the game began.

Alice thought she had never seen such a curious croquet-ground in her life; it was all **ridges** and **furrows**; the balls were live hedgehogs, the **mallets** live flamingoes, and the soldiers had to double themselves up and to stand on their hands and feet, to make the **arches**.

The chief difficulty Alice found at first was in managing her flamingo: she succeeded in getting its body **tucked away**, comfortably enough, under her arm, with its legs hanging down, but generally, just as she had got its neck nicely straightened out, and was going to give the hedgehog a blow with its head, it WOULD twist itself round and look up in her face, with such a puzzled expression that she could not help **bursting out** laughing: and when she had got its head down, and was going to begin again, it was very provoking to find that

Alice's playing croquet

the hedgehog had unrolled itself, and was in the act of **crawling away**: besides all this, there was generally a ridge or furrow in the way wherever she wanted to send the hedgehog to, and, as the doubled-up soldiers were always getting up and walking off to other parts of the ground, Alice soon came to the conclusion that it was a very difficult game indeed.

The players all played at once without waiting for turns, **quarrelling** all the while, and fighting for the hedgehogs; and in a very short time the Queen was in a

furious passion, and started shouting 'Off with his head!' or 'Off with her head!' about once in a minute. Alice began to feel very uneasy: to be sure, she had not as yet had any **dispute** with the Queen, but she knew that it might happen any minute, 'and then,' thought she, 'what would become of me? They're **dreadfully fond of** beheading people here; the great wonder is, that there's any one left alive![63]

Vocabulary List

tumble (v) - fall

ridge (n) - vrchol

furrow (n) – brázda/ rýha

mallet (n)- palice

arch (n) - oblouk

tuck away (v) – schovat se/ zastrčit

burst out (v) - propuknout

crawl away(v) – odplazit se pryč

quarrel (n,v) - hádka, hádat se

dispute (n) - hádka

dreadfully (adv)-strašlivě, (velice)

be fond of (v) – mítrád

[63] CARROL, Lewis. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. London: Macmillan, 2015. ISBN 978-1-4472-799-0. P. 108-110.

Text 2 – Roald Dahl

Little Red Riding Hood and the Woolf

As soon as Wolf _____ to feel
That he would like a decent meal,
He went and _____ on Grandma's door.
When Grandma opened it, she saw
The sharp white teeth, the _____ grin,
And Wolfie _____, "May I come in?"
Poor Grandmamma was terrified,
"He's going to eat me up!" she _____.
And she was absolutely _____.
He ate her up in one big bite.
But Grandmamma was small and _____,
And Wolfie wailed, "That's not enough!
I haven't yet begun to _____
That I have had a decent meal!"
He ran around the _____ yelping,
"I've got to have a second helping!"

Then added with a _____ leer,
"I'm therefore going to wait right here
_____ Little Miss Red Riding Hood
Comes home from walking in the _____."

started/ begin/ began

watched/ knocked/saw

horrid/ hurried/worried

sad/ said/told

screamed/ cried/ died
right/ light/ correct

draft/ tough/ though

meal/ feel/deal

living room/chicken/kitchen

rightful/ interesting/ frightful

till/ bill/ after

good/ wood

He quickly put on Grandma's   gloves/ clothes/ robes
_____,

(Of course he hadn't eaten _____).   those/ nose/ goose

He dressed himself in coat and ___.   hat/ not/ nut/

He put on shoes, and after that,   cleaned/ rushed/ brushed

He even _____ and curled his hair,

Then sat himself in Grandma's chair.

In came the little girl in ___   read/ red

She stopped. She stared. And then she said,

"What great big ears you have, Grandma."

"All the _____ to hear you with,"   beetle/beat /better

the Wolf replied.

"What great big eyes you have, Grandma."

said Little Red Riding Hood.

"All the better to see you with,"

the Wolf replied.   smiled/ laughed/ screamed

He sat there watching her and _____.

     through/ tough/ thought

He _____, I'm going to eat this child.

Compared with her old Grandmamma,   waste/ taste

She's going to _____ like caviar.

Then Little Red Riding Hood said, "   loony/ lonely/ lovely

But Grandma, what a _____ great big furry coat you have on."

     long/ ring/ wrong

"That's _____!" cried Wolf.

"Have you forgot

To tell me what BIG TEETH I've ___?   hot/ got/ get

Ah well, no matter what you say,

I'm going to eat you anyway."

The small girl smiles. ___ eyelid   her/ none/ one

flickers.

She whips a _____ from her   Bristol/pistol

knickers.

She aims it at the creature's head,

And bang bangbang, she shoots him

_____.   head/ died/dead

A few weeks later, in the ____,   road/ good/ wood

I came across Miss Riding Hood.   chance /change/chain

But what a _____! No cloak of red,

No silly hood upon her head.

She said, "Hello, and do please ____   got/ note/ new

My lovely furry wolf skin coat."[64]

[64]DAHL, Roald. Revolting Rhymes: *Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf* [online]. [cit. 28.05.2017]. Dostupné z: http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoem.do?poemId=7428

Text 3 – Edward Lear

Limericks

1.   There was an Old Man with a nose
   Who said, 'If you choose to suppose,

   That my nose is too long,

   You are certainly wrong!'

   That remarkable Man with a nose.

2.   There was an Old Man with a flute,

   A serpent ran into his boot;

   But he play day and night,

   Till the serpent took flight,

   And avoided that man with a flute.

3.   There was a Young Lady whose eyes,

   Were unique as to colour and size;

   People all turned aside,

   And started away in surprise.

4.   There was an Old Man who said, 'Hush!

   I perceive a young bird in this bush!'

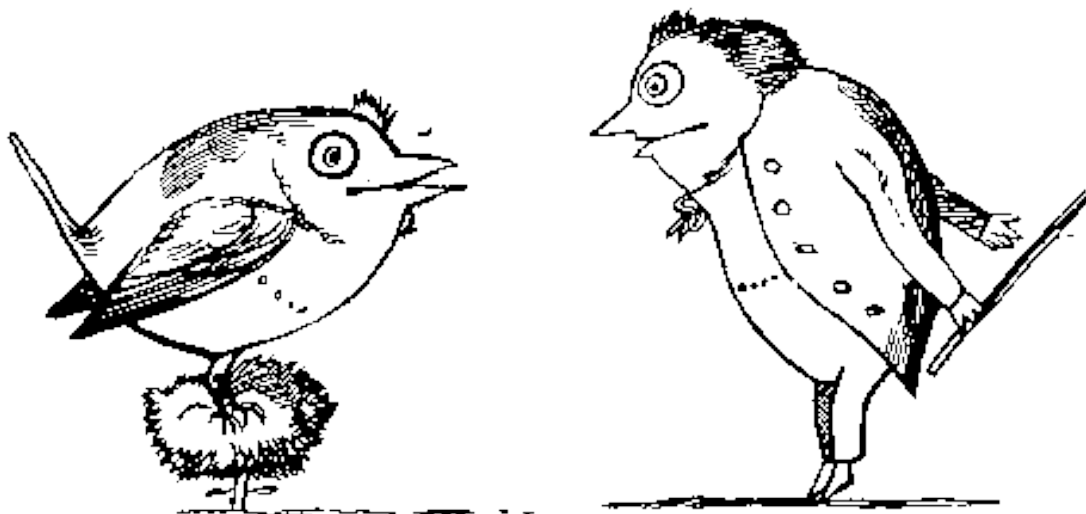   When they said, 'Is it small?'

   He replied, 'Not at all!'

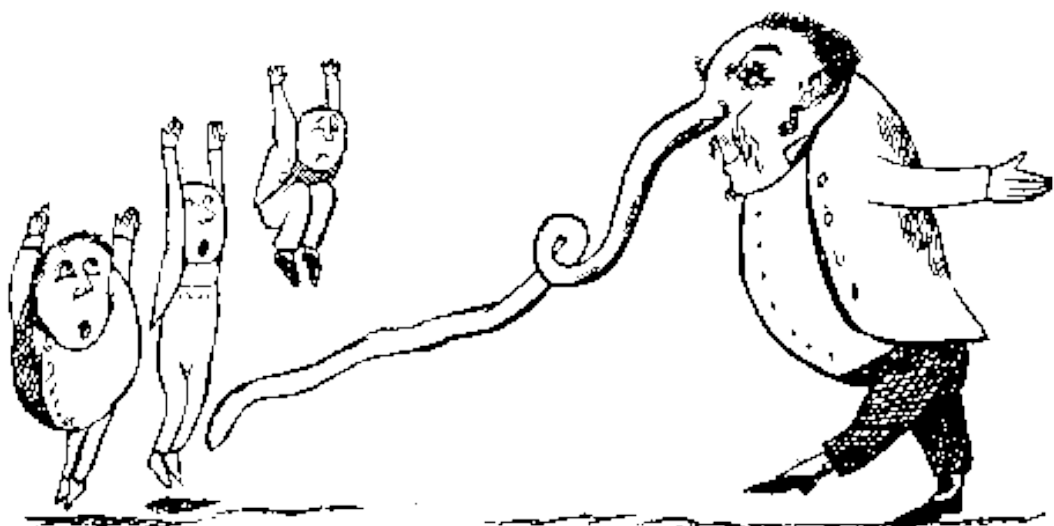   It is four times as big as the bush!'

Pictures:

a.

b.

c.

d.

65

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65 LEAR, Edward. A Book of Nonsense [online]. 2012 [cit. 23.05.2017]. Dostupné z:
http://www.nonsenselit.org/Lear/MN/mn090.html

Text 4 – David Walliams

Billionaire Boy

The Grubbs

… "**Don't pick on him**!" said Joe. Then he instantly regretted drawing attention on himself against as the Grubbs took a step towards him.

"Or what?" said either Dave or Sue, their breath toxic from a bag of Skips they had recently **snatched** from a little girt in year five.

"Or…" Joe searched his mind for something to say that would crush these bullies forever. "Or I'll be very disappointed with you both."

That wasn't it.

The Grubbs laughed. They snatched what was left of the Cadbury Dairy Milk bar from Bob's hand and then grabbed his arms. They lifted him up and, as Bob yelled for help, they deposited him into the **wheely bin**. Before Joe could say anything else the Grubbs **were stomping**offdown the road laughing, with their mouths full of stolen chocolate.

Joe dragged a wooden crate over, then stood on it to give himself more height. He leaned down into the bin and caught hold of Bob under the armpits. With a great **heave**, he started to pull his heavy friend out the bin.

"Are you OK?" he asked, as he strained to take Bob's weight.

"Oh, yeah. They do this to me most days," said Bob. He pulled some spaghetti and parmesan cheese out of his curly hair- some of it might have been there since the last time the Grubbs twins deposited him in a bin.

"Well, why don't you tell your mum?"

"I don't want to make her worry about me. She's got enough to worry about already." replied Bob.

"Maybe you should tell a teacher then,"

"The Grubbs said if I ever told anyone that they would really beat me up. They know where I live and even if they **got expelled** they could still find me," said Bob. He looked like he was about to cry. Joe didn't like to see his new friend upset.

"One day, I'll get them back. I will. My dad always used to say the best way to beat bullies is to stand up to them. One day I will."

Joe looked at his new friend. Standing there in his underwear, covered in scraps of Italian food. He thought of Bob standing up to the Grubbs. The fat boy would get massacred.

But maybe there's another way, he thought. *Maybe I can get the Grubbs off his back forever.*

He smiled. He still felt bad about paying Bob to come last in the race. Now he could make up for it. If his plan worked, he and Bob were going to be more than just friends. They'd be *best* friends.[66]

Vocabulary list

Don't pick on him – Nedobírejtesi ho!

Snatched – sebral

A wheely bin – popelnice

Were stomping –dusali

Heave – zdvihnutí

Got expelled – bylivyhozeni

Task:

List new words you read and look them up in a dictionary.

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[66] WALLIAMS, David. Billionaire Boy, London: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2010. ISBN 978-0-00-737108-2. P. 85-89.