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American society, mental disorders, addictions,
and sexuality from the perspective of American
writers

Autor: Bc. Jana Kráčmarová

(D220834)

UAJ-ma, UVV-mi

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Petr Anténe, M.A., Ph.D.

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité materiály a literaturu.

I declare that I have prepared this diploma thesis independently and I have listed all the used materials and literature.

In Olomouc:

Bc. Jana Kráčmarová

Signature:

Acknowledgment

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Annotation

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Anotace práce:	Tato diplomová práce zkoumá americkou společnost, duševní poruchy, závislosti a sexualitu z pohledu amerických spisovatelů. Zaměřuje se na využití literatury ve výuce angličtiny k prevenci rizikového chování u dospívajících. Analyzuje <i>Requiem za sen</i> a <i>Americké psycho</i> a aplikuje poznatky na výukové plány pro žáky základní školy v devátých třídách.
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Anotace v angličtině:	This diploma thesis explores sexuality, addictions, mental disorders, and American society from the viewpoint of American writers. It focuses on how literature may be used to teach English and prevent risky behaviour in teenage years. It examines <i>Requiem for a Dream</i> and <i>American Psycho</i> , offering insights that might be used as lesson plans for lower secondary school pupils in the ninth grade.
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Abstract

This diploma thesis compares the portrayal of American society in the selected works of two significant authors. Furthermore, it provides an introduction to the subject of diverse addictions for students. The subsequent focus involves an exploration of various mental disorders that have manifested in modern times, particularly during the twentieth century and the twenty-first century. Additionally, the thesis addresses matters related to sexuality and the potential crises associated with it. In addition, I connect these topics with two iconic novels, *American Psycho* and *Requiem for a Dream*.

Keywords

Addiction, American society, drugs, disorders, dream

1 Introduction

Numerous literary works are world widely read by individuals of diverse ages, races, and genders on a daily basis. However, only a few of these books manage to become iconic and even cult in many countries and across the generations. In addition, some of these stories are honoured to be immortalized not just on a paper covered by a hardback, but even on cinema and television screens. In this digital age, where displays and blue light dominate, some people may become overwhelmed, and the traditional way of discovering added information or finding a unique story to read may lead us to reach for something older than ourselves – the books. The book's rough, cold, and ink-stained pages may evoke old memories, good or bad, or prepare us for the near future, or even make us feel unwell in the present moment.

Books are an essential part of existence for all human beings. An excellent source of knowledge and entertainment. People become acquainted with titles during the childhood and often tend to forget about them after they grow up. Former readers choose to watch TV because of the thought that it is the best way to rest, while favourite bestsellers are collecting dust on the shelves. However, the stories individuals read will stay with them for eternity and can lead the people towards a new way to experience their lifetime. Sometimes, readers can relate to the situations that the main protagonist is going through, or they can learn from the mistakes of the characters and try not to repeat them. People may even find themselves empathizing with the villain. It is a never-ending world of beauty that needs to be explored individually, and thereafter they can discover what suits their soul the best.

While the readers' existence may have started with narratives characterized by enchanting princesses, magnificent castles, and powerful kingdoms, all the stories with happy endings became boring and readers began to seek something more realistic and unpredictable. Something truer and more surprising. It is natural for some of them to seek out uncomfortable sincere scenes, revealing that life is not always a romance, but may sometimes turn into a nightmare when they least expect it. Life can take unanticipated turns, and a human being cannot always predict what the future holds and how the path will continue. Sometimes desires and dreams can become a reason for failure and disappointment. Even when people get what they need or what they want it may not make them satisfied. Humans crave more. As the characters of two novels, I will introduce in this thesis, *Requiem for a Dream* and *American Psycho*.

Examining four major themes—American society, mental disorders, addictions, and sexuality—through the unique perspective of American writers is the main goal of this diploma thesis. It also aims to explore the ways in which literary works might be used as instructional resources in English Language Teaching (ELT), specifically about preventing dangerous habits among teenagers.

The theoretical section provides a comprehensive analysis of American society and the three other taboo topics, based on the insights of two familiar American authors and their important works: *Requiem for a Dream* (1978) by Hubert Selby Jr. and *American Psycho* (1991) by Bret Easton Ellis. The thesis compares and contrasts viewpoints from two contrasting socioeconomic classes: the lower-class Brooklyn, New York, milieu in the 1970s, and the upper-class Manhattan, New York milieu in the 1980s.

The theoretical framework specifies particular parts of these books that are appropriate to use in the context of ELT. In order to avoid violent or inappropriate content and to emphasize issues connected to drug use and psychological health, the selected passages were carefully picked for their relevance and appropriateness for children in the fourteen- and fifteen-year-old age range. This analysis led to a deeper understanding of text selection, student motivation, and effective pedagogical strategies in literature-based ELT.

These theoretical parts are transformed into effective teaching strategies in the thesis's practical aspect. Detailed lesson plans were created and put into practice for the ninth-grade pupils. Numerous lessons, conversations, and data gatherings showed favourable reactions to including young adult (YA) literature in ELT courses. Through both individual and group learning, the students' language abilities and vocabulary knowledge improved, and they demonstrated increased interest and participation in literature-based activities. Despite challenges like lesson preparation and choosing demanding books, there are a lot of advantages to using YA fiction in lower secondary education.

To edit this thesis, the author has used the websites [Thesaurus.com](https://www.thesaurus.com) and [Grammarly.com](https://www.grammarly.com).

2 Tragedy of American dream

The concept of American Dream: A joyful lifestyle often considered attainable by many Americans and anyone in the U.S. Particularly through challenging work and achieving success. The American dream can be understood as having well-paid employment, a pleasing home, a life partner, clever kids, and financial prosperity (Britannica, January 6, 2024).

It is the conviction that individuals, regardless of their place of birth or social class, can achieve their unique definition of success in a society where social advancement is accessible to all. Achieving the American dream is thought to result from dedication, taking risks, and diligent effort, as opposed to mere chance. The phrase was introduced by author and historian James Truslow Adams in his widely successful 1931 publication *The Epic of America* (Adams, 1931, p. 5).

However, the concept of the American dream has more profound origins, with its principles evident in the Declaration of Independence, which articulates: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” (Jefferson, Declaration of Independence, p. 3).

In a society founded upon these principles, an individual can lead a fulfilling life according to their definition. Additionally, America predominantly evolved as a nation of immigrants, shaping a country where attaining American citizenship and passing it on to one’s offspring did not necessitate being born to American parents.

Advantages as the realization of the American dream hinges upon the presence of political and economic freedom, coupled with the establishment of legal frameworks and protection of private property rights. Without these crucial elements, individuals find themselves unable to make the necessary choices for success, and they lack assurance that their accomplishments will not be unjustly confiscated through arbitrary means.

The American Dream guarantees both freedom and equality. It provides the liberty to navigate through significant and minor life decisions, the freedom to aspire to greater accomplishments, the opportunity to increase wealth, the prospect of leading a

dignified life, and the liberty to adhere to personal values, although they differ from widely accepted norms.

Disadvantages as referring to it as a “dream” implies that these ideals may not align with the lived experiences of numerous Americans and those aspiring to be part of American society. The critique that the reality falls short of the American dream is as old as the concept itself. Historical events such as the expansion of settlers into Native American territories, the practice of slavery, the initial restriction of voting rights to white male landowners, and a multitude of other injustices and hurdles have impeded the actualization of the dream for many residents of the United States. This illusion can take hold of many individuals, and sadly, many people are lost inside of it (Barone, 2024).

Achieving the American Dream requires a financial investment that exceeds the lifetime earnings of the majority of individuals (Picchi, 2023). The current price tag for the American Dream is \$3,455,305, encompassing the projected lifetime expenses for typical milestones such as marriage, raising two children, homeownership, healthcare, vehicles, and education (Srinivasan, 2023). However, escalating expenses have rendered the traditional American Dream unattainable for numerous individuals. The average lifetime income for Americans, regardless of their educational attainment, costs around \$2.3 million (Carnevale, 2011, p. 3). It follows that Americans can believe in this phenomenon as much as they want, but the goal is unattainable. Moreover, even the reach of the goal sometimes become a burden, and it grows over the heads of those who really achieved it.

In the contemporary era, the American dream appears to have assumed the character of a mythological construct. From a European perspective, this phenomenon is perceived as an anachronism, embodying an antiquated method of enticing individuals to engage in labour and subsequently find themselves entrenched in socioeconomic section characterized by lower status or occupations deemed essential by the prevailing system. An urban perception persists that modern nations prioritize industrialization over the cultivation of a population possessing advanced educational options.

3 Authors

3.1 Selby's life and work

Hubert Selby Junior was an American author, born as an only child and raised in New York City. His parents were Hubert and Adalin Selby; his father was a former coal miner from Kentucky turned merchant sailor. While the family enjoyed a moderate level of financial comfort, Hubert's father struggled with alcoholism, leading to numerous tense domestic situations (Guttridge, 2004). Hubert Jr. had attended several New York state schools but chose to discontinue his education at the age of fifteen. Following the outbreak of World War 2 in 1944, Hubert Sr. returned to the merchant marine, and his son, raised on narratives recounting his father's experiences at sea during the First World War, joined the merchant marine, causing significant disappointment to his parents (Gargan, 2023).

During his third year at sea, Selby contracted tuberculosis. Upon being informed that he had only a few months left to live, he was removed from his ship, which had docked in Bremen, Germany, and transported back to the United States (Lucas, 2010). Admitted to the Marine Hospital in New York, he underwent an experimental treatment involving streptomycin and surgery, during which ten ribs were removed to facilitate lung surgery, as one of his lungs had collapsed. Although the streptomycin treatment proved successful, it left him with lingering pulmonary issues for the remainder of his life (IMDB. *Hubert Selby Jr. - Biography*).

Following three years in the hospital, he developed an addiction to morphine. Nevertheless, his hospitalization provided him with the opportunity to engage in serious reading and fuelled his determination to become a writer (Guttridge, 2004). Unfortunately, the pain-relieving medications administered during his confinement, as well as later heroin use, contributed to a pattern of substance abuse, leading to feelings of depression and despair (Gargan, 2023).

In 1949, he entered his initial marriage. However, lacking formal qualifications, work experience beyond the military, and grappling with serious health issues, his employment opportunities were limited. Consequently, he assumed the role of a homemaker, caring for his daughters, while his wife pursued employment in a department store. Throughout this period, he formed connections with various writers,

such as Gilbert Sorrentino and Amiri Baraka, who provided encouragement and support for his literary pursuits (IMDB. *Hubert Selby Jr. - Biography*).

In the interval of raising two children before experiencing a divorce in 1960, he developed a close relationship with Gilbert Sorrentino, a fellow aspiring writer and childhood friend. Following Selby's expression of interest in writing, even though he was dyslexic, Sorrentino assumed the role of his literary mentor and introduced him to the Cedar Tavern in the Greenwich Village neighbourhood of New York City (Gargan, 2023).

In 1961, Selby's decision to publish his narrative *Tralala*, which depicted the rape and murder of a prostitute, resulted in an obscenity trial. The editor faced charges for selling pornographic literature to a minor, leading to an arrest. However, the case was ultimately dismissed upon appeal. As the collection of loosely interconnected stories coalesced into *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, Amiri Baraka recommended that Selby reach out to Sterling Lord, Jack Kerouac's agent. Grove Press, which had previously published works by William S. Burroughs, released his book in 1964 (IMDB. *Hubert Selby Jr. - Biography*).

Upon its release, the novel garnered swift acclaim and criticism alike for its vivid portrayal of an urban dystopia and taboo subjects such as homosexuality, drug addiction, and violence. When Calder and Boyars published *Last Exit to Brooklyn* in Britain in 1966, a jury deemed it obscene, resulting in fines for the publishers. However, upon appeal, the courts ruled in their favour. By that time, the book had already achieved significant commercial success, with 33,000 hardback copies and half a million paperbacks sold in America. A massive portion of Selby's earnings was devoted to heroin and alcohol consumption. Following a brief stint in prison, he achieved sobriety through a cold-turkey approach in 1969.¹ Subsequently, he entered into a second marriage and relocated to California, where he spent the remainder of his life. The pervasive sense of hopelessness that characterized *Last Exit to Brooklyn* persisted in nearly all of his subsequent novels.

¹ The phase of intense distress that ensues immediately after an individual ceases the use of a substance upon which they are addicted - CAMBRIDGE. Cold turkey.

Although his second novel, *The Room* (1971), garnered positive reviews, it did not attain widespread acclaim. Selby professed to consider it the most unsettling book ever written, revealing that he refrained from revisiting it personally for a period of 20 years. In 1976, his third novel, *The Demon*, delving into the theme of sexual compulsion, maintained a similar tone. Certain critics consider his 1978 work, *Requiem for a Dream*, to be his masterpiece, delivering a bleak and harrowing portrayal of heroin addiction. Remarkably, he drafted this novel in just six weeks following a bout of pneumonia. During this illness, his wife asserted that she had been visited by two spirits who urgently implored her to rush him to the hospital, convinced that he was on the brink of death (Guttridge, 2004). The book also achieved historical significance when it was adapted into a movie directed by Darren Aronofsky in 2000.

With advancing age, Selby's writing output decelerated, evident when the collection of short stories, *Song of the Silent Snow*, was published in 1986, featuring works that spanned two decades. Despite this, he authored two subsequent novels, *The Willow Tree* (1998) and *The Waiting Period* (2001) and collaborated on a screen adaptation of *Requiem for a Dream*. Concurrently, at the time of his demise, he was engaged in part-time teaching of creative writing at the University of Southern California (IMDB. *Hubert Selby Jr. - Biography*).

At the age of seventy-five, on April 26, 2004, while actively engaged in the previously mentioned creation of a novel and a screenplay, Selby passed away serenely in Los Angeles, surrounded by his family. The contributing factor to his demise was chronic obstructive pulmonary lung disease. Following his death, his remains were cremated, and his ashes were scattered at sea (Gargan, 2023).

Selby's writing style is characterized by its intense prose and its unflinching exploration of the darker aspects of human existence. He often depicted characters on the edge of society, struggling against forces beyond their control. Throughout his whole life, Selby battled with addiction and health issues, despite these challenges, he continued to write and publish works that left a lasting impact on American literature. Even though his life ended, his work will endure other generations, and his legacy as an uncompromising voice in literature lives on, inspiring readers and writers alike with his searing portrayals of the human condition.

3.2 Ellis's life and work

Bret Easton Ellis is an American author and screenwriter. He was born in Los Angeles in 1964, growing up in Sherman Oaks within the San Fernando Valley. His father, Robert Martin Ellis, pursued a career in property development, while his mother, Dale Ellis (formerly Dennis), dedicated her time to homemaking. As the son of a property developer, he enjoyed a privileged upbringing, yet he could not escape the challenges posed by his alcoholic and abusive father. Earlier in his career, Ellis has acknowledged that the infamous character of Patrick Bateman in his disturbing novel, *American Psycho*, bears an influence from his own father (FAMOUS AUTHORS, *Bret Easton Ellis*).

However, Ellis later asserted that the character was not directly inspired by his father, but rather by aspects of himself, suggesting that his creative process stemmed from personal struggles he faced during the writing of his books, and he clarified that despite the challenges posed by his parents' divorce, his upbringing in California was predominantly characterized by an "idyllic" childhood (Brunetti, 2017).

He received his education from a prestigious institution frequented by the upper class. Then upon relocating to Vermont, he participated in a music program at Bennington College but later transitioned to writing. Ellis made his literary debut with the novel *Less Than Zero*, published in 1985 while he was still studying. Despite receiving mixed reviews from critics, the novel increased to the top of bestseller lists. Making this work took him five years as he wrote and rewrote his personal experiences, eventually shaping them into a novel format from journal arrangement. *Less Than Zero* describes disillusioned rich youth in the early 1980s in Los Angeles as a reflection of a generation that has experienced drugs, and sex and lives in a world that is influenced by casual nihilism, apathy, and excessive wealth (FAMOUS AUTHORS, *Bret Easton Ellis*).

Ellis, along with Tama Janowitz, Mark Lindquist, and Jay McInerney, found themselves labelled as the "Literary Brat Pack." While the moniker may have lightly teased their youthfulness and the themes of their stories, there was undeniable recognition that these four had become very popular in the literary world. Following the success and controversy surrounding with *Less Than Zero*, Ellis became a close friend to second Brat Pack writer Jay McInerney. The duo garnered attention as the "toxic

twins” due to their widely publicized late-night escapades and debauchery (Ardeljan-Braden, 2016).

In 1987, Ellis released his second novel, *The Rules of Attraction* which, though heavily autobiographical, failed to match the success of his previous work. The novel explores the lives of its characters through a stream-of-consciousness narrative technique (FAMOUS AUTHORS, *Bret Easton Ellis*).

Ellis’s iconic work of 1980s consumerism and masculinity named *American Psycho* was published in 1991 after being rejected the year before over content concerns and depiction of extreme violence. Eventually, Vintage Books (now Penguin Random House) picked it up for publication. The novel sparked significant controversy due to its portrayal of the anti-hero Patrick Bateman, engaging in detached acts of rape, torture, cannibalism, murder, and necrophilia (Cain, 2016). It is ironic to consider the initial rejection regarding the book’s eventual cult status, especially after the success of its movie adaptation directed by Mary Harron. The film, featuring handsome Christian Bale in the role of Patrick Bateman, further propelled the story into popular culture. It is now regarded as Ellis’s masterpiece.

During the prolonged writing process of *Glamorama* Ellis presented *The Informers* to his publisher in 1994. Additionally, he made a screenplay for the film adaptation of *The Rules of Attraction* although it went unused. A fictionalized part of Ellis’s life story is told in the opening chapter of *Lunar Park* in 2005. The book was dedicated to Ellis’s partner, Michael Wade Kaplan, who passed away shortly before the completion of the book. The passing of his love served as a motivation for completing *Lunar Park*, sharing a newfound sense of wistfulness. He dedicated this book also to his father, Robert Ellis, who died in 1992, even though he really hated him. In one interview, Ellis expressed a sense of liberation upon finishing the novel, describing how it enabled him to confront and come to terms with unresolved issues he had regarding to his father (Widmyer).

Ellis released *Imperial Bedrooms* in 2010 as a follow-up to *Less than Zero*. It combines *Less than Zero*’s ennui with *Lunar Park*’s postmodernism. It takes place 25 years after *Less than Zero*’s events. The narrative centres around Clay, a screenwriter residing in New York, coming back to Los Angeles to assemble the cast for his latest film. However, he soon finds himself in the evil world of his former friends and

confronts the worst aspects of his own character. Despite its critical acclaim, *Imperial Bedrooms* failed to meet sales expectations.

Ellis garnered recognition for his original screenplay for *The Canyons*, directed by Paul Schrader, earning the Best Screenplay award at the 14th Melbourne Underground Film Festival with the film also winning Best Foreign Film, Best Foreign Director, and Best Female Actor, for Lindsay Lohan. In 2019, Ellis made his first non-fiction work called *White*, a compilation of essays dissecting contemporary political culture (IMDB. *Bret Easton Ellis – Awards*).

In late 2020, Ellis initiated the serialization of his most recent creation, a fictionalized memoir named *The Shards*, via his podcast. This narrative centres around his formative years in Los Angeles and revolves around the presence of a serial killer known as the Trawler (Molloy, 2020). In 2021 he shared the arrival of the manuscript for *The Shards* via Instagram, indicating his forthcoming review. Subsequently, on May 20, 2022, he announced the commencement of preorders for the book. Ultimately, *The Shards* officially hit the shelves on January 17, 2023.

Aside from his novels, Ellis has also worked in television and has made cameo appearances in various films and TV shows. Additionally, he is hosting a popular podcast called “The Bret Easton Ellis Podcast,” where he interviews notable figures in the arts and entertainment industry. The podcast has been delivering compelling discussions of film, television, music, literature, and pop culture since 2013 till today (Ellis, Patreon).

Bret Easton Ellis remains a controversial and influential figure in contemporary literature, known for his uncompromising exploration of the darker aspects of modern society and the human psyche, particularly among the affluent youth. His writing often delves into the moral ambiguity and emotional detachment of his characters, reflecting contemporary America’s societal and cultural landscape. He has made a significant impact on American literature thanks to confronting the themes of excess, nihilism, and moral decay, offering a stark portrayal of the emptiness and superficiality prevalent in modern life.

4 Requiem for a dream

4.1 Plot

Hubert Selby Jr.'s *Requiem for a Dream* stands as a touching exploration of the human psyche amidst the horrors of addiction. Set against the tough backdrop of Brooklyn, New York in the 1970s, the novel follows the lives of four interconnected characters – Harry Goldfarb, Marion Silver, Tyrone C. Love, and Sara Goldfarb – as they fight with the seductive allure of drugs and the elusive pursuit of their dreams.

In the first scene, Harry Goldfarb finds himself engaged in a disturbing confrontation with his mother, Sara Goldfarb. Motivated by his addiction and desperation, Harry resorts to locking Sara in her closet as he plans to steal her television set for quick cash. He attempts to take the television and then discovers that the TV is chained to the radiator; a precautionary measure taken by Sara to safeguard her property. Harry saying: “Why do you always gotta play games with my head for Krist’s sake, always laying some heavy guilt shit on me? Don’t you have any consideration for my feelings? Why do you haveta make my life so difficult?” (Selby, 1978, p. 6). Harry gets angry and in a moment of escalating tension, he threatens his mother until she reluctantly surrenders the key, allowing him to leave with the television.

Accompanied by his best friend, Tyrone C. Love, Harry proceeds to sell the television at Mr. Rabinowitz’s pawn shop. The recurring sight of Harry, Tyrone, and the television becomes a familiar occurrence for Mr. Rabinowitz, who observes their transactions with a disapproving shake of his head. Determined to finance their drug habit, Harry and Tyrone opt to utilize the proceeds from the pawned television to procure drugs from one of Tyrone’s friends, Brody (Selby, 1978, p. 6-9).

Mr. Rabinowitz tells Sara, as she comes to retrieve the television, that she should call the police, but she adamantly refuses any suggestion of having her son arrested. After all, Harry is her dear son and the final descendant of the Goldfarb lineage, she cannot bear to see him labelled as a criminal as Harry is all she has left in her life following the passing of her husband, Seymour, two decades ago. Sara’s love for her son is unwavering, she eagerly looks forward to the possibility of embracing the role of grandmother one day. Sara repurchases her television and once again secures it to the radiator with a chain, sitting in her chair dreaming of Harry’s future wife and kids (Selby, 1978, p. 9-11).

Harry and Tyrone sit in Tyrone's flat and think about the terrible monotone routines endured by those with traditional nine-to-five jobs. They visit the morgue where their friend Angel is employed and reunite with him, Marion, and Gogit. That evening, Tyrone is struck by an idea. Exhausted from the challenges of street hustling, particularly dealing with stolen TVs, he contemplates a different approach. Tyrone suggests to Harry and Harry's girlfriend, Marion, pooling their resources to purchase a stash of high-quality items. They could "cut" the goods and sell them for a profit, and they agreed. Their shared dream of opening a coffee shop serves as a hope, symbolizing their collective desire for a more fulfilling life together (Selby, 1978, p. 42).

Meanwhile, Sara receives a mysterious call from Lyle Russel of the McDick Corporation, extending an invitation for her to participate in a television program. Despite Lyle's omission of specific information regarding the show, Sara is thrilled beyond measure, not caring about the details (Selby, 1978, p. 11-16). She becomes fixated on the idea of appearing on television, believing it will bring her fame and fulfilment. However, her obsession with television ultimately contributes to her isolation and detachment from reality as she becomes more reliant on the screen for validation and distraction. Sara desires to wear the red dress she wore to Harry's high school graduation yet encounters a problem: it no longer suits her. Now it is the time to start a diet (Selby, 1978, p. 17-18).

Harry and Tyrone are discussing potential opportunities to obtain money for drugs. They contemplate newspaper delivery as a potential source of income and later join friends at Tony's place, where they smoke hashish and enjoy each other's company. In contrast, Harry and Marion share intimate moments (Selby, 1978, p. 18-22). Harry and Marion stroll through the Bronx streets, feeling the effects of drugs. Their conversation reveals Marion's unconventional relationships with her parents' hypocrisy. Despite their philosophical musings, they end the night in passionate lovemaking, drifting off to sleep as dawn breaks (Selby, 1978, p. 26-28).

Sara enjoys her morning routine of eating breakfast while watching TV commercials. She indulges in a cheese Danish, initially trying to resist but ultimately giving in to temptation. After savouring every bite, she heads to the library to pick up diet books, aiming to lose weight for a television appearance. With the librarian's help, she selects a slim volume on weight loss and heads home (Selby, 1978, p. 28-30).

Each day, Sara relentlessly inspected the mailbox, however she found no response from the McDick Corp. Despite attempting the eggs and grapefruit diet, she seeks accelerated weight loss methods. Sara finds a specialist willing to prescribe diet pills. After that she carried her chair outside and joined the ladies, situating it in the designated spot of honour that was always saved for her (Selby, 1978, p. 60-62).

Harry and Tyrone's drug plan is proving successful. Their drug dealing plan takes place in various locations throughout the street corners, clubs, and parties. They typically operate within their local neighbourhood, targeting customers who are looking to buy heroin. They strategically manage their supply, limiting personal consumption to maintain quality while maximizing profits. Their business flourishes, allowing them to accumulate significant wealth. With earnings exceeding a thousand dollars daily, they invest in upscale attire and begin fronting drugs to others for additional income. Their newfound achievement changes their perspective on life, going from a feeling of deprivation to happiness. Additionally, Harry expresses the intention to buy a new television for his mother, as a gesture of recompense for the previous stealing of the old one, symbolizing his desire for her happiness despite their disagreements (Selby, 1978, p. 64).

As the transition from summer to fall unfolds, the impacts of the different drugs consumed by Harry, Tyrone, Marion, and Sara become increasingly apparent. Harry pays Sara a visit to share the great news of his success in "new business" and her new television. However, he observes her grinding her teeth, not in anticipation of enjoying numerous hours of watching TV, but due to the side effects of the diet pills she has been consuming. Harry discovers that the diet pills she has been taking are amphetamines, commonly known as "uppers," prompting him to caution her about the associated risks. Despite his warning to discontinue their use, Sara refuses. Her delight of appearing on television is obvious, offering her a sense of purpose in her otherwise monotonous existence. Feeling guilty, Harry promises to visit her again soon. Harry leaves in a taxi, emotionally shattered by his mother's position, but unable to take action to prevent her or stop her growing addiction (Selby, 1978, p. 66-72).

As their addiction escalates, Harry and Tyrone find themselves in a bad situation. Their friend Brody dies, Tyrone gets caught in a drug gang assassination, resulting in his arrest and necessitating bail (Shmoop Editorial Team). In due course, Tyrone, Harry,

and Marion find themselves depleted of both drugs and financial resources, rendering them unable to procure additional substances (Selby, 1978, p. 83).

The availability of narcotics diminished over time, making it increasingly challenging to obtain them daily. While occasionally they bought drugs for distribution and profit, it appeared that the majority of their acquisitions were predominantly used for personal consumption. Desperate, Harry asks Marion to seek financial assistance from her therapist. However, as Marion apprehends, Arnold, the therapist, demands sexual favours in exchange for money and she reluctantly agrees to the proposition. Despite her aversion, Marion sees this action as a necessary evil (Selby, 1978, p. 94-97). The strain on their relationship intensifies as Marion and Harry engage in frequent fights over Harry's inability to secure drugs (IMDb.com., *Requiem for a dream*).

Sara's weight loss progresses as her dress zipper inches closer to closing. Concurrently, her escalating medication intake without medical oversight leads to hallucinations, notably involving her refrigerator. Despite her declining health, she remains fixated on her imagined future fame and fortune. This obsession leads her to neglect her physical well-being, as evidenced by her refusal to eat and her reliance on medication. Additionally, Sara's detachment from reality becomes evident as she experiences paranoia and delusions, believing that she is being watched and sabotaged by the McDick Corp. These factors ultimately contribute to her hospitalization and false diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia, despite one doctor being convinced that she is not exhibiting psychotic behaviour and that her mental state may have been influenced by medication, the others dismiss his opinion (Selby, 1978, p. 100-103).

Tyrone and Harry navigate a heavily guarded drug transaction, taking precautions to secure their share of drugs - unsuccessfully. Despite Marion's concerns about their future supply, Harry remains confident in their ability to obtain more drugs (Selby, 1978, p. 107-111).

As autumn transitions to winter, escalating violence among drug gangs and intensified police efforts make it impossible for Harry and Tyrone to secure heroin locally. Faced with severe withdrawal² symptoms, Marion appeals tearfully to Tyrone

² A term used to describe the physical and mental symptoms that a person has when they suddenly stop or cut back the use of an addictive substance, such as opiates and opioids, nicotine products, or alcohol. (National Cancer Institute)

only to be turned away due to her lack of funds. Desperate, she reaches out to Big Tim and visits his residence. Initially hesitant, she agrees to perform a sexual favour in exchange for a dose of drugs. Impressed by her actions, Big Tim extends an invitation for her to attend a large orgy gathering at his home later in the week (Selby, 1978, p. 110-116).

Due to an incorrect diagnosis, Sara is being treated for schizophrenia, despite her actual issue being related to medication. The doctors are maintaining a strict and brutal. Sara declines medical intervention and abstains from consuming food, intensifying her psychosis. While still under delusions, she inadvertently grants authorization for doctors to subject her to electro-shock therapy without awareness (Selby, 1978, p. 116-119).

Escalating drug violence and police actions leave Harry and Tyrone unable to find heroin locally. They decided to travel to Florida for a purchase. However, on the road, Harry's arm develops a concerning black spot, causing him considerable pain. Tyrone rushes him to a hospital for treatment. The doctor, suspecting drug use, notifies the authorities. Subsequently, both Tyrone and Harry are arrested. In jail, Tyrone faces discrimination from guards and gruelling labour assignments. Meanwhile, Harry's phone call to Marion reveals her anticipation of attending Big Tim's party, despite her plea for his return home, she leaves her apartment, knowing his promise to come back is false (Selby, 1978, p. 119-129).

Sara completed her series of shock treatments and sat by her bed, gazing out at the sad landscape through the window. She often shuffled to the nurses' office, attempting a smile despite her struggles. Later, she was wheeled to a waiting room, where she was eventually called for a hearing. Found unfit, she was committed to a state mental hospital. During a visit from her friends Ada and Rae, Sara appeared unrecognizable, her physical and mental state greatly deteriorated. Despite their efforts to connect with her, they left feeling emotionally drained and helpless, their tears mingling with the depressed atmosphere of the hospital grounds (Selby, 1978, p. 124-125).

Marion sits alone on her couch, grappling with conflicting emotions. The unexpected turn of events with the other girls left her feeling nauseated, yet she justified her actions by reminding herself of her motives. Despite initial discomfort, she finds herself disturbingly adept at the task. Her unease dissolves upon returning home and indulging in heroin, postponing any concerns until morning. "That taste will last a long

time. She smiled to herself. And there's more where that came from, and no one to share it with. I can always have as much as I want. She hugged herself and smiled, I can always feel like this" (Selby, 1978, p. 129). She revels in the drug's effects, lying happy, smiling, and reassured by the promise of more drugs to come (Selby, 1978, p. 124-129).

Harry and Tyrone stand facing a three-month sentence for forced labour. Each inmate is asked if they can hear and see, receiving approval for the work camp upon nodding. Harry and Tyrone, the final in line, face a different reception. Harry, delirious and struggling to stand, is humiliated by his condition. Tyrone, with injuries and signs of struggle, faces racial insults and aggression. Despite his anger and frustration, Tyrone controls himself, knowing any resistance will worsen their situation. When Harry is examined, his deteriorating condition pleases the doctor and guards, who enjoy his suffering. The doctor predicted Harry's death, smiling (Selby, 1978, p. 125-130).

Sara joins the line for medication, moving slowly along with the others. After receiving her dose of Thora-zine, she makes her way to the television room, hugging herself tightly. Sara remains impassive, fixated on the TV screen (Selby, 1978, p. 130).

Harry is brought unconscious into the operating room where his arm is amputated at the shoulder. With a tube supplying oxygen to his lungs and drains to pump toxic fluid from his body, Harry experiences moments of stirring and groaning amidst nightmares. Harry's consciousness briefly transitions to a profound experience of light, followed by a descent into darkness (Selby, 1978, p. 130-131).

Tyrone endures agonizing weeks of physical torment in jail, oscillating between fear of imminent death and desperate survival. Suffering from cramps and relentless retching because of withdrawal, Tyrone struggles to maintain his strength. Despite the kindness of fellow inmates, he endures moments of profound loneliness. After the spasms and retching pass, he manages to endure a day's labour with the assistance of other inmates. Gradually, he becomes just another inmate to the guards, left to complete his duties without interference (Selby, 1978, p. 130-132).

4.1.1 American society

Hubert Selby Jr. is known for work that aligns with the themes and ideals of the Beat Generation, his overview of American society in the 1970's, as depicted in the novel, is hopeless and disillusioned. The novel captures the alienation and desperation prevalent in American society during that time, particularly among the working class and lower class. There are central themes such as economic instability, social fragmentation, and the pursuit of the American dream gone wrong.

During the late 1970s, New York City encountered profound economic and political challenges of an unprecedented magnitude for its residents. Confronted with economic stagnation and industrial downturn the municipal authorities responded by implementing layoffs of city personnel and reducing essential services such as sanitation and extracurricular programs. Consequently, the already elevated levels of unemployment surged further, propelling over 820,000 individuals, predominantly from middle-class backgrounds. They had to relocate to suburban areas in pursuit of employment opportunities. Simultaneously, a segment of the public, disillusioned by the reduction in social welfare provisions and feeling marginalized by governmental neglect, resorted to acts of violence. This period witnessed a swift escalation in crime rates, characterized by the production of narcotics, vandalism, and theft, through altering the fabric of urban life (Public Broadcasting Service).

During his wait for Harry's arrival to jail, Tyrone becomes engrossed in the colourful tales of an elderly addict. Despite his pitiful state, this individual assumes the role of a "guru", regaling the others in the lockup with tales of past drug-induced glory and wisdom (Selby, 1978, p. 84). He reminisces about his brief stays in various jails across the nation, recalling beautiful era when drugs were so clean and pure that injection was unnecessary, and marijuana grew freely in public areas where people congregated to partake whenever news of a "burning" lot was announced in the papers so they can inhale the smoke for free (Giles, 1998, p. 99-100). The addict's nostalgia for past times among addicts speaks a lot about the era of poverty and disillusionment in the United States. It reflects a preference for drug use over enduring the hardships of impoverished work and a meagre existence with limited means to survive. For many, drugs represented a more appealing way of life compared to participating in a flawed societal system.

Selby represents a society where people are consumed by their desires, frequently leading them towards destructive actions. The novel's characters are cursed by their craving for achievement and contentment, yet they ultimately become trapped in addiction and hopelessness. By illustrating addiction, Selby critiques the dark underground American society and the stress on its citizens. His overview is a haunting representation of the human condition among the pressures of American society.

4.1.2 Mental disorders

This novel explores various mental disorders experienced by its characters, primarily driven by their battles with addiction, which accompanies them from the beginning.

The portrayal of the American Dream frequently depicts it as a hollow and unattainable ideal, with potential negative influence. In *Requiem for a Dream*, the characters' relentless pursuit of this dream results in addiction, fixation, and ultimately, disappointment (Karimova, 2023, p. 77).

Depression, formally known as major depressive disorder, is a prevalent and significant medical condition that profoundly impacts emotions, cognition, and behaviour. However, it is fortunate that depression is treatable. It manifests through feelings of profound sadness and a diminished interest in previously enjoyed activities. This condition can precipitate a range of both emotional and physical challenges, ultimately impairing one's capacity to perform effectively in both professional and personal spheres (Torres, 2020). Depression has accompanied the characters of this book since the beginning, Harry and Tyrone are overwhelmed by a monotonous life in poverty, Marion has an awful relationship with her parents who do not understand her, and Sara is a lonely widow who sits in her chair, eating chocolate and watching TV without any purpose in her life.

Stimulant psychosis is a mental condition distinguished by the emergence of psychotic symptoms, including hallucinations, paranoid thoughts, delusions, disorganized thinking, and markedly disordered behaviour. This disorder usually arises subsequent to an overdose or prolonged binge consumption of psychostimulants (World Health Organization, 2018). It is regrettable to acknowledge that Sara's descent into psychosis was precipitated by the prescription of amphetamines and the neglect she experienced from medical professionals. Her condition deteriorated as she increasingly relied on prescribed diet pills, making it challenging to confirm her diagnosis following her transfer to a clinic. The medical professionals' level of concern for the patients was not as high as today in this era, as we can see by the novel's end. Rather than implementing a gradual withdrawal of Sara's medication, they opted to subject her to involuntary electroconvulsive therapy, a treatment characterized by its harsh and inhumane nature (Selby, 1978, p. 103-106). Sara's traumatic experience in a medical facility highlights her struggles with fear and suffering (Selby, 1978, p. 116-119).

4.1.3 Addictions

Harry and Tyrone are close friends who share a common goal of escaping their current circumstances and achieving success. They support each other through difficult times and work together towards their shared dreams. However, their relationship becomes strained as they become increasingly ensnared in the world of drugs and addiction.

Harry, Tyrone C. Love, Marion, and Sara Goldfarb, the main protagonists within this narrative, find themselves deeply afflicted by a pervasive sense of suffering and isolation at the core of their existence. Seeking solace, they shift towards their dreams, only to find themselves trapped in their allure, ultimately leading to their downfall (Giles, 1998, p. 105).

Addiction is a chronic and relapsing disorder, which involves compulsive drug seeking, persistent usage despite terrible effects, and enduring brain alterations. As both a complex brain condition and a mental illness, it represents a severe form of substance use disorder, classified as a medical illness resulting from repeated substance misuse (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). As their addiction escalates, Harry and Tyrone find themselves both dependent on and enabling each other's destructive behaviours. Despite their deep bond, their relationship is ultimately tested by the challenges they face, including the consequences of their addiction and their struggles to break free from its grip (Selby, 1978, p. 83). Even Harry and Marion become increasingly dependent on each other for validation and support, leading to a cycle of enabling and co-dependency.

To imply the tragic conclusion of *Requiem*, Selby introduces a disturbing contrasting scene later in the novel, one marked by brutality compared to his earlier works. Winter comes, and a power struggle among organized crime factions leads to a heroin shortage, turning New York into a state of panic. The city's addicts roam the icy streets in search of drugs, their suffering carved upon every sickly face and shivering body. Every corner and hallway become a picture of desperation, where the bitter cold worsens their withdrawal symptoms. Even securing a fix becomes a dangerous effort, fraught with the constant threat of violence and theft. The paradox in this scene is crystal clear: Harry and Tyrone have long been entrenched in their addiction, and by venturing into this hazardous zone, they reveal their willingness not only to live for heroin but also to risk their lives for it (Giles, 1998, p. 112-113).

4.1.4 Sexuality

Sexuality refers to an individual's intimate nature and behaviours (Encyclopædia Britannica). This theme follows us throughout our entire life, from the beginning to the end, also showing its portrayal in *Requiem for a Dream*.

A Freudian³ interpretation could suggest that the characters in *Requiem for a Dream* exhibit various phenomena of unresolved Oedipal and Electra complexes, as well as reactions to parental figures and societal expectations. Harry's relationship with Sara reflects the concept of the Oedipal complex, where he may be suffocated by her overbearing presence. This dynamic could contribute to his later struggles with addiction as a means of rebelling against her control. Tyrone's pain from losing his mother ("ol moms") may result from an unresolved Electra complex, leading to a longing for the maternal figure he lost in childhood. This loss could contribute to his vulnerability and eventual involvement in drug use. Marion's resentment towards her upper-class parents could be interpreted as a reaction to societal expectations and the pressure to make a certain image. Her rebellion against her parents' values and lifestyle may be a manifestation of unresolved conflicts and desires for autonomy (Giles, 1998, p. 114).

It is obvious that in this theme we can focus the most on Marion, who has gone from rebelling against her parents to drugs and prostitution. Her descent into prostitution reflects not only her desperation for drugs but also the commodification of her sexuality in an exploitative environment. These terms show the process of turning something, in this case – sexuality, into a commodity for sale or trade. Through Marion's story, Selby highlights how sexuality can be a source of empowerment and a tool of exploitation, influenced by external pressures and individual choices. Marion's initial transaction, exchanging money for sex, symbolizes her downward spiral into addiction. While Harry makes a pressure, Marion recognizes her own desire for drugs that the money can provide. This act also corrupts her relationship with Arnold, with whom she occasionally engages in sexual activity. During these encounters, Marion senses a shift within herself, causing a split between her and Harry, ultimately influencing her decisions towards the novel's end (Forthenovelovers, 2017).

³ Sigmund Freud: The author of Psychoanalysis, a clinical approach that uses a dialogue between patient and psychoanalyst to diagnose and treat mental conflicts (Ford & Urban, 1963, p. 109).

5 American psycho

5.1 Plot

Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* is a novel about violence, success, sex, money, fashion, and the experiences of Patrick Bateman, a young protagonist in 1980s Wall Street culture. It is an exploration of the emptiness of yuppie⁴ culture, wrapped in glamour and brutality, written in obscene and shocking performance. *American Psycho* is a provocative book about looking into the heart of darkness hiding beneath the fulfilled American dream.

American Psycho opens with a quote from Dante's *Inferno*: "Abandon all hope ye who enter here," prominently displayed in blood-red paint on the exterior of a bank. The setting is late 1980s New York City, the narrative introduces Patrick Bateman, a 27-year-old investment banker on Wall Street. Through the whole novel Bateman is describing his internal reflections, perceptions of others, and observations on contemporary pop culture. Starting accompanied by his friend, Timothy Price, Bateman is en route to a dinner gathering at his fiancée's residence, Evelyn Richards. This visit includes the presence of Evelyn's best friend, Courtney Lawrence, who has an affair with Patrick (Mauriello, 2017).

Following this initial dinner, Bateman proceeds to narrate the stream-of-consciousness reflections and events of his extremely controlled life including a portrait of a fixation on material possessions and social status. Seriously anxious with his personal appearance, he illustrates his morning rituals, including a regimen of exercise, skincare, and an organized healthy breakfast. He is a dedicated viewer of "The Patty Winters Show," a daytime talk program. Additionally, he regularly rents and returns VHS tapes featuring his preferred films. Bateman and his Wall Street friends, including Price, Craig McDermott, and David Van Patten, exclusively eat only at extravagant restaurants, wear premier designer fashion, and display interest in women gorgeous looking, often referred to as "Hardbodies" (Mauriello, 2017).

He spends his days at work, engaging in banal conversations with colleagues, and his nights frequenting trendy clubs and engaging in casual sexual activities with various

⁴ A young individual, who lives in the downtown, is wealthy and invests it towards trendy activities and high-value belongings (Cambridge, 2011).

women. At the parties they use cocaine, comment on clothing, share fashion advice, and discuss appropriate etiquette even though it seems ironic towards his misogynist behaviour later in the novel. This contrast between his professional life and his pleasure-seeking pursuits is a central aspect of his character, reflecting the decadence and emptiness of his existence since the beginning of the book.

As the story progresses, Bateman's inner thoughts and actions become unpredictable and disturbing. He struggles with violent impulses and begins to enjoy acts of brutality, including the torture and murders of various individuals. He encounters a homeless man named Al and his dog Gizmo, he offers his help and assistance at first, but in a second, he changes it into a violent and sadistic attack, brutally mutilating Al and the dog with pleasure in his eyes. Afterward, Bateman goes to McDonald's, reflecting on his actions with disturbing satisfaction (Ellis, 1991, p. 88-91). Later in the novel, he meets Al again and kills this blind man to complete what he started.

The name Paul Owen is frequently repeated throughout many sections of the novel. He is a successful investment banker and a colleague of Patrick Bateman. Paul is described as handsome and charming, a very successful man holding a Fisher's special bank account (Ellis, 1991, p. 35). Bateman's interactions with Owen reveal a competitive side of Patrick, as he feels envious and threatened by Owen's success and social standing. He struggles to accept his greater position over him, making him insecure. Bateman is pretending to be Marcus Halberstam so he can be closer to Owen. "Paul Owen has called me Marcus four times and Evelyn, much to my relief, Cecilia twice, but Evelyn doesn't notice since she's been glaring at Courtney the entire time we've been in the limousine" (Ellis, 1991, p. 97).

Patrick's jealousy goes too far, he takes drunk Paul to his apartment, where he later brutally murders him (Ellis, 1991, p. 145-147). Following the homicide Bateman appropriates Paul's apartment to host and execute additional victims. As Bateman's control over his violent impulses vanishes, his killings escalate in sadistic complexity, transitioning from mere stabs to disgusting acts of torture, rape, mutilation, cannibalism, and necrophilia. And his mental stability starts to break evident in his casual talk about serial killers in conversations and his open confessions of murderous activities to oblivious or dismissive friends, who often ignore his words. "I close my eyes, three words fall from my mouth, these lips: 'Kill... All... Yuppies.' She doesn't say anything. To break the uncomfortable silence that follows, I mention all I can come up

with, which is, “Did you know that Ted Bundy’s first dog, a collie, was named Lassie?” Pause. “Had you heard this?” (Ellis, 1991, p. 249).

In another chapter, Bateman’s devoted secretary Jean (who loves him) informs him of a visit from a detective named Donald Kimball. Kimball discloses that he has been employed by Paul Owen’s girlfriend to investigate Owen’s disappearance. Seeking general information about Owen and his mysterious flight to England, Kimball questions Patrick. He tells him, that he does not know anything about this case and asks Kimball if anyone has seen Owen in London. Surprisingly, yes, two people confirmed this statement. Patrick finished this conversation with satisfaction (Mauriello, 2017).

Meanwhile, Bateman’s behaviour becomes increasingly erratic and his crimes more sadistic and careless. He intensifies his drug usage, incorporating various pills into his cocaine habit, resulting in numerous hallucinations. On one occasion, he has a bad reaction to pills, leaving him sick and disoriented as he wanders the streets of New York. Eventually, he finds himself in a diner, too intoxicated to even place an order (Ellis, 1991, p. 103). Furthermore, his torture and murder of young women reaches horrifying new levels. The killings become more disgusting, often involving Bateman engaging in depraved acts on his victims’ dying or deceased bodies. Additionally, he descends into cannibalism, preparing and consuming a woman’s flesh. Bateman also crosses new thresholds of depravity by targeting individuals who would typically be missed; he murders his ex-girlfriend Bethany after intoxicating her during lunch and even stabs a young child in a public park (Mauriello, 2017).

Additional incidents lead to a shooting rampage in which Bateman randomly kills several people on the street, following the dispatch of a SWAT team via a helicopter. This narrative shift marks the transition from first-person to third-person perspective. Bateman runs and seeks refuge in his office, where he confesses to his lawyer about Harold Carnes, and uncontrollably confesses all his crimes on the telephone (Ellis, 1991, 233-236). However, there is no change on the next page, just talking about music and Courtney. There is no mention of jail as expected.

Days later, Bateman returns to Paul Owen’s apartment expecting to find a terrible picture and smell of rotten meat of decay from the corpses he left behind. To his surprise, the apartment is open and remarkably clean, being shown by a realtor to new

buyers. Bewildered, Bateman is questioning the realtor about weird things, and he is asked to leave.

Several weeks afterward, at the inauguration of a new club, Bateman sees his lawyer amidst the crowd and decides to approach him regarding the voicemails he left on the night of police intervention. His lawyer amusedly mistakes Bateman for someone else (as many people do), telling him that the suggestion of Bateman committing such acts is amusing and funny because Bateman is “such a bloody ass-kisser”. Carnes further dismisses that Bateman could have killed Paul Owen because he had dinner with Owen just the week before (Ellis, 1991, p. 258).

The novel concludes much like it began, with Bateman socializing with his friends over drinks, and engaging in superficial conversations about fashion, work, and trivial matters. As the reader is left confused about the uncertain future of Bateman’s hedonistic and violent existence, Bateman’s attention is drawn to a sign on the bar wall, written: “This is not an exit” (Mauriello, 2017).

Has anything of this happened or was it just Patrick’s dream?

5.1.1 American society

American Psycho offers a huge judgment of American society, focusing on the eccentricity and superficiality of the 1980s yuppie culture. The novel portrays a world where materialism, consumerism, and narcissism reign supreme, and individuals are judged not by their character or actions, but by their possessions, wealth, and outward appearance.

During the 1980s, a wave of conservatism appeared through social, economic, and political spheres, characterized by the notable importance of materialism and consumerism. This era witnessed the rise of the “yuppie” lifestyle, and cable networks such as CNN and MTV, which popularized the music video format and made numerous artists more famous. Concurrently, the AIDS crisis of the 1980s took the lives of over 100,000 individuals in the United States (History.com).

Particularly the start of the era, and notably in New York City, marked a period of transition from financial instability towards prosperity. Individuals embraced a lifestyle characterized by extravagance and excess, living more expansively than in previous years. However, this era also witnessed deaths in unexpected manners, reflecting the unpredictability of the times. New York City became a centre of eccentric fantasies, which flourished under the influence of substances like cocaine and Ecstasy. These wonderlands emerged as active cultural epicentres. The year 1983, in particular, held a shifting of societal landscape: the grand opening of Trump Tower, and the debut of Donald Trump within the pages of the *Vanity Fair*. This publication became a guiding force of the decade, reflecting and magnifying a newfound fixation on wealth and fame of Americans (especially New Yorkers) who had achieved one or both (Bruni, 2018, p. 37).

The popular culture of the 1980s mirrored the era’s political conservatism. The typical figure of this period was the young, rich, urban professional, commonly known as the “yuppie” - a male or female characterized by a college education, a lucrative career, and a desire for luxury. Yuppies often faced criticism for their egocentrism and materialism. Surveys conducted among young urban professionals nationwide revealed a greater emphasis on wealth gathering and consumerism compared to previous generations (History.com, 2018).

Ellis employs dark humour and graphic violence to highlight the moral bankruptcy of his characters and the high class they represent. The novel is filled with detailed descriptions of parties, extravagant shopping sprees, and brutal murders, all of which serve to underscore the emptiness and corruption of the characters' lives. (A significant part of the book is about clothing and what to wear and where). As the narrative unfolds, Bateman's descent into violence blurs the lines between reality and hallucination, offering a critique of consumerism and moral decay in society.

Bateman, though appearing as a successful and integrated member of society, is revealed to be a sexist, racist, and xenophobic serial killer. Through his narration, which maintains a flat tone regardless of the horrific events described, we are occupied in his world filled with details ranging from his daily routines to his acts of violence. While the violent scenes alone could categorize the book within the horror genre, *American Psycho* is a much more complicated novel; it serves as a metaphor for the superficial, consumer-driven society of the 1980s (Baelo-Allué, 2011, p. 95). Furthermore, it demonstrates a blindness towards the upper class, suggesting that attractiveness and success do not necessarily reflect inner corruption and ugliness.

5.1.2 Mental disorders

The protagonist Patrick Bateman shows us through the novel several concrete characteristics that suggest he may have various mental disorders. However, it is important to note that the author does not write anything concrete about the diagnosis or any specific condition for sure. Instead, readers are left to analyse his behaviour and symptoms and can think about what is going on in Patrick's head. It is harder because of the open ending without a specific conclusion. Some potential mental disorders that could be inferred from Patrick Bateman's actions may include:

Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) is characterized by inflexible patterns of dysfunctional thinking, primarily marked by social irresponsibility and a tendency toward exploitative, delinquent, and often criminal behaviour. Common traits of this disorder include a shameless disregard for the rights of others, evidenced by behaviours such as not following the law, changing employment, engaging in manipulation for personal benefit, and struggling to have stable interpersonal relationships (Black, 2015). Bateman prioritizes his own desires and ego above all else. He has no empathy with humans or animals, he is disgusted by homeless people seeking help. He loves just himself; he has no feelings even for his fiancée. The antisocial behaviour can be seen in the absolute absence of meaningful relationships and connections with his family. His detachment from reality through his increasingly violent and sadistic actions reflects a psychological disturbance.

Narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is a complicated personality disorder frequently associated with other affective and personality disorders. NPD is characterized by a consistent pattern of grandiosity, a constant need for admiration, and a notable lack of empathy (Mitra, 2023). Throughout the novel, Bateman craves approval and admiration from people around him. He obsessively focuses on his appearance, status symbols, and social standing, seeking constant affirmation of his perceived superiority. Readers can see it in his instant focus on hair from the very beginning. "My skin seems darker because of the candlelight, and I notice how good the haircut I got at Gio's last Wednesday looks. I make myself another drink. I worry about the sodium level in the soy sauce" (Ellis, 1991, p. 11). Narcissists are known for their manipulative tendencies, using charm and manipulation to use others for personal gain. Bateman engages in fake and manipulative behaviour throughout the novel, often to satisfy his own desires or to have control over others.

A borderline personality disorder is a mental health condition that profoundly influences an individual's emotional regulation. This lack of emotional stability often leads to heightened impulsivity, changes self-perception, and affects interpersonal relationships. Fortunately, there are effective therapeutic approaches accessible to help individuals manage the symptoms associated with borderline personality disorder (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023). Bateman is very emotionally unstable, individuals with BPD often experience intense and rapidly shifting emotions. He often demonstrates moments of extreme emotional shifting, particularly in his outbursts of rage and episodes of profound despair. Bateman engages in impulsive acts throughout the novel, including extravagant spending, drug use, and buying prostitutes that he murders. Furthermore, the readers can also see that he is struggling with his identity, with extreme fear of abandonment and his detachment from reality.

5.1.3 Addictions

Bateman's addictions maybe started from underlying psychological issues, such as a lack of fulfilment, and a search for a bigger purpose in a materialistic life. Cocaine use, for example, can be a way how to deal with emotional pain or distress or on the other hand, complete numbness. Additionally, his need for control and validation may drive compulsive behaviours like substance use and violence. Furthermore, the normalization of drug use and casual sex within his social circle may support this unhealthy behaviour.

Bateman is a cocaine addict. It is Bateman's favourite drug, he consumes it frequently in nightclubs, at parties, and at business meetings throughout the novel. Cocaine use provides Bateman with temporary euphoria, encouragement, and energy, allowing him to escape from the fear of his own existence and the pressures of his job. In addition to cocaine, Bateman also engages in heavy alcohol drinking. He generally drinks his favourite J&B whiskey, sometimes he drinks so much that he blacks out or experiences memory loss. Alcohol numbs his emotions and supports his taste for blood. He also experiments with marijuana and prescription pills, although these are less used in the novel compared to his cocaine and alcohol usage. Bateman's substance abuse is driven by a desire to escape from the emptiness and disillusionment of his empty life and identity crisis followed by anxiety and sadness.

Patrick is also a materialistic addict. Another central expression of his character. Bateman is possessed by the thought that he must wear only designer labels and luxury brands, constantly speaking about his expensive clothing, accessories, and belongings. He often describes the designer labels of his suits, shirts, shoes, everything that he can wear, and even his business cards, showing their importance in defining his identity and social status impulsively purchasing luxury goods without care about price or necessity just to look better in the eyes of others and make them feel envious. He often describes the clothes of his friends and co-workers, and he frequently offers advice on how to pair clothing items and explains why certain combinations are incompatible, checks that his friends listen to him, and he gets the appreciation of his friends, who respect his fashion advice and opinions. He is a great example of a "yuppie" who prioritizes appearance and material wealth over genuine human connections or personal fulfilment.

The emphasis on wealth, status, and excess fuels his addiction to materialism and desire for social validation as usual in the materialistic and hedonistic culture of 1980s

Manhattan. It critiques the consumerism and superficiality in very concrete way. Due to a lack of empathy, he may engage in addictive behaviours as a means of seeking stimulation or gratification, without any care for consequences or impact on others. His various addictions serve as a means of control over a chaotic and meaningless world.

5.1.4 Sexuality

Patrick Bateman is depicted as having a disturbing sexuality. Bateman's sexuality is a central aspect of his character, connected with his violent impulses. Throughout the novel, Bateman experiences many sexual actions, a lot of which are described in graphic detail. Sex often involves sadomasochistic behaviour, including his dominance. Bateman's sexual partners are frequently treated as objects for his pleasure, reflecting his profound lack of empathy and disregard for human life. He is combining sexual desire and sadistic aggression. His sexual partners often end up humiliated, killed, and defaced in a very disgusting way. As time progresses Bateman can be sexually satisfied only by torturing others, and his horrific and horrible acts escalate. These actions fill his empty, rotten heart.

His own realization influences every discourse of Bateman. Consider the sections showing his sexuality, particularly within the three chapters titled "Girls". Instead of encountering elements of spontaneity and genuine sexual expression, these passages offer a shallow imitation of pornographic language. Sexuality is reduced to clichés from mass-produced pornographic literature, without any emotional expression. The language used looks more like a math class than a romantic evening. The authoritative voice guiding the narrative becomes detached from the actions it describes, occasionally appearing lost in its disinterest (Murphet, 2002, p. 38).

However, what is most alarming about Bateman's sexuality is not only its portrayal through stereotyped language and paraphernalia but rather its transition into the torturous violence depicted in the book's most infamous passages. It is important to see the connection of these aspects. Bateman's sexual and textual violence occurs as a symptom of the collapsing of sexual intimacy within the consumerist framework. Moreover, as previously suggested, it indicates the absence of genuine sexual connection within the text. Men and women are unable to create meaningful connections outside of moments of consumption, whether in restaurants, as prostitutes, through the use of contraception products, or, as seen in the disturbing scene titled "Tries to Cook and Eat Girl." It is noteworthy, however, that sexual violence can be seen only in the second half of the book, with the first acts of violence being directed towards men and dogs (Murphet, 2002, p. 39-40).

6 American literature in ELT

The pedagogical possibilities of using Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* and Hubert Selby Jr.'s *Requiem for a Dream* in English Language Teaching (ELT) for the secondary level pupils are explored in this section. The primary focus is on the ways in which these books might be used to address and prevent risky behaviour among teenagers. These books offer a strong basis for conversations on the effects of such decisions, critical thinking, and the development of empathy, even despite their mature themes.

Adolescence is a crucial time that brings about major changes in social, emotional, and cognitive areas. People are more vulnerable to dangerous behaviours during this point, like substance abuse and aggression, which can have long-lasting negative consequences (Steinberg, 2008, p. 78). Through raising awareness and developing decision-making abilities, the educational system is essential in reducing these dangers (Resnick et al., 1997, p. 823).

It has long been known that literature is an effective ELT tool for language development as well as for deepening moral and ethical discussions with students (Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 3). Through reading, pupils can learn about basic human experiences and grow in emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and empathy (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 85).

The influential classics *Requiem for a Dream* and *American Psycho* both present explicit images of the results of addiction and violence. Selby's book explores the terrible effects of heroin addiction on several characters, focusing on the socioeconomic elements that lead to these characters' destruction. Elli's book presents a psychotic protagonist's perspective on materialism. Despite their advanced subject matter, both books provide thoughtful examinations of the consequences of taking these risks.

The graphic nature of these novels requires a careful and ethical approach. It is important to inform parents and school officials about the content, avoid certain passages, and highlight the negative effects of risky behaviour without exposing pupils to explicit content. Teachers should also create a welcoming climate that encourages open discussion and provides students with clear warnings about hazards (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 89).

6.1 Expectations

The secondary sources used for this subchapter mention the following ideas and recommend the following approaches to using novels in ELT:

Start with an easily understood overview of each novel's primary topic. Explain the selection of these texts to look at the effects of risky behaviour. Highlight that learning about the serious consequences of substance addiction, aggression, and psychological instability is an important educational aim. As a start of discussion have a conversation with the kids regarding what they already know about problems including drug misuse, mental health problems, and violence (Steinberg, 2008, p. 81).

Use well-selected passages that highlight significant points in the characters' experiences. Consider, for example, a few passages from *Requiem for a Dream* which demonstrate the characters' slow descent into addiction, or from *American Psycho*, which concentrates on scenes that show the protagonist's moral degeneration and separation from reality. Provide guided reading questions to encourage reflection and critical thinking about the given text (Resnick et al., 1997, p. 825).

Bring the characters' intentions and consequences to the students' notice. Urge them to think about other options and their possible advantages. This task improves moral judgment and critical thinking. (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 93).

Provide pupils with a list of resources, including hotlines, websites, and local organizations, where they can seek further information or assistance regarding substance abuse, mental health, and violence prevention. This ensures pupils can access support outside the classroom (Steinberg, 2008, p. 86).

A careful and considerate approach is needed when introducing *Requiem for a Dream* and *American Psycho* into the ELT curriculum for the pupils. When used properly, these texts can effectively discuss and discourage risky behaviour. The secret is to provide a secure and encouraging learning atmosphere that places students' mental health first and encourages empathy and critical thinking. Teachers can empower students to make healthy decisions in life by teaching them about the serious effects of dangerous behaviours through facilitated conversations and reflective activities.

7 Lessons

7.1 Implementation of *American psycho* in ELT

This ninth-grade Czech students' English language lesson's primary goal is to explore and analyse the ideas, characters, and social commentary presented in Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*. The purpose of this lesson is to improve students' analytical and critical thinking abilities while giving them a better understanding of challenging literary aspects.

The lesson introduces the protagonist Patrick Bateman and the novel's plot set in 1980s Wall Street culture to young learners. The novel's point of view on modern society focuses on the themes of materialism, addiction, and mental health problems including psychopathy and narcissism. Analysing Bateman's character, among others like Evelyn Richards and Paul Owen, helps students acknowledge the moral and psychological aspects of the plot.

The lesson plan combines careful reading and textual analysis of chosen passages, allowing learners to get deeper into Bateman's psychological state and the thematic elements of the work. This strategy invites an investigation of Patrick's inner monologue, his obsession with looks, and his addiction to materialism. Discussion questions encourage critical thinking, allowing students to reflect on how Bateman's obsessions shape his identity, the portrayal of consumerism, and the novel's critique of society's ideals. Using *American Psycho* as a teaching tool is inspired by the novel's rich thematic material and its relevance to conversations about modern societal challenges. The provocative aspect of the book encourages students' interest and participation, making it a useful medium for addressing deeper moral and psychological questions.

For pupils, taking part in this lesson has many advantages. It improves their ability to analyse and interpret this complicated text, a crucial skill for advanced English studies. A deeper awareness of society is provided by the critical discussion of topics like materialism and mental health, which offer insightful perspectives on societal problems. By analysing the results of Bateman's behaviour and the arrogant ideals of his surroundings, the lesson additionally supports empathy and ethical reasoning. All things considered, this lesson plan aims to enhance students' language skills while also improving their critical thinking and analytical skills, providing a well-rounded

educational experience. For a better understanding of the story, I will also add a Czech language translation to every lesson.

7.2 The aim of Lesson 1

This section explores the main goals and instructional strategies of an English language lesson based on Bret Easton Ellis's novel *American Psycho* which is intended for specific Czech ninth graders. The goal of the lesson is to make it easier for readers to comprehend the novel's themes, characters, and criticism of society in the full sense.

The overview of the story and its themes and the plot is provided at the start of the lesson. The story of *American Psycho* centres on Patrick Bateman, the protagonist, whose life embodies the materialistic ideals of the 1980s Wall Street culture. A major focus is on addiction to material goods as well as destructive behaviours and mental health conditions like psychopathy and narcissism. These ideas are necessary to properly understand the novel's view on modern society.

Character evaluation and studying the key characters is an important part of the lesson. Patrick Bateman as the main character is portrayed as a wealthy, charming person whose life is characterized by an obsession with status, looks, and consumerism. The fiancée of Bateman, Evelyn Richards, shares the same naive ideals and is blind to Bateman's darker part. Bateman's coworker Paul Owen acts as a trigger for his violent and envious tendencies. Pupils learn about the novel's exploration of identity and moral decay by analysing these characters.

Learners study selected chapters from the book closely to look at the text's themes and Patrick's psychological state. For example, Bateman's internal monologue reveals his identity crisis and separation from reality. Passages that detail his attention to his looks and luxury products emphasize his obsession with appearance and material belongings. Students can better realize Bateman's extreme psychopathy and the meaninglessness of his consumerist lifestyle thanks to this knowledge.

Discussion topics in the lesson are designed to encourage critical thinking and develop a relationship with the material. Parts of this are the novel's portrayal of American society's ideals, the way consumerism is portrayed as an addiction, how mental health is important in Patrick's acts of violence, and how his issues with looks define his identity. Students are encouraged to reflect critically on

the author's thoughts and consider the consequences of the novel's social critique through these discussions.

Furthermore, the class explores the novel's use of expensive brands and possessions as symbols. These aspects are important because they symbolize both the materialism in Bateman's surroundings and his need to keep up an illusion of happiness. Students can understand how the novel criticizes the moral emptiness of a society fixated on wealth and status by exploring these symbols.

7.2.1 Lesson plan 1

In the first lesson, pupils will read parts of *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis to develop their analytical and critical thinking abilities. The lesson plan is structured to offer an extensive look at the themes, characters, and social criticism in the book.

In the first lesson, pupils will read parts of *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis to develop their analytical and critical thinking abilities. The lesson plan is structured to offer an extensive look at the themes, characters, and social criticism in the book. We are going to start with a summary of the book's plot and Wall Street culture setting from the 1980s. To give the students a contextual framework I will highlight the main issues of consumerism, addiction, and mental health.

The three main characters in the book – Patrick Bateman, Evelyn Richards, and Paul Owen – will be the focus of our character analysis. Learners can develop a better understanding of the characters' interactions and complexity because of this. The main aspects of the lesson will be mindful reading and passage analysis from the text. Guided analysis questions will be included with each passage to assist students in reading the text and discovering its deeper meanings. Subsequently, the students will be divided into small groups to debate these analysis topics, with an emphasis on how Bateman's obsessions shape his identity, how materialism is shown as an addiction, how mental health affects his actions, and how the novel criticizes American culture. They will also investigate the text's use of premium goods and brand names as symbols.

Following a class discussion where each group will share what they have learned, we will close. This will allow us to summarize the important elements and reflect on the novel's relevance to modern issues.

The overall aims of this lesson are to build an improved understanding of important societal topics while developing students' analytical abilities, critical thinking, and literary appreciation. It provides a diverse method that combines group discussions and textual analysis, offering learners an interesting and useful learning experience.

7.2.1.1 Reflection

The lesson on Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* in 9A class was successful, and the pupils showed an average amount of participation. The class started with a summary of the book, and the pupils appeared attentive and interested in the Wall Street background of the 1980s and Patrick Bateman's persona. The introduction to the major topics of addiction, consumerism, and mental health set a strong basis for the activities that followed.

The lesson started with an interesting overview of the book, which takes place in the Wall Street setting of the 1980s, and a brief introduction of Patrick Bateman, the protagonist. The main issues of consumerism, addiction, and mental health were understood by the motivated and focused students. Through character analysis, students were able to learn about the complex details of the story and the interactions that form the storyline, especially about Patrick Bateman, Evelyn Richards, and Paul Owen.

Analysis of passage 1: Most pupils said that they thought Patrick Bateman was mentally ill and that he was unaware of his state of mind. The first analysis was dominated by this perspective. Students noted that Bateman's self-description as an "abstraction" and his detached behaviour show a lack of self-awareness. "I think he is an evident psychopath," a pupil said. This realization demonstrated how the students were able to relate Bateman's psychopathic traits to his lack of an apparent awareness of self.

Analysis of passage 2: Learners agreed that Patrick's obsession with his appearance plays a big role in defining who he is. They observed that he prioritizes his appearance over his actual emotions. They also noted that his persistent self-consciousness about how handsome he is points to insecurity, and that his extreme care may be a cover for his drug usage. According to this analysis, learners were aware of Patrick Bateman's underlying fears and the outer level of his existence. Shortly, they think that his appearance is more important than his true feelings. However, he is also insecure about his looks all the time because he wants to be always attractive, and he wants to hide his drug use.

Passage 3 analysis: In the third analysis, pupils concurred with the statement that Patrick's addiction to materialism is evident through his desire to flaunt his new business card. They unanimously agreed, with one commenting, "I think this is true,"

recognizing how material possessions are a superficial distraction from his deeper existential despair. This showed that pupils could see how Bateman's consumerist behaviour was a cover for his internal emptiness.

Questions for discussion answers analysis:

1. Obsession with appearance: Learners observed that Bateman's mental health is negatively impacted by his fixation with his appearance. They noted that he is unable to recognize the damaging effects on his mental health due to his obsession. This analysis demonstrated how learners were able to relate Bateman's internal conflict to his external focus.

2. Addiction to materialism: They stated that Patrick's behaviour with his business card, in particular, serves as an illustration of his addiction to materialism in the novel. They emphasized his need for approval and jealousy from other people, which suggests a serious problem.

3. The role of mental health: It was widely agreed upon that Bateman's psychopathy comes from his mental health problems. They realized that his shallow emotional well-being drives him to act violently to experience emotion. Many advised that he should open to close friends about his problems or seek help from a professional - a psychologist.

4. Critique of society: Pupils understood the author's message to be a critique of the lack of empathy and fixation with material possessions in modern-day society. They talked about how individuals nowadays prioritize material wealth over lending a hand to others. "It seems that he is used to having expensive things around him and he wants to get attention and love through money," one pupil wrote.

5. Relationships reflecting mental state: They saw that Bateman's jealousy could quickly escalate into aggression and other unpleasant feelings, which was a reflection of his unstable mental state.

6. Symbolism of brand names: The learners came to the conclusion that Patrick Bateman's focus on luxurious items represents his need for approval and his effort to inflate his ego. They saw that he views material prosperity as a sign of attractiveness and self-worth and that he uses it as a means of obtaining satisfaction and attention. "He wants to flex," one pupil said.

Conclusion: All things considered, the class met its goals and got the pupils thinking, writing, and speaking. The pupils' answers to the discussion questions revealed critical thinking, and they also indicated that they understood the themes and characters in the book. Personally, I thought the issue was fascinating and that the word "drugs" encouraged them to engage as it is, I believe, the most taboo of all topics for ninth graders these days. Although there were times when a deeper investigation might have been recommended, the learner's participation and commitment were excellent. In my opinion, there should be a greater emphasis on education these days regarding addictions. This lesson gave them a strong basis for growing their literary analysis, critical thinking abilities, and maybe it inspired someone to read books.

7.3 The aim of Lesson 2

This lesson's primary purpose is to improve the ability of concrete Czech ninth graders to make decisions when faced with drug-related issues. Through the use of realistic scenario simulations based on themes from Bret Easton Ellis's novel *American Psycho*, the course offers students a relatable and fascinating framework in which they can examine the effects and consequences of their decisions.

The lesson plan aims to engage pupils in active learning by simulating real-life scenarios involving substance use. Learners are encouraged to think through possible choices and consider the short- and long-term effects of each choice through interactive activities and small group discussions. Scenario cards and decision-making handouts help with this process by guiding pupils through an organized analysis of the cases. The lesson, which takes its inspiration from *American Psycho*, uses the book's examination of extreme actions and their effects to provide learners with an engaging framework. They engage with literature in a meaningful way while learning a deeper awareness of the possible hazards and negative effects of substance use by making connections between the scenes and themes from the novel.

Engaging in this lesson provides students with multiple advantages as they examine several situations and evaluate the possible effects of their choices, they improve their critical thinking abilities. The lesson helps pupils identify the advantages and disadvantages of their choices by highlighting the importance of making well-informed judgments. They can also strengthen their social skills by talking about their decisions and thinking back on their emotions. Pupils develop their social and emotional intelligence, which strengthens their ability to resist peer pressure and other social factors, by talking about their decisions and thinking back on their emotions. The realistic scenarios give them the knowledge and confidence they need to deal with substance use issues in real life. They also prepare them for situations in the real world.

All things considered, this interactive simulation provides a bright and effective method of teaching drug usage to concrete ninth grade Czech learners, helping them develop important life skills and make responsible decisions.

7.3.1 Lesson plan 2

In the second lesson, pupils will try to improve their ability to make decisions when directly faced with substance use-related problems. The lesson uses situations that are based on themes from Bret Easton Ellis's book *American Psycho* to give students a context that is approachable and realistic. The session intends to illustrate potential substance usage scenarios that students can encounter by involving them in realistic simulations. This will increase critical thinking and encourage students to consider the potential consequences of their choices.

Including literary elements from *American Psycho*, the lesson creates greater awareness of the complications and risks linked to substance abuse. First, the practice introduces students to decision-making in the context of substance use by referring to *American Psycho* themes to give them a familiar framework. The instructor says that in an interactive simulation based on the novel, students will investigate the effects of the decisions they make about substance usage.

The class is separated into small groups for the scenario simulation, and each group is handed a scenario card that presents problems like being approached by peers to try drugs at a party, finding prescribed medications, and other similar situations. While debating and coming up with various options of action, students consider the advantages and disadvantages of each option. The concepts and situations from *American Psycho*, which highlight the severe consequences of substance addiction, provide an organizing principle for this conversation and can help prevent risky behaviour.

Following that, students are given decision-making worksheets to examine the short- and long-term effects of the choices. With the help of these handouts, students are encouraged to critically consider health hazards, social implications, and emotional effects, leading to a comprehensive evaluation of every choice. Presenting their scenario and decision-making process, each group encourages group learning and the exchange of opposing perspectives.

Scenario examples include "Party Pressure," where a student must decide whether to accept cocaine at a party and what would happen if not; "Unexpected Discovery," involving the discovery of prescription pills; "Peer Influence," addressing peer pressure to try vaping; "Social Gathering," involving the choice to drink alcohol at

a social event; and “Family Gathering,” where a student must decide whether to accept a cigarette from a relative or not. Students are guided through a structured analysis by the decision-making handouts, which also encourage them to analyse results, evaluate risks, think about social consequences, reflect on feelings, assess future effects, learn about their classmates’ opinions, and think back on lessons learned.

In conclusion, this lesson plan offers a comprehensive approach to drug use education by effectively combining literary analysis with real-world decision-making abilities. Through the introduction of situations inspired by *American Psycho*, learners are provided with an engaging context to examine the outcomes of substance abuse. They also learn about other classmates’ thoughts, experiences, and points of view, which can help to strengthen their inner class relationships and promote analytical thinking and responsible decision-making.

7.3.1.1 Reflection

The lesson on decision-making in substance use dilemmas, inspired by themes from *American Psycho*, was generally received positively and welcomed by the 9A Czech pupils from 9A. The primary objective of the lesson was to improve the student's ability to make decisions in realistic scenarios involving substance use. Although I kept their identities anonymous to provide the worksheets with truthful responses, it was successful in holding their attention and making them thoughtfully consider their options.

The opportunity to select multiple situations for discussion was offered to the students, who chose the two most relevant and interesting ones. They were more involved in the action as a result of this decision. The class was separated into groups of three for the scenario simulation, and each group's objective was to think about how, given their underage standing, they would respond if these events happened today.

The group's reactions to the "Social Gathering" scenario, which was centred on tasting alcohol, differed. Out of curiosity, half the students decided to try a small amount of alcohol, but not too much. Though they were careful not to consume too much, they were curious to discover what it was like. The other half chose not to take part, giving reasons like aversion to the smell and a preference for orange juice in their place. This demonstrates that the pupils were considering the consequences of their behaviour as well as their own personal boundaries.

The reactions were divided evenly once more in the "Family Gathering" scenario, which featured the chance to try cigarettes. A few students expressed that they would not normally take advantage of the opportunity to test the cigarettes because of the expense, but they would if they were given out for free. The others showed an understanding of health awareness and personal preference by expressing an intense aversion to both the scent and even the thought of smoking. Notably, one group creatively engaged with the circumstance by jokingly stating they would rather listen to the band "Cigarettes After Sex" than try actual cigarettes.

One group selected the "Party Pressure" scenario, which required deciding whether to accept cocaine at a party or not. Numerous variations in the replies demonstrated multiple levels of vulnerability and drug hazard awareness. One student was adamant that they would never try cocaine since they thought it was horrible and

would not touch it. Although they did not provide any other details, another student similarly stated they would not try it. The third student expressed a tendency to partake in risky activity under specific circumstances by saying they might give it a try if they thought the cocaine was pure and safe.

The decision-making worksheet revealed further details about the pupils' mental processes. Students pointed out that smoking cigarettes could make them feel great at the moment, but it would damage their lungs over time. They knew that drinking alcohol would make them feel strong and pleased in the moment, but they also knew that it could cause headaches and possibly cause liver disease in the future. They understood the short-term, euphoric effects of cocaine but also the long-term hazards of addiction, depression, and unhappy feelings.

In the second part of the handout students also discussed more general hazards that could result in risky behaviours, like being arrested by the police and having family issues after that. They thought about how consuming drugs could damage their social connections and relationships, making them feel uncomfortable or affecting how other people saw them. The students acknowledged that any positive emotions they may have had at the time would probably be followed by regret and bad emotions when they talked about the feelings connected to their decisions. They discussed how it would affect their future, realizing that addiction could have serious consequences like homelessness or death. Overall, they acknowledged the insightful information they discovered involving actual effects.

Even though the lesson was well-planned and provided an opportunity for improvement. In my opinion, more time was required to make sure every student could completely fill in the decision-making handout and provide thorough answers to every question. The end of the lesson felt hurried, and some pupils might have found the handout's complexity too overwhelming. This suggests that future lessons could benefit from the handout being simplified or from offering more advice before the class. Despite these difficulties, the lesson effectively expressed essential thoughts and encouraged insightful conversations that assisted students in growing as critical thinkers and hopefully responsible decision-makers.

7.4 Implementation of Requiem for a dream in ELT

The suggested lesson plan's main purpose is to analyse character motives in the context of addiction as they are presented in Hubert Selby Jr.'s book *Requiem for a Dream*. Czech pupils in the ninth grade are encouraged to participate in group discussions, critical reading analysis, and reflection exercises through an organized series of activities. The goal of the lesson is to develop students' empathy and critical thinking skills while helping them comprehend addiction as a complicated social issue.

The lesson plan was inspired by the realization that literature has the power to shed light on social concerns and inspire interesting conversations. With an examination of the characters' motivations, tensions, and outcomes in *Requiem for a Dream*, students are allowed to critically analyse the effects of addiction on people and relationships.

The lesson plan's methods are intentionally designed to encourage participation and team-based learning. Students are led through the process of evaluating specific passages from the book, determining the motivations of the characters, and participating in group discussions to consider the larger themes and consequences. Students are encouraged to express their ideas, exchange perspectives, and make connections between the imaginary story and their own experiences by using this multimodal method.

For students, taking part in this lesson has a number of advantages. First of all, encouraging pupils to fully understand and evaluate difficult literary materials develops critical literacy abilities. As students involve themselves in the motivations and difficulties of the characters, it increases empathy and perspective-taking. Additionally, the lesson advances the discussion and active participation, giving students the chance to practice effective interaction and thought processing. Overall, this lesson improves students' emotional intelligence, cognitive skills, and reflective thinking abilities, which helps them become more thorough, well-informed, and people with empathy. For a better understanding of the story, I will also add a Czech language translation to every lesson.

7.5 The aim of Lesson 1

The introduction analyses the motivations of characters in literary works as an essential way to comprehend difficult subjects and societal problems. An analysis of Hubert Selby Jr.'s novel *Requiem for a Dream* in the context of ninth-grade pupils in the Czech Republic offers a chance to delve into the representation of addiction and its effects on people and society. This thesis explores the pedagogical effectiveness of a lesson plan intended to support character motivation analysis within the context of addiction in American literature as it is portrayed in *Requiem for a Dream*.

The proposed lesson plan aims to increase students' awareness of addiction as portrayed in literature while also building critical thinking and literary analysis skills in ninth-grade pupils and preventing risky behaviour. By carefully studying the reasoning behind the decisions and actions of the characters in *Requiem for a Dream*, students should be able to better understand the complex nature of addiction and how it affects people's lives.

The lesson plan's methodology is made up of a planned series of exercises meant to get students thinking about character motives in the context of addiction. The novel's characters' motivations, tensions, and outcomes are examined by the students through a combination of paying attention to reading, group discussions, and reflective tasks. In order to encourage pupils' involvement and critical engagement, the technique places a strong emphasis on interactive and collaborative learning strategies.

Handouts using selected passages from *Requiem for a Dream*, character analysis worksheets, and selected parts of the book are included in the teaching materials. The following resources have been carefully chosen to give students the textual support they need for deep character motivation analysis and thematic investigation. The lesson plan's expected results cover multiple important categories, such as critical thinking abilities developed by thorough text analysis, and increased awareness of addiction as a complex social problem. Development of empathy and introspection via interaction with complicated characters and their challenges. Application of literary analysis methods to situations and events experienced in everyday life. Encouragement of inspiring class debates that allow students to express their opinions and thoughts.

In conclusion, the suggested lesson plan presents an organized framework for helping with a review of the motivations of the characters in *Requiem for a Dream*

concerning addiction. The plan intends to encourage ninth-grade Czech students to critically connect with American literature while gaining a deeper knowledge of societal concerns like addiction by combining textual analysis with reflective tasks and group discussions. This pedagogical technique has the potential to create critical thinking and empathy in students in a variety of educational contexts with additional research and application.

7.5.1 Lesson plan 1

This lesson plan analyses character motives in the context of addiction as they are described in Hubert Selby Jr.'s *Requiem for a Dream*. The lesson plan is designed to help students in 9B relate critically to the text and get a deeper knowledge of addiction as a social issue. The teaching strategy mixes in-depth text analysis, group discussions, and reflection exercises with activities that encourage learners' active engagement and cognitive growth.

The lesson begins with an introduction to the issue of addiction in American literature, which is followed by a brief summary of the book and its main characters. Following this, the students go to a reading and analysis phase in which they examine specific passages from the book to analyse and debate the characters' intentions, ideas, and behaviours around addiction. Worksheets on character study were provided in conjunction with this phase to assist pupils in their analytical activities.

After finishing the individual study, students go into group or pair discussions where they are expected to look at the reasons behind and outcomes encountered by the assigned characters. Students participate in group discussions to combine their ideas and viewpoints, and they are encouraged to think about things like their own preferences, cultural influences, and peer pressure. I believe it is also a good way to strengthen their friendships.

A thorough class discussion is offered as the lesson is finished, giving students an opportunity to present their research, make connections between the text and personal experiences, and consider the lesson's larger thematic implications. By means of this methodical approach, students were given chances to build effective communication tactics, improve empathy and perspective-taking skills, and develop critical thinking abilities.

All things considered, the lesson plan provides a solid pedagogical base for exploring complicated literary issues and encouraging student participation and cognitive development. Its methodical approach, focus on group projects, and incorporation of reflective activities make it ideal for promoting deep understanding and stimulating discussion in the classroom.

7.5.1.1 Reflection

For 9B pupils, the lesson on exploring the motivations of the characters in Hubert Selby Jr.'s *Requiem for a Dream* proved to be effective. Through both individual and group character analysis exercises, students developed a more thorough understanding of the difficult problems surrounding addiction and its far-reaching effects. The lesson planning effectively encouraged critical thinking and empathy in the students by using worksheets, chosen passages, and guided discussions.

Pupils who chose to study Sara Goldfarb's fate highlighted that her original motive for dieting was a desire to fit into a red dress and not to take drugs intentionally. They pointed out that she did not realize she was dependent on diet pills at first because of her obsession with losing weight. "Sara is justifying her addiction to the pills by saying she needs to lose weight," remarked a particularly perceptive pupil. This illustrates an intricate perspective of the relationship between Sara's addiction and her motivations.

Students recognized Sara's internal struggle when her mental state worsened, and she started to experience hallucinations as a result of taking excessive amounts of medications. In terms of character development, students saw that Sara's extreme and cruel medical treatment in a hospital left her body empty of a soul and deepened her despair, which was the reason behind her lack of want to live. The consequences of her addiction were recognized as tragic, highlighting the damage it caused. Overall, the book received positive comments from students, from my point of view it was an effective prevention of drug usage. Learners emphasized how crucial it is to follow medical advice and be aware of the serious consequences of taking more prescribed medications than is recommended.

The majority of students who examined Harry and Tyrone revealed an understanding that their motivations were in financial gain and the pursuit of happiness. They noticed that when their drug addiction got worse, both characters turned to stealing and selling things to pay for their drug usage. The students accurately described how Harry and Tyrone's casual and impulsive experimentation with drugs quickly escalated into a serious addiction.

Both characters' internal problems were obvious, including their sense of illness and desire to experiment with stronger substances in an attempt to feel better. The

devastating impacts of their acts are described by a student's moving comment, "Their health might be very bad after taking drugs, and when they get caught, they get arrested." Harry's arm amputation was described in detail, highlighting the serious effects of their addiction and leaving a long-lasting effect on the pupils. The conclusion made from their story was evident: drug usage has terrible consequences and may quickly and permanently destroy life.

Although it is not mentioned specifically in this reflection, students who explored Marion Silver's life mentioned how she and her partner Harry both fell into addiction. They emphasized her early dreams for a better state of existence which her drug addiction soon replaced. Her struggle with addiction and the subsequent destruction of her self-worth and ambitions were acknowledged by the pupils as an internal struggle. Marion had equally catastrophic effects, which ultimately led her to turn to prostitution as a means of supporting her heroin habit. The main idea of the lesson that addiction is destructive was additionally supported by this analysis.

Overall, the lesson plan was well-received; students took part in active learning and showed an awareness of the risky behaviour. They thought the topic was interesting and instructive, and they valued the chance to look at a present-day issue through a literary perspective and experience different kinds of lessons that they are used to. The students' comments and conversations demonstrate how well the class showed empathy and critical thinking. The main lesson was the warning against drug usage and its harmful effects, and that, in my opinion, went successfully.

In conclusion, the session successfully achieved its goals and gave the students a memorable and significant learning experience. Through the use of a structured strategy that combined individual analysis with group discussions, students were able to think critically about the book and consider its larger societal implications. Positive feedback and well-considered responses show that the students not only absorbed the content but also processed the crucial lessons regarding addiction and its serious effects.

7.6 The aim of lesson 2

The aim of the interactive simulation lesson Substance Use Dilemma for 9B students in the Czech Republic is to improve their ability to make decisions by simulating real-world substance use scenarios, it is the same as in lesson 2 in the *American Psycho* part. The lesson's inspiration, Hubert Selby Jr.'s *Requiem for a Dream*, attempts to immerse pupils in challenging, thought-provoking scenarios that reflect issues encountered in everyday life. This method fosters critical thinking and ethical rationality in pupils while helping them understand the serious implications of substance use.

Using the themes of the novel as a backdrop, the class starts out by introducing the idea of decision-making in substance use contexts. After being split up into smaller groups, the students are each handed a scenario card that illustrates a particular problem, such as dealing with pressure from friends to vape or take drugs due to peer pressure or finding prescription medicines at home. Students are prompted by these scenarios to think through and discuss potential courses of action, considering both short- and long-term effects.

The lesson includes group presentations, where students share their scenarios and decision-making processes with the class. Students get the chance to explain their thinking and take into account different points of view during this group discussion, which also helps point out the significance of making informed choices.

Students will benefit from taking part in this lesson since it offers a comprehensive educational experience by combining literary analysis with real-world decision-making tasks. Students' answers are anonymous which gives them a safe space for their opinions without being judged and are emotionally and cognitively engaged, in a safe, encouraging setting, which helps them realize the seriousness of their decisions about substance use. Through the simulation of real-world problems, students become more responsible and considerate people who have a stronger ability to handle similar situations outside of school.

7.6.1 Lesson plan 2

The purpose of the lesson “Interactive Simulation: Substance Use Dilemma” is to help students become better at making the right decisions by using realistic and interesting scenarios. Using ideas from Hubert Selby Jr.’s *Requiem for a Dream*, the class immerses students in challenging scenarios that reflect issues associated with substance use in real life. This strategy seeks to develop students’ capacity for ethical reasoning and critical thinking.

Using the themes of the novel as a compelling and accessible backdrop, the session introduces students to the idea of decision-making in substance use contexts. They are split up into smaller groups by three and handed scenario cards that show different situations that they might encounter, such as being pressured by friends to vape or use drugs at a party or to try alcohol. These hypothetical situations encourage dialogue and imaginative brainstorming for potential courses of action that take the short- and long-term effects in general.

Following that, students fill out a decision-making worksheet to organize their analysis. This worksheet helps students think critically about the dangers and effects of substance use by guiding them through the process of assessing the possible outcomes of their decisions. Students can learn from each other’s perspectives and develop their communication skills thanks to the collaborative nature of group work. It can also increase their trust in each other and learn that they can speak to each other if there is a problem someday. Group presentations, when students present their situations and decision-making procedures to the class, serve as the lesson’s completion. Students get the chance to explain their thinking without any judgment and take into consideration different points of view during this group discussion, which also helps underline the significance of making informed decisions.

This lesson offers an extensive learning experience for students by integrating literary analysis with real-world decision-making tasks. It helps students recognize the importance of substance use decisions in a supportive setting by involving them on an emotional and cognitive level. Through the simulation of real-world problems, students become more responsible and considerate people who are better equipped to handle similar situations outside of the classroom. In addition to improving their linguistic abilities, this method fosters socio-emotional learning and equips them with a critical and educated perspective for everyday life.

7.6.1.1 Reflection

The aim of the lesson “Interactive Simulation: Substance Use Dilemma” was to help ninth-grade students become more skilled at making decisions by using realistic and captivating situations that drew inspiration from Hubert Selby Jr.’s *Requiem for a Dream*. The lesson was conducted successfully. Although there was a space for improvement (as always), the pupils showed that they understood the targets of the lesson and they paid attention the whole time.

The students were free to select more than one scenario during the scenario simulation, choosing the two they thought were most suitable for them. They were divided up into groups of three and instructed to consider what they would do as underage kids if they were put in these situations today.

The groups disagreed on what to do in the “Social Gathering” scenario, which included tasting alcohol. Viewing it as a controlled experiment, half of the students said they might try a small amount of alcohol if it were supplied by classmates they trusted. The other half were strongly opposed to trying alcohol, claiming awareness of the risks and strong personal convictions.

Similar disagreements showed over trying cigarettes in the “Family Gathering” scenario. Because they thought it may help them maybe relax, half of the students were willing to try cigarettes; the other half said no, citing the bad odour and expensive cost of smoking as reasons.

There was an agreement not to try any drugs in the “Party Pressure” scenario, where students had to decide whether to accept drugs at a party. The students voiced their extreme distaste for drug usage, emphasizing its negative impact on one’s health as well as its ability to destroy friendships and relationships. They stressed how crucial it is to follow parental guidance and not take anything from strangers.

The pupils’ reflections were made clear by the decision-making handouts: They knew that smoking cigarettes carried long-term hazards, such as cancer and discoloured fingers, but they still felt that they might feel good in the short term.

When it came to alcohol, they expected to feel pleasant and lightheaded in a short time, but headaches and depression could happen later on.

They recognized that while using drugs would make them feel satisfied and at ease at first, there were serious long-term risks as well, such as depression, addiction, and serious health problems such as losing teeth, hair, weight, hopes, and dreams.

In their analysis, the students also made note of some important details. They recognized the potential for disappointment from friends and family, the nature of any pleasurable experiences from substance use, and the legal and social concerns associated with underage drinking. They understood that addiction could result in serious declines in one's physical and mental health.

All things considered, the class went well, with students paying close attention and learning the main ideas. More time, though, would have been helpful because the latter part was hurried and left certain questions unsolved. Furthermore, the students found the decision-making handout to be a little overwhelming. More time for discussion and a more straightforward handout might be included in future lessons to guarantee that every student participates fully and gives a thorough response.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this diploma thesis was to explore four central themes such as American society, mental disorders, addictions, and sexuality from the perspective of American writers, and to investigate how literary works can be utilized as tools in English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly for the prevention of risky behaviours in adolescents.

The theoretical section of the thesis offered a thorough analysis of American society and the three other taboo topics, incorporating insights from two famous American authors and their iconic works: *Requiem for a Dream* by Hubert Selby Jr. and *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis. This thesis presents perspectives on the topics from contrasting socio-economic classes: the lower-class milieu of Brooklyn, New York in the 1970s, and the upper-class environment of Manhattan, New York in the 1980s.

Proceeding toward ELT, the theoretical structure presented particular sections from the novels to use American literature in language learning, highlighting the benefits that were demonstrated while acknowledging the potential fates of the noted characters by choosing the parts that were the most interesting for me personally, and suitable for the fourteen and fifteen years old pupils. I skipped the violent and inappropriate parts because of that and highlighted the parts about drug use and psychological health. Analysis of the key components of using literature in ELT classes led to a better knowledge of text choice, student motivation, and pedagogical strategies.

The thesis's practical section used theoretical understandings in useful methods for education. Along with thorough explanations of lesson plans, I intended to try to improve language learning through the use of American literature. The lessons were applied to pupils from 9A and 9B at ZŠ Náměstí Svobody, Šternberk. Numerous research, dialogues, and data-gathering outcomes revealed positive reactions to the use of the YA literary genre in ELT classes. Students' interest and engagement levels increased throughout literature-based activities, and their language abilities and knowledge of vocabulary improved through individual and group work. Benefits of YA literature in lower secondary school were noted, despite difficulties including advanced book selection lesson planning.

Appendices

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Appendix 9: Lesson 1

Appendix 10: Lesson 2

Appendix 1: American Psycho worksheet 1

Introduction: Plot

Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* is a novel about violence, success, money, fashion, and the experiences of Patrick Bateman, a young protagonist in 1980s Wall Street culture who seems like a typical wealthy guy living in New York City. He's all about fancy clothes, expensive stuff, and looking good. But here's the twist: Patrick isn't as normal as he seems. Behind his shiny exterior, he's actually very sick in the head. He's got some serious issues going on in his head, and as the story goes on, things get darker and darker. He starts doing some really crazy and violent stuff that will make you question everything you thought you knew about him. It's a wild ride through the mind of a guy who's living on the edge. *American Psycho* is a provocative book about looking into the heart of darkness hiding beneath the fulfilled American dream.

One of the main themes in the novel is addiction, both to materialism and to more destructive behaviours, and also cocaine, as well as mental health issues such as narcissism and psychopathy. Bateman really likes cocaine. He uses it a lot, especially when he's at parties, clubs, or even during work meetings in the story. Cocaine makes him feel happy for a little while. It gives him energy and makes him feel less worried about his life and job.

Materialism: a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.

Introduction: Characters:

Patrick Bateman: The protagonist of the story, is a rich 27-year-old Harvard graduate. On the surface, he looks charming and successful, but beneath his handsome looks lies a dark and violent personality. Patrick is obsessed with materialism, appearance, and status, and he becomes very dangerous killer.

Evelyn Richards: Patrick's fiancée, Evelyn is also caught up in the world of wealth and luxury. She is attracted to Patrick's cash and status but is often ignores his true nature and the darkness in him.

Paul Owen: is one of Patrick Bateman's colleagues. Paul is also successful, attractive, and confident, fitting into the same wealth as Patrick. Patrick hates him because he thinks he is more successful than he is and starts to get jealous. There is a part in the book when Patrick kills Paul, but no one really knows, if it was a reality or hallucination.

Handout:

Excerpts for Analysis:

1. Passage 1: Patrick Bateman's Inner Monologue

“Shhh...” “...there is an idea of a Patrick Bateman, some kind of abstraction, but there is no real me, only an entity, something illusory, and though I can hide my cold gaze and you can shake my hand and feel flesh gripping yours and maybe you can even sense our lifestyles are probably comparable: I simply am not there.” (p. 251.)

„Psst...“ „...je tu představa Patricka Batemana, nějaký druh abstrakce, ale neexistuje žádné skutečné já, pouze entita, něco iluzorního, a přestože dokážu skrýt svůj chladný pohled a vy mi můžete potřást rukou a cítit mé tělo svírající vaše a možná dokonce cítíte, že naše životní styly jsou pravděpodobně podobné: prostě tam nejsem.“

- Analysis: This passage provides insight into Patrick Bateman's struggle with identity. Do you think that he is aware of his madness or not?
Analýza: Tato pasáž poskytuje vhled do zápasu Patricka Batemana s identitou. Myslíte si, že si je svého šílenství vědom nebo ne?
-
- Analysis: This passage showcases Patrick's descent into violence and psychopathy. His detachment from reality and lack of empathy are evident as he starts to be a killer.
-

2. Passage 2: Patrick Bateman's Obsession with Appearance

- “I'm in the men's room, staring at myself in the mirror – tan and haircut perfect – checking out my teeth which are completely straight and white and gleaming. Winking at my reflection I breathe in, sliding on a pair of leather Armani gloves (p. 106).”

„Jsem na pánském záchodě, zírám na sebe do zrcadla – opálený s perfektním sestřihem – prohlížím si zuby, které jsou úplně rovné, bílé a lesklé. Mrknu na svůj odraz a nadechnu se a nasunu si pár kožených Armani rukavic.“

- Analysis: This excerpt highlights Patrick's obsession with his appearance and the superficiality of his existence. Do you think he is insecure inside, when he has to look perfect outside?
-

3. Passage 3: Patrick Bateman's Addiction to Materialism

- “but I decide to even up the score a little bit by showing everyone my new business card. I pull it out of my gazelle skin wallet (Barney's, \$850) and slap it on the table, waiting for reactions.” (p. 32)
„ale rozhodnu se skóre trochu vyrovnat tím, že všem ukážu svou novou vizitku. Vytáhnu ji z peněženky z gazelí kůže (Barney's, 850 dolarů) a plácnu ji na stůl a čekám na reakce...” (str. 32)
- Analysis: This excerpt highlights Patrick's obsession with material possessions and the emptiness of his consumerist lifestyle. Luxury serves as a distraction from his existential despair. Tento úryvek zdůrazňuje Patrickovu posedlost majetkem a prázdnotu jeho konzumního životního stylu. Luxus slouží jako odvedení pozornosti od jeho existenciálního zoufalství.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Patrick Bateman's obsession with appearance influence his identity?
2. In what ways does the text show an addiction to materialism?
3. What role does mental health play in Patrick Bateman's psychopathy?
4. How does the novel critique American society's values and priorities through the character of Patrick Bateman? What do you think the author is trying to say about society?
5. How do you think Patrick's relationships with other characters, like Evelyn and Paul Owen, reflect his mental state?
6. Patrick Bateman mentions brand names and expensive items. Why do you think these are important to him, and what do they symbolize in the story?

Appendix 2: American Psycho worksheet 2

Scenario 1: “Party Pressure”

You are at a party with your good friends, and someone offers you drugs – cocaine.

They say it is just for fun and that everyone is doing it. It is said to be bitter, and it burns in the nose, but you will feel refreshed and faster. What will you do? Say no? Yes? Run away?

Scénář 1: „Tlak na párty“

Jste na večírku se svými dobrými přáteli a někdo vám nabízí drogy – kokain. Říkají, že je to jen pro zábavu a že to dělají všichni. Je to prý hořké a pálí to v nose, ale budeš se cítit svěží a rychlejší. Co budeš dělat? Řekneš ne? Ano? Utečeš?

Scenario 2: “Unexpected Discovery”

You find a bottle of prescription pills at home. They are not yours, and you are not sure who they belong to. Or what it can do to you. It can cheer you up, but it can also depress you. What is your next move?

Scénář 2: „Neočekávaný objev“

Najdete doma lahvičku s prášky na předpis. Nejsou vaše a vy si nejste jisti, komu patří. Nebo co to s vámi může udělat. Může vás to povzbudit ale i utlumit. Jaký je váš další krok?

Scenario 3: “Peer Influence”

Your best friend wants to try vaping because he thinks it is cool. They are pressuring you to do it too, even though you are not sure. You can start to choke or look like a real adult. How will you handle this situation?

Scénář 3: „Vliv vrstevníků“

Váš nejlepší přítel chce zkusit vaping, protože si myslí, že je to cool. Tlačí na vás, abyste to udělali také, i když si nejste jisti. Můžete se začít dusit, nebo vypadat jak pravý dospělák. Jak budete tuto situaci řešit?

Scenario 4: “Social Gathering”

You are at a gathering with classmates, and someone has a bottle of alcohol. You know it is against the rules, but everyone seems to be drinking. A person may become more cheerful or aggressive or start throwing up. What will you choose to do?

Scénář 4: „Shromáždění“

Jste na srazu se spolužáky a někdo má láhev alkoholu. Víte, že je to proti pravidlům, ale

zdá se, že všichni pijí. Člověk může být veselejší nebo být agresivní nebo začít zvracet.
Co se rozhodnete dělat?

Scenario 5: "Family Gathering"

During a family event, you notice some relatives smoking cigarettes outside. They offer you one, saying it is no big deal. How will you respond? It is a smelly and expensive thing. Would you try it anyway?

Scénář 5: „Rodinné setkání“

Během rodinné události si všimnete, že někteří příbuzní venku kouří cigarety. Nabídnou vám jednu s tím, že to není žádný velký problém. Jak odpovíte? Je to smradlavá a drahá věc. Zkusili byste to i tak?

Decision-making Handout:

Instructions:

1. Talk about each possible outcome and think about what could happen in the short term and the long term.
2. Discuss and fill in the paper together, considering all the stuff we just talked about.
3. Think about how your choices connect to “American Psycho.”

Scenario:

Potential Outcomes:

Potential Outcome	Short-Term Results	Long-Term Results
Outcome 1		
Outcome 2		
Outcome 3		

Let’s Think About It: (choose Long - Term results)

Risk Check:

- What about health issues or getting caught?
 - Could this lead to more dangerous habits?
2. Social Ties:
 - How will this affect your relationships with friends, family, and others?
 - Will it change how people see you?
 3. Feelings:
 - How do you think you’ll feel right after making this choice?
 - How might you feel later on?
 4. What’s Next?
 - How might this affect your future plans, like school or work?
 - Could this open up new opportunities or close doors?
 5. Looking Back:
 - What have you learned from this process?
 - What can you do differently next time?

Requiem for a dream

Introduction: Plot

Requiem for a Dream by Hubert Selby Jr. is a story about four people from Brooklyn in the 1970s who get caught up in drugs.

There's Harry, his girlfriend Marion, their friend Tyrone, and Harry's mom, Sara. Each of them has big dreams, such as opening a coffee shop or being skinny. But as they start using drugs, everything starts falling apart. By the end, you really feel sad for these characters and what they have gone through because of their addiction. It's a tough story, but it's important to know about this because it shows just how much drugs can mess up people's lives.

This story is a book that shows us the devastating consequences of drug addiction, showing how it can destroy lives and dreams. This reminds us of the importance of making wise choices and seeking help when we need it most. Asking for help is not a weakness but it is an example of strength.

Introduction: Characters

Harry Goldfarb

A young man with dreams of making a great future for himself. He gets caught up in drug addiction while trying to achieve success. He falls in love with another drug addict and struggles with his mother's addictions.

Tyrone C. Love

Harry's close friend and partner in their drug-selling job. This character is a heroin addict, is street-smart, and struggles with the pain of his dead mother.

Sara Goldfarb

Harry's mother becomes addicted to diet pills in her effort to lose weight. This character is addicted also to television and food.

Marion Silver

Harry's girlfriend, who shares his dreams of a better life. This character comes from a wealthy family and eventually becomes addicted to drugs and at the end of the novel becomes a prostitute.

Parts from the book: Examples:

In the first scene, Harry Goldfarb wants to steal a TV from his mother to sell it and use the money for heroin. Harry decides to lock his poor mother in a closet and then force her to give him keys to the TV. He steals it and takes it away with Tyrone.

V první scéně chce Harry Goldfarb ukrást televizi své matce, aby ji prodal a peníze využil na heroin. Harry se rozhodne zamknout svou nebohou matku do skříně a pak ji donutit, aby mu dala klíče od televize. Televizi ukradne a odnese ji spolu s Tyronem.

“Why do you always got to play games with my head for krist's sake, always laying some heavy guilt on me? Dont you have any consideration for my feelings? Why do you have to make my life so difficult?” (p. 6)

„Proč si vždycky musíš hrát s mou hlavou pro Krista a vždycky na mě uvaluješ nějakou těžkou vinu? “Nebereš ohled na moje pocity? Proč mi musíš tak ztěžovat život?“

Harry tells Marion:

“There’s a lot of things we’re going to do when we make that money. We’re going to move on out. We’re going to get it all together and turn things upside down. We’ll have that coffee shop going in no time and then we’ll go to Europe and you can show me all those paintings you are always talking about. We can even get you a studio and you can go back to painting and sculpting.” (p. 42)

„Když vyděláme peníze, je spousta věcí, které budeme dělat. Posuneme se dál. Budeme mít to všechno společně a obrátíme věci vzhůru nohama. Za chvíli budeme mít tu kavárnu a pak pojedeme do Evropy a můžeš mi ukázat všechny ty obrazy, o kterých pořád mluvíš. Můžeme ti dokonce získat ateliér a můžeš se vrátit k malbě a sochařství.“

Sara got her package of pills, and the nurse explained the instructions so that Sara understood them completely. After two weeks on the pills, Sara was accustomed to their effects. She almost enjoyed the grinding of the teeth, and even if it annoyed her a little from time to time it was worth the slight inconvenience to feel so good and to see the weight dropping off. Each morning and evening she tried on the red dress to see how much closer it was to fitting and each time the back came closer and closer together. (p. 66)

Sara dostala svůj balíček pilulek a sestra ji vysvětlila pokyny tak, aby jim Sara zcela rozuměla. Po dvou týdnech užívání pilulek byla Sara na jejich účinky už zvyklá. Téměř si užívala skřípání zubů, a i když ji to čas od času trochu štvalo, stálo to za to malé nepohodlí – cítit se tak dobře a vidět, jak váha klesá. Každé ráno a večer si zkoušela červené šaty. Aby se podívala, jak mnohem blíž to bylo k tomu, aby ji seděly a pokaždé se zip přiblížil k sobě.

Sara starts to hallucinate because of over-taking the pills. Due to an incorrect diagnosis, Sara is being treated for schizophrenia, The doctors are brutal, and try electro-shock therapy that leaves her body without a soul. (p. 119)

Sara začne mít halucinace kvůli braní více prášků. Kvůli nesprávné diagnóze Saru léčí jako schizofreničku Lékaři jsou brutální a zkoušejí elektrošokovou terapii, která zanechá její tělo bez duše.

At the end of the book, Harry and Tyron go on a long journey to get better drugs in Florida. But halfway through their journey, Harry collapses and Tyrone notices a black infected hole in his hand where he used to inject heroin. They immediately go to the hospital, where instead of treatment, they are both arrested for drug use. Harry's hand will have to be amputated and Tyrone ends up doing forced labour at the camp, where he experiences withdrawal symptoms associated with pain, nausea, and complete panic. Marion has no choice but to take the offers of prostitution for drugs instead of waiting.

Na konci knihy se Harry a Tyron vydávají na dlouhou cestu k sehnání lepších drog na Floridu. V půlce jejich cesty ale Harry upadá do šoku a Tyrone si všimne jeho hnisající černé rány na ruce, kam si dříve píchal heroin. Ihned jedou do nemocnice, kde je místo léčby oba zatknou za užívání drog. Harrymu ruku budou muset amputovat a Tyrone skončí na nucených pracích v táboře, kde zažívá abstinenci příznaky spojené s bolestí, nevolností a kompletní panikou. Marion nezbyvá nic jiného než místo čekání využít nabídky prostitute za drogy.

Work sheet: What do you think? Tell me your opinion. (Co myslíte? Řekněte mi váš názor)

Character Analysis Worksheet: "Requiem for a Dream"

Characters: What do you think about them:

Pick one or more characters:

Name(s):

1. Motivations:

- What are the character's primary motivations throughout the story? Jaké jsou hlavní motivace postavy v průběhu příběhu?
-
- How do these motivations drive their actions and decisions? Jak tyto motivace řídí jejich jednání a rozhodování?
-
- Are there any underlying desires or fears influencing their behaviour? Existují nějaké základní touhy nebo obavy, které ovlivňují jejich chování?
-

2. Relationship with Addiction:

- How do you think the character's relationship with addiction develop? Jak se podle vás vyvíjí vztah postavy k závislosti?
-
- How do you think they justify their substance use? Jak si myslíte, že ospravedlňují své užívání návykových látek?
-

3. Inner Conflicts:

- What internal conflicts does the character face in relation to addiction? Jakým vnitřním konfliktům postava čelí v souvislosti se závislostí?
-

4. Character Development:

- What insights do they gain about themselves and their addiction journey? Jaké poznatky o sobě a své cestě k závislosti získají?

-

5. Impact on Others: Dopad na ostatní:

- What are the consequences of their addiction for themselves and those around them? Jaké důsledky má jejich závislost pro ně samotné a jejich okolí?

-

6. Reflection:

- Tell me five key words you would use to describe this book. Řekněte mi pět klíčových slov, které byste použili na popis této knihy.

-

- What can we learn from their experiences about addiction? Co se můžeme naučit z jejich zkušeností se závislostí?

-

Appendix 4: Requiem for a Dream worksheet 2

Scenario 1: “Party Pressure”

You are at a party with your good friends, and someone offers you drugs – cocaine. They say it is just for fun and that everyone is doing it. It is said to be bitter, and it burns in the nose, but you will feel refreshed and faster. What will you do? Say no? Yes? Run away?

Scénář 1: “Tlak na párty“

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Scenario 2: “Unexpected Discovery”

You find a bottle of prescription pills at home. They are not yours, and you are not sure who they belong to. Or what it can do to you. It can cheer you up, but it can also depress you. What is your next move?

Scénář 2: „Neočekávaný objev“

Najdete doma lahvičku s prášky na předpis. Nejsou vaše a vy si nejste jisti, komu patří. Nebo co to s vámi může udělat. Může vás to povzbudit ale i utlumit. Jaký je váš další krok?

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Your best friend wants to try vaping because he thinks it is cool. They are pressuring you to do it too, even though you are not sure. You can start to choke or look like a real adult. How will you handle this situation?

Scénář 3: „Vliv vrstevníků“

Váš nejlepší přítel chce zkusit vaping, protože si myslí, že je to cool. Tlačí na vás, abyste to udělali také, i když si nejste jisti. Můžete se začít dusit, nebo vypadat jak pravý dospělák. Jak budete tuto situaci řešit?

Scenario 4: “Social Gathering”

You are at a gathering with classmates, and someone has a bottle of alcohol. You know it is against the rules, but everyone seems to be drinking. A person may become more cheerful or aggressive or start throwing up. What will you choose to do?

Scénář 4: „Shromáždění“

Jste na srazu se spolužáky a někdo má láhev alkoholu. Víte, že je to proti pravidlům, ale

zdá se, že všichni pijí. Člověk může být veselejší nebo být agresivní nebo začít zvracet.
Co se rozhodnete dělat?

Scenario 5: "Family Gathering"

During a family event, you notice some relatives smoking cigarettes outside. They offer you one, saying it is no big deal. How will you respond? It is a smelly and expensive thing. Would you try it anyway?

Scénář 5: „Rodinné setkání“

Během rodinné události si všimnete, že někteří příbuzní venku kouří cigarety. Nabídnou vám jednu s tím, že to není žádný velký problém. Jak odpovíte? Je to smradlavá a drahá věc. Zkusili byste to i tak?

Decision-making Handout:

Instructions:

4. Talk about each possible outcome and think about what could happen in the short term and the long term.
5. Discuss and fill in the paper together, considering all the stuff we just talked about.
6. Think about how your choices connect to “Requiem for a Dream.”

Scenario:

Potential Outcomes:

Potential Outcome	Short-Term Results	Long-Term Results
Outcome 1		
Outcome 2		
Outcome 3		

Let’s Think About It: (choose Long - Term results)

Risk Check:

- What about health issues or getting caught?
 - Could this lead to more dangerous habits?
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 - How might this affect your future plans, like school or work?
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 9. Looking Back:
 - What have you learned from this process?
 - What can you do differently next time?

Appendix 5: Completed worksheets examples – American Psycho

Appendix 6: Lesson 1

Handout:

Excerpts for Analysis:

1. Passage 1: Patrick Bateman's Inner Monologue

“Shhh...” “...there is an idea of a Patrick Bateman, some kind of abstraction, but there is no real me, only an entity, something illusory, and though I can hide my cold gaze and you can shake my hand and feel flesh gripping yours and maybe you can even sense our lifestyles are probably comparable: I simply am not there.” (p. 251.)

„Psst...” „...je tu představa Patricka Batemana, nějaký druh abstrakce, ale neexistuje žádné skutečné já, pouze entita, něco iluzorního, a přestože dokážu skrýt svůj chladný pohled a vy mi můžete potřást rukou a cítit mé tělo svírající vaše a možná dokonce cítíte, že naše životní styly jsou pravděpodobně podobné: prostě tam nejsem.“

- Analysis: This passage provides insight into Patrick Bateman's struggle with identity. Do you think that he is aware of his madness or not? Analýza: Tato pasáž poskytuje vhled do zápasu Patricka Batemana s identitou. Myslíte si, že si je svého šílenství vědom nebo ne?
I think he is not aware about his madness
- Analysis: This passage showcases Patrick's descent into violence and psychopathy. His detachment from reality and lack of empathy are evident as he starts to be a killer.
I think he is an evident psychopath.

2. Passage 2: Patrick Bateman's Obsession with Appearance

- “I'm in the men's room, staring at myself in the mirror – tan and haircut perfect – checking out my teeth which are completely straight and white and gleaming. Winking at my reflection I breathe in, sliding on a pair of leather Armani gloves (p. 106).”

„Jsem na pánském záchodě, zírám na sebe do zrcadla – opálený s perfektním sestřihem – prohlížím si zuby, které jsou úplně rovné, bílé a lesklé. Mrknu na svůj odraz a nadechnu se a nasunu si pár kožených Armani rukavic.

- Analysis: This excerpt highlights Patrick's obsession with his appearance and the superficiality of his existence. Do you think he is insecure inside, when he has to look perfect outside?
It is more important for him how he looks than how he feels

3. Passage 3: Patrick Bateman's Addiction to Materialism

- "but I decide to even up the score a little bit by showing everyone my new business card. I pull it out of my gazelle skin wallet (Barney's, \$850) and slap it on the table, waiting for reactions.." (p. 32)
„ale rozhodnu se skóre trochu vyrovnat tím, že všem ukážu svou novou vizitku. Vytáhnu ji z peněženky z gazelí kůže (Barney's, 850 dolarů) a plácnu ji na stůl a čekám na reakce..." (str. 32)
- Analysis: This excerpt highlights Patrick's obsession with material possessions and the emptiness of his consumerist lifestyle. Luxury serves as a distraction from his existential despair. Tento úryvek zdůrazňuje Patrickovu posedlost majetkem a prázdnotu jeho konzumního životního stylu. Luxus slouží jako odvedení pozornosti od jeho existenciálního zoufalství.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Patrick Bateman's obsession with appearance influence his identity?
It influences him a lot, he is focused on his look and not on his behaviour
2. In what ways does the text show an addiction to materialism?
It shows it in a part with business card and wallet
3. What role does mental health play in Patrick Bateman's psychopathy?
he wanted to feel something so he became violent. He should find a psychiatrist.
4. How does the novel critique American society's values and priorities through the character of Patrick Bateman? What do you think the author is trying to say about society?
People likes more expensive things than other people. It is sad. People should help each other if someone is rich.
5. How do you think Patrick's relationships with other characters, like Evelyn and Paul Owen, reflect his mental state?
His jealousy made him violent
6. Patrick Bateman mentions brand names and expensive items. Why do you think these are important to him, and what do they symbolize in the story?
He wants to boost his ego and get attention

Appendix 7: Lesson 2

I don't like alcohol so I would not drink it. I would rather go to someone that doesn't drink alcohol.

I would leave. I would ~~drink~~ rather drink ^{my} orange juice. I would not even go.

Alcohol - Shromāḍelēn

No! I don't wanna get addicted. Cigarettes disgust me. I would rather listen to Cigarettes after sex is.

No, ~~unlike~~ it's not legal! "rr
No, thank you.

Cigarettes

~~Alcohol (Shromāḍelēn)~~

!KARMA IS B*tch! -Jojo Siwa

Decision-making Handout:

Instructions:

1. Talk about each possible outcome and think about what could happen in the short term and the long term.
2. Discuss and fill in the table together, considering all the things we have just talked about.
3. Think about how your choices connect to "American Psycho."

Scenario:

Potential Outcomes:

Potential Outcome	Short-Term Results	Long-Term Results
Outcome 1	I will stop using drugs and feel happy	I will be on addicted
Outcome 2	We don't like a drug	to normal life
Outcome 3	Person is materialist and if I want to be happy with drugs it will be the same	After some time, being addicted to drugs will not make me happy

Let's Think About It: (choose Long - Term results)

1. Risk Check:

- What about health issues or getting caught? *Some people will not, but if you get caught, it will be a big problem*
- Could this lead to more dangerous habits? *Yes, it could*

2. Social Ties:

- How will this affect your relationships with friends, family, and others? *Yes, that*
- Will it change how people see you? *Yes, high if I would do it for longer time*

3. Feelings:

- How do you think you'll feel right after making this choice? *Good, maybe good*
- How might you feel later on? *Happy, depressed*

4. What's Next?

- How might this affect your future plans, like school or work? *If I will be addicted to drugs I think I will be the happy*
- Could this open up new opportunities or close doors? *Yes, but this way is wrong*

5. Looking Back:

- What have you learned from this process? *Nothing*
- What can you do differently next time? *Nothing*

Appendix 8: Completed worksheets examples – Requiem for a Dream

Appendix 9: Lesson 1

Work sheet: What do you think? Tell me your opinion. (Co myslíte? Řekněte mi váš názor)

Character Analysis Worksheet: "Requiem for a Dream"

Characters: What do you think about them:

Pick one or more characters:

Name(s): *Erin*

1. Motivations:

- What are the character's primary motivations throughout the story? Jaké jsou hlavní motivace postavy v průběhu příběhu?
To loose weight
- How do these motivations drive their actions and decisions? Jak tyto motivace řídí jejich jednání a rozhodování?
Overloading pills
- Are there any underlying desires or fears influencing their behaviour? Existují nějaké základní touhy nebo obavy, které ovlivňují jejich chování?
The obsession over the way her body looks

2. Relationship with Addiction:

- How do you think the character's relationship with addiction develop? Jak se podle vás vyvíjí vztah postavy k závislosti?
Yes, they develop to the stage where Erin starts hallucinating
- How do you think they justify their substance use? Jak si myslíte, že ospravedlňují své užívání návykových látek?
By wanting to loose the weight

3. Inner Conflicts:

- What internal conflicts does the character face in relation to addiction? Jakým vnitřním konfliktům postava čelí v souvislosti se závislostí?
*well after the detox shock treatment she's
I think very numb "without a soul", but like
I think she's really sad and depressed and*

4. Character Development:

- she's helpless because of her body but
she's too tired to care ???*

- What insights do they gain about themselves and their addiction journey? Jaké poznatky o sobě a své cestě k závislosti získají?

If the pills work, then who cares about consequences

5. Impact on Others: Dopad na ostatní:

- What are the consequences of their addiction for themselves and those around them? Jaké důsledky má jejich závislost pro ně samotné a jejich okolí?

So because she is balancing it so badly affects everyone a lot but in the end I have read there was only about doctors going crazy

6. Reflection:

- Tell me five key words you would use to describe this book. Řekněte mi pět klíčových slov, které byste použili na popis této knihy.

interesting, chytlivá, dokumentární, naučný

- What can we learn from their experiences about addiction? Co se můžeme naučit z jejich zkušeností se závislostí?

Just listen to the things doctors tell you about pills and don't do otherwise because even if proper use some pills can have certain side effects and then if you overuse them

I would probably tell him I don't want it ^{DRUGS} because it is not good for my health. Besides my parents raised me to not to take anything from a strangers. Drugs are disgusting and it ruins your body and your friendships too. So I wouldn't take the drugs, even if everyone did

SOCIAL GATHERING

If it were classmates that I trust I would take maybe one ~~sip~~ sip or two but I definitely wouldn't drink the whole bottle because if I'd be drunk I don't know what I would do.

Decision-making Handout:

Instructions:

- Talk about each possible outcome and think about what could happen in the short term and the long term.
- Discuss and fill in the paper together, considering all the stuff we just talked about.
- Think about how your choices connect to "Requiem for a Dream."

Scenario:

Potential Outcomes:

Potential Outcome	Short-Term Results	Long-Term Results
Outcome 1 Cigarettes	Maybe good feeling, cool, hyped	Lung cancer, yellow fingers
Outcome 2 alcohol	Fun, nice feel, DRIZZINESS	Headache, depression
Outcome 3 drugs	chilled, happy	smart, sadness, health issues

Let's Think About It: (choose Long - Term results)

Risk Check:

- What about health issues or getting caught? *police can arrest you* you can have migraine
- Could this lead to more dangerous habits? *yes, it could*

Social Ties:

- How will this affect your relationships with friends, family, and others?
- Will it change how people see you? *Family would be disappointed* *yes*

Feelings:

- How do you think you'll feel right after making this choice? *happy*
- How might you feel later on? *guilt*

What's Next?

- How might this affect your future plans, like school or work? *you will change, you will focus just on drugs/alcohol*
- Could this open up new opportunities or close doors? *close doors, you will lose friends*

Looking Back:

- What have you learned from this process? *not taking drugs*
- What can you do differently next time? *don't try it*

Resumé

Tato diplomová práce se primárně soustředí na čtyři hlavní témata: americkou společnost, duševní poruchy, závislosti a sexualitu z pohledu amerických spisovatelů. Zaměřuje se na využití literárních děl ve výuce anglického jazyka (ELT) k prevenci rizikového chování u dospívajících, s využitím kontrastních pohledů z New Yorku, a to z nižší společenské třídy Brooklynu v 70. letech a vyšší společenské třídy Manhattanu v 80. letech 20. století. V teoretické části jsou témata zkoumána prostřednictvím kultovních knih *Requiem za sen* od Huberta Selbyho Jr. a *Americké psycho* od Breta Eastona Ellise. Vybrané kapitoly z románů byly vybrány s ohledem na jejich vhodnost pro žáky ve věku 14–15 let; vyhýbaly se explicitnímu násilí a místo toho se zaměřily na témata jako užívání drog a duševní zdraví. Praktická část využila tato pozorování k vytvoření výukových plánů pro deváté ročníky na ZŠ Náměstí Svobody ve Šternberku. Navzdory obtížím při výběru vhodných částí výsledky ukázaly, že nadšení, zapojení a jazykové schopnosti studentů se zlepšily.

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