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***The Great Gatsby* - flappers and philosophers in the upper secondary classroom**

A historical-biographical reading, watching and studying of Fitzgerald's novel

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Master's Thesis in English Literature



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Abstract

This master's thesis tries out a historical-biographical approach to the challenge of teaching English literature in Norwegian upper secondary schools in three steps according to three curricular aims. In selecting *The Great Gatsby* for this purpose, I discover the opportunity to kill several birds with one stone when I enable my students to interpret and analyse the novel, compare two film versions, and *additionally* study the Interwar period in depth. Through employing a historical-biographical approach to *The Great Gatsby*, I seek to demonstrate how several curricular aims can be reached through one and the same novel, and I claim that teaching these aims in combination helps augment the students' learning outcomes. This thesis has a two-fold objective in accomplishing several curricular aims through a three-step process, together with additionally securing my students a more profound comprehension of *The Great Gatsby* and its context.

I try to investigate whether this process will enhance students' outcome of studying a novel and lessen teachers' constant worry about time keeping. Due to poor results in the 2000 and 2003 PISA – Programme for International Students Assessment in Norwegian schools, the “Knowledge Promotion”, the new national curriculum LK06, appeared in 2006. All curricula within every subject taught in Norwegian schools were renewed to secure pupils a required amount of knowledge. After 12 years with practicing the Knowledge Promotion curricula, teachers have found that they contain too many aims, we merely scratch the surface and seldom do we have time to study novels in a detailed and thorough way. Politicians have taken the preliminary initiatives for a renewal of the national curricula in 2020. While awaiting them, I seek to compress the curricular aims within English studies and allow my students to work in depth instead of furnishing them with quantities of superficial knowledge.

The Great Gatsby and its film versions depict the Interwar period in the US concisely when echoing the lives of “a lost generation” facing a modern world. Never again in history would a young generation of the western world be victims of a similar trial.

Key words: comparing novels and films, context, extensive reading, in depth studying, EFL-reading, new national Norwegian curricula, reading strategies, upper secondary schools.

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1 Introduction:

A historical-biographical reading, watching and studying of Fitzgerald's novel

This thesis, based on teaching F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) in a Norwegian upper secondary school, seeks to demonstrate the novel's appropriateness through a historical - biographical approach in a three-step process that combines several core elements of the national curricular aims of English in general studies. This process comprises firstly extensive reading; secondly watching film versions; and finally in-depth studying when teaching *The Great Gatsby* in the 13th grade in programmes for specialization in English. All of these approaches are grounded in the Norwegian national curriculum of Social Studies English and English literature and culture. During this process, the overall aim is to enhance the students' experience of reading a novel. A previous teaching of the same novel resulted in a superficial understanding students took from their encounter with the text. Admittedly, there are several other novels as convenient for a similar purpose, but in his great novel, Fitzgerald touches on the quintessential elements of the American Interwar period that some might argue bear resemblance to the present Western world. Within both studies of English within Culture, society and literature the novel combines the curricular aims of "analyse at least two lengthy works of fiction" and "interpret at least one major work of fiction".

This novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald echoes its own time with its frustrations after a long, meaningless war that ripped away the lives of nearly a generation of European and American young men. According to Pearl James, *The Great Gatsby* examples an excellent opportunity "to teach students to think and write about the complex relation between literature and history." (32) Gaining an insight into the American 1920s provides a stepping-stone into several aims from the curriculum. Actually, *both* English curricula in the 13th grade contain the aim of presenting "a major in-depth project with a topic from Social Studies English and assess the process" or - "with a topic from English literature and culture and assess the process" (Utdanningsdirektoratet). When I provide students with a frame of the years in between World War I and II and insist that this is their time span to study in depth, their choices appear rather limited. They are at this point *already* familiar with the world of *The*

Great Gatsby and its setting, and this thesis seeks to investigate whether this approach will enhance their understanding of the novel and the historical period in which it is set.

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training called for teachers' views on core elements within all subjects to meet the current criticism against the present Norwegian National curricula. The English committee of The Norwegian Upper Secondary Teachers' Union in their final report claim that the present Norwegian National curricula have emphasis on breadth over depth and seldom allow an opportunity to study in depth. What is most important within, in this case, the subject of English? Mapping the core elements will guide teachers in tracing the overall view of their mandate. The results of this hearing in 2018 will subsequently make up the basis of the new curricula in 2020. This implies that teachers will still experience frustrations for a couple of years, inventing strategies to accomplish as many aims as possible within the limited time at our disposal. These are, in my opinion, the reasons *The Great Gatsby* from 1925 conveniently serves several purposes in upper secondary school, and provides an opportunity of studying in depth, while furnishing students with the skill of understanding the core elements in English, and guides them into comprehending an interrelationship between separate parts of the curriculum. Most importantly, students will thus enhance their understanding of the core elements in the studying of the English language, which are similar to all languages: to understand and to be understood, in short communication.

Most of the aims listed under Culture, society and literature within the Norwegian national curricular aims for English studies in upper secondary school's 13th year may relate to one single historical period. When teaching students how text and context are irrevocably knit together in *The Great Gatsby*, the intention is to make them perceive literature as more significant than merely isolated novels, and thus even enhance their pleasure of reading them too. Pearl James seeks to make "my students familiar with the history of World War 1, I enable them to place literary texts in a larger historical context." (32) I employ a similar aim. This study, then, seeks to discern whether Fitzgerald's novel appeals to 18-year-olds by making them read, watch and study its context in depth. While spurring on students' knowledge, of the social and historical conditions of the 1920s in America after World War I, and link it together with a tale of the lives of members of "The Lost Generation" they experience how history and literature are connected. The purpose of this three-step process is to enhance their insight into a culture shaped by the American experience, which in its turn is shaped by, and still shapes, the Western world. Like *Gatsby*, we believe in "the green light", a

future that we stretch our arms against, run for and believe that one fine morning we will reach something unique, but without mercy, we are constantly “borne back ceaselessly into the past” (Fitzgerald 115), a past that is still intriguing to us all, young and old. Perhaps this is why it deserves a second glance?

Why confront students with a close-to-a century-old novel from the USA, and insist on the importance of buying a private paper copy to read and analyse in class? Would 18-year-olds be interested in *The Great Gatsby*? Regarding the students, there are two inevitable facts that influence a decision to assign this novel in particular. First of all, the majority are already familiar with the story due to the film from 2013 with Leonardo DiCaprio portraying Jay Gatsby. Secondly, the novel contains a comparatively limited number of pages, which makes it appear approachable.

Reading a novel in the 13th grade of upper secondary school is rooted in the curricular aims of the “Knowledge Promotion” or LK06. The teacher’s task is to enable the students to interpret at least one major work of fiction, Social Studies English, or to analyse at least two lengthy works of fiction, English literature and culture. Some years ago, this led me to single out Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* as an appropriate novel to teach students in the 13th grade of upper secondary school, because students were already familiar with the film version from 2013. Subsequent to an extensive reading of the novel, I made students compare *their* film version from 2013 to *my* film version from 1974, and expected an enhanced understanding of the novel on my students’ part. Unfortunately, it did not turn out this way. Upon reflection, I discovered that we had merely touched the surface of one of *the* most significant periods in American history, and that Fitzgerald’s novel and its film versions remained not fully comprehended within its context. The second time I initiated a reading of *The Great Gatsby* I knew that we needed more to complete the picture, and it occurred to me that to take on both the novel and its film versions, we needed to study the novel’s external factors in-depth to understand its context additionally. An in-depth study will be the third and final step and task students are going to carry out in a process based on *The Great Gatsby* and its context.

The 1920s created the modern American society, which some would claim still clings to the convincing thought that wealth appears a passport to happiness. As Ronald Berman states about Fitzgerald’s short stories, they “are about men who need money, in love with women who are inaccessible without it.” (79) When teaching literature in the 2018 classroom, where to my mind we live in a world bearing a resemblance to the 1920s, it is crucial to stress that

numerous novels witness lives spent within a certain setting on one hand, while on the other hand novels might also appear timeless. At the same time, some critics choose to regard the text almost in a vacuum. This is why some critics agree with Gerald Graff, who recalls his own experiences as a student: “class discussions of literature bored him until he discovered that literature was something to argue over” (Leitch 1961). In my opinion, literature as a discipline contains few if any definite answers, and students attain a richer appreciation of reading novels if teachers succeed in “teaching the conflicts,” as Graff puts it. Up to a point, he believes that there are “no right answers, just good questions” (Graff 179), and in his *They Say/I Say*, Graff provides universal tools for arguments applicable within academic discourse. In the preface, he claims “students and teachers can move beyond the type of essay that analyses literature in isolation from the conversations and debates about those works” (Graff xiii). By furnishing students with tools for comparing and contrasting similar traits between our time and that of *The Great Gatsby*, an overall aim is to seek to enhance students’ understanding of how a text belongs to its context, and emphasize that their personal and individual opinions are educative to the readers themselves. Rather than putting a cat among the pigeons, the apparent intention is to teach students the interrelationship between text and context. Subsequently, as in Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken” and according to Graff, to demonstrate through a three-step-process “how way leads on to way” (Frost), which is to invite students into an investigation of a novel’s text and context, while applying the core elements of studying English that are again in sum “to understand and to be understood” (*Læring og vurdering*).

Ruth Prigozy opens her introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald* by stating that “F. Scott Fitzgerald is one of the most recognized figures in American literary and cultural history” (1). She proceeds to claim that he is “not only as one of the major writers of the twentieth century, but also as a man whose life story excites the fascination of a public that knows him primarily as the author of *The Great Gatsby*”(1). Most young students of the present Western world are familiar with *Gatsby* due to the 2013 movie starring Leonardo Di Caprio and Carey Mulligan. A fact that provides an excellent starting point for a historical-biographical novel study and singles out this novel in particular as a perfect match for triggering the interests of upper secondary school students to the origins of today’s world. A world that is related to in the introduction to the Volume of *Approaches to Teaching Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby*, where Bryer and Van Arsdale note that “classroom analysis of this classic American novel repeatedly leads to a rich exploration of “ [...] “the dimensions of an

evolving modern American culture” (xi). Gilbert Highet claims, on the other hand, that “Bad teaching wastes a good deal of effort, and spoils many lives which might have been full of energy and happiness” and the reason why many teachers have failed their work is that “they have not thought about it”. (Gibaldi) While “thinking about” how to approach *The Great Gatsby* through reading, watching and studying this novel in a three-step process according to the curricular aims I sincerely hope that the subsequent study will improve my teaching of literature and do not ruin any of my students’ lives.

The theoretical underpinning of this thesis relies on strategies related to an enhanced extensive reading of *The Great Gatsby* by note taking, writing summaries, activating prior knowledge and in depth studying. Furthermore, useful points of departure are the Official Norwegian Report about “Students learning in future schools” and L. M. Brevik’s study “How teachers teach and readers read,” where she claims that there is a “lack of reading research on Norwegian upper secondary schools *in general* – and in particular on English as a second language” (Brevik 70). Brevik’s thesis is her contribution to rectifying the situation, and the source of my curiosity and inspiration to look into the challenge of reading English novels in Norwegian upper secondary schools.

To approach the pedagogic challenge of teaching literature to students of upper secondary school and applying *The Great Gatsby* for this purpose through a historical-biographical method, it seems convenient to combine the three aforementioned curricular aims regarding a major work of fiction, a film and an in-depth study and assess the process when carrying out this study. Its focus is to try out a three-step approach to *The Great Gatsby* in class with students of Social Studies English and English literature and culture. This study consists of employing a deeper focus when teaching students to interpret/analyse a novel within its internal and external factors, and to find out whether this results in a more profound understanding of the novel and its context on the part of the students.

2 Background

“If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away.”

(Fitzgerald 3) strikes a background chord for this novel study.

2.1 A challenge

My experience is that teaching novels in English is a challenging task to perform in many classes. The reasons provide a complex picture. Sometimes the excuses teachers make relate to a shortage of time in general, while in other cases teachers and students were unable to agree upon what novel to choose. There are additional practical excuses also, relating to the availability of the novels in question and the expenses of buying a novel for the students. The most intriguing reason often encountered, however, seems to be the extensive reading in itself. This is a familiar challenge for teachers within other subjects too, even those taught in students' mother tongue, Norwegian. The Norwegian Upper Secondary Teachers' Union stresses a similar view in their response (Utdanningsdirektoratet) to the suggested core elements in English. One student in my group of 13th graders honestly claim in class that she had read altogether four novels in her life, and that none had been of her own free will.

To inspire students, then, to read for pleasure seems, in my opinion the most challenging mandate for teachers. It might be interesting to look into the experiences of our colleagues in our neighbouring country Sweden too. When Simon Granath interviewed seven teachers in upper secondary schools in Sweden in 2017 about their approach to literature, he reached the conclusion that “literature inclusion is a complex matter”. He discovered that “in light of the perceived dwindling motivation to read among students, it might be increasingly important in general for teachers to connect to students' interests when including literature” (Granath 20). Keeping Granath's statement in mind, teachers should try to connect to students' interests when selecting a novel for the purpose of extensive reading. A pedagogic concept that involves reading longer texts that I will return to in my thesis.

2.2 “Knowledge Promotion”

Prior to the “Knowledge Promotion” or LK06 (Utdanningsdirektoratet) in the 11th year of upper secondary school, students' first year, where English is a compulsory subject, the national curriculum contained the reading of a novel. The new curriculum of LK06 had omitted it, contrary to the fact that in the general hearing, several colleagues within the

English language department at Norwegian schools strongly advised against it. We argued that extensive reading, which often implies the reading of a novel, should remain on the list of curricular aims for 11th grade of general and vocational studies. The responsibility now rests with the individual English teacher and their interpretation of “different types of literary texts in English from different parts of the world” (Utdanningsdirektoratet), and whether they interpret this to include novels. This represents a means to lower the competence in English amongst Norwegian students, and I fear it will turn out disadvantageous to them in the end. A fear shared by colleagues in The Norwegian Upper Secondary School Teachers’ Union and expressed in their report on the suggested core elements of the new curricula in English. There is no reason to claim, however, that this is deliberate, but the inevitable fact remains that to read a novel in English within 11 years at school is no longer required. As we know, there are numerous varieties of novels. They range from the challenging works of Dickens to graphic novels. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Utdanningsdirektoratet) is preparing for a renewal of the national curricula in 2020, and last fall there has been a hearing relating to the core elements within all subjects in Norwegian schools. Colleagues in The Norwegian Upper Secondary School Teachers’ Union maintain that an unarguable core element in English must be to teach different types and lengths of English texts *and books* from several parts of the world. When Siri Hjorteland interviewed five EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers in the first year of upper secondary school, she found that “although there is a strong focus on literacy in the Norwegian curriculum”, there is no “specific list of what literary texts to employ in the EFL classroom.” (Abstract)

2.3 Students’ background

For students in 13th grade, who have chosen to specialize in English for their upper secondary studies, however, the curricular aims are quite specific: “The aims of the studies are to enable pupils to interpret at least one major work of fiction, one film and a selection from other English-language literature from the 1900s and up to the present” (Utdanningsdirektoratet). The main challenge appears to be “enable” and “interpret”. The teachers’ mandate is to help pupils to read or listen to and understand one or more major works of fiction. Students who are unfamiliar with reading or listening to lengthy works of literature might struggle while others claim they have read several works of art from the English-speaking world. Sometimes students still refer to “an early awakening of the pleasure of reading” with J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* and J. K. Rowling’s books about Harry Potter. In last year’s textbook for the International English course, *Worldwide* (2012), students really appreciated the text

“The Harry Potter Phenomenon” where the introduction reads, “*Improved literacy, a boost to the UK film industry, more tourism – it’s all down to the boy wizard*” (Haugum and Skanke 258). It seems that a whole generation of young readers have experienced a breakthrough in reading novels in the last couple of decades, and obviously the successful filming of the novels has contributed to this effect too. Many students state that they learn extensively from watching movies and TV-series. The more the reason for upper secondary schools to keep up the good work, and stimulate their appetite for good reading, while profiting from the benefit of combining film and novel study. Fitzgerald himself was a movie fan too, and “he believed in film as an ideal art form for reaching out to millions who might never have read a serious novel” (Prigozy 12).

What makes students specialize in English? Several answers to this question have to do with the fact that it is a language that a constantly increasing number of people use for communicating throughout the world; a lingua franca, a term explaining why English is a world language and that must be retained in the new curricula (Utdanningsdirektoratet). Students value the richness of the language’s vocabulary that allows for a multitude of ways of expressing themselves, their thoughts and their feelings. Furthermore, they also value the ability to read major novels in their original language, and some are aware of the fact that the most important academic language in the Western world is English, and of course, last but not least, English provides a means of communication for travellers. This appetite for seeing the world and experiencing other cultures has brought students to several corners of the globe as exchange students. Those who have spent their exchange year in the US claim to have read *The Great Gatsby* already, a fact that confirms this novel’s place within the American literary canon. They also refer to different approaches to the novel, where some claim to have interpreted it in detail and regret having left the book behind with several explanatory notes that might have turned out beneficial during a second reading. A second reading will utterly enhance their understanding of it and personally they will be able to compare the approach to this novel in its domestic culture with that of a Norwegian method.

2.4 Local challenges

Aust-Lofoten videregående skole is a comparatively small school within the Norwegian context, and our students face a relatively limited choice of electives. In Norwegian upper secondary schools, the students may choose English as an elective subject in the 12th and 13th years of the general programmes. For Year 12 there is only one option: “International English”, while in the 13th year they may choose between either Social Studies English or

English literature and culture. Unfortunately, since our school is not able to offer both, students must decide between the two options towards the end of the 12th year. When we point at the differences within the national curricular aims and compel them to post their preferences, including the reasons behind them, at our teaching platform before the summer vacation, students find it easy to choose. Usually this takes place after a thorough information session about the two options followed by further discussions, but it seldom involves any difficulties. In this respect it is noteworthy that The Norwegian Union of Secondary School Teachers, in their response to the suggested core elements in the future curricula, recommend a possible combination of the two electives in one group. A solution reflected in the presently suggested drafts of the new curricula within Specializing in English at the upper secondary level, where they simply name the two future options English 1 for International English and English 2 for Social Studies English *and* English literature and culture.

(Utdanningsdirektoratet)

The majority of the students have already made up their minds, and those who still hesitate will be likely to have reached a decision by the time school starts again in August. There seems to be a certain divide in genders too. Male students prefer Social Studies English, while female students are more into poems, short stories and novels. Moreover, teachers do have their preferences as well. According to the curricular aims, the two options have the basic in common. The curricular aims within Language and language learning have two aims in common, while English literature and culture focuses on the terminology for analysing texts and linguistic features, contrary to Social Studies English that stresses dissimilar genres. Within Communication there are some similarities and dissimilarities too. Social Studies English focuses more on communication than English literature and culture. Seven aims make up the list within the former while five within the latter, and among those they have five in common. Social Studies English focuses especially on figures and statistics. Looking more closely at the curricular aims within Culture, society and literature, one easily finds parallels and overlaps. Social Studies English obviously focuses more deeply on historical and social developments within American and British society while English literature and culture concentrates on literary-historical periods in English literature from the Renaissance up to the present, and on cultural expressions from a cultural-historical and social perspective. The main challenge is in selecting a representative novel that covers both curricula, and that all students may find suitable according to their choice of English study. The decision to make

them all read *The Great Gatsby* seems to be beneficial to both groups of students, since the novel covers several curricular aims within both versions of English studies.

As part of teachers' responsibility, I go through the curricular aims in order to prove that both Social Studies English and English literature and culture have several aspects of learning English in common, and that historical periods and literary historical periods are strongly interwoven, even though they carry different labels and features. Authors seldom write literature in a vacuum, and historical and social changes often act as catalysts for writers. By use of a timeline in the classroom, where we include both historical events and novels on a wallpaper, students contribute themselves with either a famous event, a person or novel central to British and American history according to their own opinion, and thus they understand the interrelationship between the two English options in the end. At this point, there are students who claim that now they are familiar with the historical periods, and were eager to place its literary works within their contexts.

A disadvantage facing teachers of English, at this level at our school, is the number of students choosing to specialize in English. They tend to vary a lot recently, from a full class of 27 students to less than 10 sometimes. This speaks for a combination of the two electives into one group in order to secure a pedagogical environment for oral activities. Usually most groups consist of an average of 20 students, containing female and male students equally. In my opinion, 10-12 students is a minimum, because the oral activities in class require a certain amount of students: no fewer than 10, preferably. Some might even argue that having small groups gives the teacher plenty of time to keep an eye on each and every student during a lesson; the students have less opportunity to hide behind or within a huge crowd of maximum 27 students, when only a tiny group of them do take an active part in the oral exercises. When you are able to keep an eye on each individual, they must participate, and the teacher has the opportunity to challenge them with individual questions. There are numerous pros and cons regarding the ideal size of a group, but in my opinion, a group of about 15 students is ideal.

2.5 The Norwegian context

In 2006, all curricula within Norwegian schools were subject to a renewal through the major reform, "Knowledge Promotion", with an overall focus on knowledge in general. Lately, highly critical voices have pointed at the massive contents of the curricula that inevitably, some claim, lead to a rather superficial teaching within each subject in order to reach as many of the curricular aims as possible. Amongst the critics is The Norwegian Upper Secondary

Teachers' Union, which claims in its report on the suggested core elements in English that the present curricula are too comprehensive and that the new suggestions on core elements do not seem to lessen this amount or provide time for in depth studying (Utdanningsdirektoratet). An increasing number of teachers feel they seldom have time to teach in depth, and thus they experience both frustrations and stress related to the amount of curricular aims, combined with the limited timespan within which we should accomplish them. (Utdanningsdirektoratet) In other words, there is a professional call for a renewal of the curricula in Norwegian schools.

In 2012, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Utdanningsdirektoratet) provided a framework for the basic skills in Norwegian schools with a detailed definition for each of them. The department drafted a preliminary document aiding groups appointed to develop and revise the present curricula of LK06. The skills the document outlines are useful tools in learning any subject. Applied to all curricular aims within all subjects, there is a framework of five basic skills defined within all subjects taught. First on the list are the digital skills, then oral skills, followed by reading skills, mathematics and writing skills. Among these basic skills are, in prioritized order: "2. 2 Reading as a basic skill", which involves: "Reading means to create meaning from text in the widest sense. Reading gives insight into other people's experience, opinion and knowledge, independent of time and place. The reading of texts on screen and paper is a prerequisite for lifelong learning and for active participation in civic life" (Utdanningsdirektoratet 8). In addition, they should be able to use prior knowledge, question what they read, as well as be aware of reading strategies. Accordingly, students should be able to understand descriptions in both simple and advanced texts, and use sources critically. Several of these skills are in use when pupils read novels like *The Great Gatsby* in class and focus not merely on the text itself, but additionally on the context in which the novel is set.

The crucial skill above all the others, and listed on top, should have been the skill of being able to read, which is the most important one since reading is a natural stepping stone for the four others skills. The digital skills all require reading on screens, and oral skills are usually a result of reading to some extent, while within mathematics you never come far without reading letters too, and being able to write most certainly involves reading. The present draft of the new curricula due in 2020 lists the reading skills on top. The overall skill related to all learning and the key to its success lies within our students' ability to read. This is why we should focus, *to a greater extent*, on reading from the utmost beginning in primary schools.

Starting off with an iPad in first grade of elementary school involves the basic skill of reading too. According to Brevik and Gunnulfsen reading is part of all subjects within the Knowledge promotion and that is why they “talk about reading in general and not reading in Norwegian”. (17).

Within Social Studies English and English literature and culture, the students receive grades for their written as well as their oral skills, and “The pupils may be selected for a written and/or an oral exam” (Utdanningsdirektoratet 8). To prepare for this, students need practice both in delivering rehearsed presentations, and in their ability to use English spontaneously. Acquiring skills in a spontaneous command of a foreign language takes more toil and practice than students anticipate themselves. In advance, students should be familiar with a chart for evaluation of oral presentations exemplified in the Reference Section of last year’s textbook (Haugum and Kagge 340). Students often inquire about necessary skills related to an oral exam, and contrasted to the written skills; teachers tend to forget to present exact definitions about what an oral presentation involves. It is crucial that students are aware of certain standards, and are accustomed to practicing them. Rehearsals prior to oral exams should be mandatory, since the sooner we initiate them, the more prepared students will be and thus their results will improve. After the reading of *The Great Gatsby*, students are required to make two presentations in class related to the watching of film versions and their in-depth study respectively in order to rehearse their oral skills.

In a press release from the Norwegian Government on September 1, 2017, the Government presented a document known as *the new “constitution” of Norwegian schools*. This document replaces the overall aims for all curricula in Norwegian schools, and describes the future values incorporated in every subject taught in Norwegian classrooms from primary school through the 13th year. These values work interdisciplinarily, and include three main topics named: Public health and life preserving, democracy and citizenship, and sustainable development. In October, to follow up, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training invited teachers to contribute with what they regard to be the core elements within their subjects taught in school. To challenge teachers to define what we ourselves understand to be the core elements or central elements of our subjects’ marks a starting point of developing the new curricula into less but more central aims to accomplish for teachers and students. The hearing, accomplished in November 2018, will serve as a point of departure for working out the new curricula due in 2020.

At Aust-Lofoten Upper Secondary school, all teachers have participated in a program called “How to enhance learning”, developed by teachers at “Inland Norway University of Applied Science”. Their programme, based on the MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses), focuses on the fact that teachers’ feedback to students must enhance their learning. In their opinion, the core elements in English are to understand and to be understood. To enable students to interpret a classic novel from the American 1920s and understand its text and context, while relating knowledge obtained in their English courses to that of their history lessons, teachers have touched, additionally, on skills useful within the overall sense of learning too. I hope that the new curricula of 2020 in Norwegian schools will focus more on teaching in depth in order to enhance students learning.

2.6 The American literary canon

Fitzgerald holds an undisputed position in the American literary canon. He is “one of the most recognized figures in American literary and cultural history” (Prigozy 1), and she proceeds with “not only as one of the major writers of the twentieth century, but also as a man whose life story excites the fascination of a public that knows him primarily as the author of *The Great Gatsby*” (Prigozy 1). A fact that is confirmed by Sarah Churchwell in her introduction to *Flappers and Philosophers The Collected Short Stories* (2010) but adding Fitzgerald’s *Tender is the Night* that appeared nine years later in 1934 too. These facts prove that certainly there must be an aspect of timelessness in his novel *The Great Gatsby*, which is presently widely taught in American teaching institutions, and add up with the aforementioned reasons for appropriateness as a choice of novel. Fitzgerald even links his story up with the arrival of the first European explorers and their initiating acquaintance with “the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors’ eyes – a fresh, green breast of the new world” (Fitzgerald 115). Like Gatsby, they must have held their breath too. In Gatsby’s “capacity for wonder” (Fitzgerald 115) lies perhaps the foundation that triggered the whole American experience. To Europeans this seemed an untouched piece of land; a new world where the white man had not yet threaded his feet. What promises and possible prosperity might there be in a green landscape. Perhaps this really was God’s Promised Land on which shores The Pilgrim Fathers had dreamt of arriving on “The Mayflower” in 1622.

Even though Churchwell additionally claims in her introduction that “Fitzgerald’s critical reputation rests upon his novels”, “those novels were always interwoven with the sort stories he was writing simultaneously.”(Churchwell vii). When I introduce the authorship of F. Scott Fitzgerald, his life and his work, which is already familiar to some students through the film

The Great Gatsby, from 2013, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Carey Mulligan, the fact remains that most of them, however, were not aware of the author and his novel behind the film. Fitzgerald wrote numerous short stories throughout his career and several of them touch on the same themes as his novels. Some of them, such as “Winter Dreams” and “The Sensible Thing” from the collection *Flappers and Philosophers: The Collected Short Stories* (Fitzgerald 1986), are preliminary studies of the story about Daisy Fay and Jay Gatsby and their friends in the American 1920s, according to Churchwell’s introduction to the collection of short stories. She even claims that Fitzgerald, at one point, had in mind to include the short story “Absolution” (1924) concerning Gatsby’s childhood in the novel about him. In the short story, an 11-year-old boy confesses and asks forgiveness for the sin of from pride, having claimed, like Gatsby, that he was not his parents’ child (Fitzgerald 235).

Throughout Fitzgerald’s authorship, there are numerous portrayals of young, attractive women and Rena Sanderson states “Though it is an overstatement to say that Fitzgerald created the flapper, he did, with considerable assistance from his wife Zelda, offer the public an image of a modern young woman who was spoiled, sexually liberated, self-centered, fun-loving, and magnetic.” (143) We find her in several of Fitzgerald’s short stories, for example Judy Jones in “Winter Dreams” who secures Dexter Green’s youth dream to repeatedly be “Now that thing is gone, that thing is gone. I cannot cry. I cannot care. That thing will come back no more.” (Fitzgerald 231), and in his novels. The flapper’s predecessor “the Gibson girl” appears in “The Lees of Happiness” from “Tales of the Jazz Age” (1920) and its prototype comprises approximately half of the participants at Gatsby’s grand house parties.

The flappers were not necessarily part of the movement fighting for women’s suffrage. Parallel to this, young women in the 1920s experienced a need to live out their new won freedom too, since they obviously had managed life at home when their men were fighting the war abroad. After the war, modern women challenged the old generation and lived out their youth as flappers. I find this aspect of Fitzgerald’s authorship central to attracting today’s young readers since there are still, obviously, battles to fight before we can talk about equality between the sexes.

In the *The Great Gatsby* the narrator Nick’s eyes reveal that Jordan Baker, for example, “was incurably dishonest” (Fitzgerald 38) and “had begun dealing in subterfuges when she was very young in order to keep that cool, insolent smile turned to the world and yet satisfy the demands of her hard, jaunty body.” (Fitzgerald 38) From a more practical reason than Bernice

had, in Fitzgerald's short story *Bernice Bobs Her Hair*, the golf-champion Jordan Baker, though not always from fair play, most likely wore the 1920s flapper haircut and attracted men with a magnetic smile. At first Nick is attracted to her, drops her in the end, but not without remorse. Jordan is irretrievably lost to the high society of the East that Nick cannot identify with.

Two young attractive women opens the often-highlighted scene in film versions of *The Great Gatsby*, which gives the impression that Nick's glance first falls on Daisy when he enters her residence for the first time. While in the novel, he casts his eyes on Jordan, the younger of the two and a stranger to him, and it startles him almost "into murmuring an apology of having disturbed her by coming in" (Fitzgerald (8)). His cousin is familiar to him, and Nick reveals this in his comment about how irrelevantly she refers to her tiny child. In one respect, though, Daisy is the champion over Jordan when employing her familiar voice that draws Nick to her. Sanderson proclaims two of the three female characters in this novel to be diametrically different when he sees "Daisy as Fitzgerald's golden girl and Myrtle Wilson as the lower-class sexualized woman" (155).

Myrtle Wilson does not receive a high score from Nick on *her* voice when she "spoke to her husband in a soft, coarse voice: "Get some chairs, why don't you, so somebody can sit down" (Fitzgerald 18), and especially since he suspects her underlying intentions right there and then. Nick presents himself an expert on women, revealing his first appearance of her on the stairs: "She was in the middle thirties, faintly stout, but she carries her flesh sensuously, as some women can." (Fitzgerald 17) Nick keeps a distance to Jordan, Daisy and Myrtle as the impersonal observer who is afraid of getting in too deep. He is the outsider, a reporter who in some ways washes his hands of the whole business and trails back to his mid-Western atmosphere with his tail between his legs having learnt a lesson about the East that only confirms his prejudices. All the three, main female members of Gatsby's world, pretend to be someone else or hide behind a false façade; thus, according to Nick they are "impostors" (Sanderson 155).

Rena Sanderson points to the fact that all Fitzgerald's feminine "fixations" were "Especially memorable for Fitzgerald, and the model for many popular daughters in his fiction, was the beautiful, wealthy and popular Ginevra King, whom he courted during his college days in 1915-16" (147). Additionally, his longing for "the golden girl" echoes a parallel and frequent theme in Fitzgerald's contemporary short stories. In "The Last of the Belles", the author

touches on the same romantic dream of past wonders, according to the introduction by Sarah Churchwell to the collection of Fitzgerald's short stories *Flappers and Philosophers* from 2010. In the end, Fitzgerald won his princess, Zelda, "the barbaric princess of the south" (Churchwell ix), but not the half of the kingdom like the Ash Lad in Norwegian folk tales. Deprived of money, Fitzgerald struggled throughout the rest of his life to be able to support their extravagant way of living. Some critics would argue that it finally killed him in the end, but I claim that unlike Gatsby, he at least had the chance to try his luck for better or for worse.

Fitzgerald's novel is today regarded *the* quintessential tale of a unique period in the US between two World Wars. A young generation had survived a world war, but lost the key to a meaningful life in its aftermath. The American author Gertrude Stein opened her Paris home to her "lost generation," where she both inspired and challenged them to trace a meaningful life out of this chaos. The after war generation that people Gatsby's world in search of a light in the tunnel. Whether they find this in their new won freedom for women, who had finally gained the right to vote in 1920, though women were still members of a world of men of the alluring American Dream, which was mainly attainable for men through success on the stock market or bootlegging. They lost the past but were determined to win the modern future. *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) by Ernest Hemingway presents a seemingly different but ultimately similar image of the first generation of the Jazz Age. According to Jingnan Shen *The Great Gatsby* and *The Sun Also Rises* represent two different stories but "both illustrate the decadence of the 1920's and reflect the same problems: disillusion, corruption and failure." (1728-1732) "Fitzgerald's 1925 novel has moved to the centre of literary history, to the extent that to many readers this is *the* modern American novel". (Reynolds v) This is why teachers in the US together with other countries find it suitable for students in upper secondary school. "It is a world of broken relationships and false relationships, a world of money and success rather than of social responsibility: a world in which individuals are all too free to determine their moral destinies" (Berman 83).

The Great Gatsby enables an accomplishment of several curricular aims within the Norwegian national curriculum, such as the reading of a novel, watching of a film and studying of a historical period in depth. According to Sarah Churchwell's introduction to *Flappers and Philosophers* Ernest Hemingway described Fitzgerald's talent "as natural as the dust on a butterfly's wings" (vii). An author's talent that has triggered readers for shortly one hundred years into asking: "Who is this Gatsby anyhow?" demanded Tom suddenly. "Some big bootlegger?" (Fitzgerald 69) In my thesis, I intend to ask my students the same questions

repeatedly. I will challenge them to think deeply about it as philosophers. To introduce this mysterious Gatsby to students, and to lure them into a setting of post war traumas, modern inventions, new-won freedom and love, accompanied by alluring rhythms from jazz music in unimaginable parties comprise the backdrop of Fitzgerald's fiction as it appears within the American literary canon.

3 Pedagogic strategies

To introduce a novel study in class requires that students possess a necessary set of tools in order to approach an extensive reading of a novel.

3.1 A general overview

According to my overall experience, there are few students even in the 13th grade of general studies who welcome reading novels, a fact that both inspires and puzzles teachers who know that for those with ambitions of university study there are few shortcuts. One sign of warning here is that a film adaption seldom is a blueprint of the original story. Introducing novels and short stories, even, that are adapted onto the screen seems to students easier than having to read the original text. Prior to the reading of a short story and subsequently the reading of a novel, there is often a certain reluctance against reading in itself. This is why I open the discussion by asking if students do know of any reading strategies. Actually, some of them do, they even recall the key word: BISON (Brevik and Gunnulfsen 93) from earlier English lessons in secondary school. Letters that remind the students of useful information to gain from the text *before* they start the actual reading. With a first glance at the text including illustrations, introduction, final paragraph, headline and key words, they possess an overall impression of the text. Thus, the reader already holds a notion of what to expect.

This strategy, anterior to the actual reading, provides a quick overview to bear in mind during the reading process. Some textbooks in upper secondary schools in Norway refer to this strategy, and experience reveals that students find it useful. In a group of 12 students, not everyone, but perhaps half of them apply this technique and some even disclose that they utilize it when reading the newspaper at home. When challenged to explain the method, it stirs interest within the rest of the group too. Other useful techniques are skimming, which is related to the BISON-technique, and scanning a text, where the former implies reading for overview while the latter implies reading for detail. An important development within pedagogy has taken place within the last decades. For former generations, the process of reading was mostly regarded as an individual skill taught in elementary school and subsequently students were left to their own devices. Personally, I recall one single teacher in my final year at school who instructed us in the importance of underlining key words in a text. In my opinion, this should have come earlier and been initiated by all teachers.

Many students are in need of some strategies prior to studying a novel. Perhaps first, they need to overcome the hindrance of believing that reading in itself is dull, and especially the idea that reading on paper seldom triggers enthusiasm. Lisbeth M. Brevik and Ann Elisabeth Gunnulfsen's *Les mindre – forstå mer Strategier for lesing av fagtekster 8.-13.trinn* (2012) deals with reading strategies that may increase students' reading skills. They have collected certain "tricks of the trade" applicable to reading in general when referring to reading strategies in the second chapter. The authors have collected a "tapas-table" for teachers to choose between within a number of reading strategies in order to enhance students' reading skills. On this table, Brevik and Gunnulfsen offer strategies of using a storyboard, using a word-bank, noting key words and using summaries. The two of them also suggest that to organize graphic overviews of shared information that both overlap but also differ provides an important tool for students when sorting out the essence of a text. Here they provide an excellent overview to select from in order to meet your own and your students' needs. To compel students to draw the line between the reading skills they learn in the first grade of elementary school and what this eventually develops into when we study. I need to apply two different terms to draw a necessary line between related but separate terms when in use. When *studying*, they perform a task other than *reading*. The former involves a different and some would say more complicated task than decoding letters into words and phrases that carry a meaning. Others would argue that this is part of the same skill. Obviously, you have to learn how to read before you can study in the academic definition of the word. There are some who can take the challenge, and who have individually picked up some personal learning strategies during their time at school. Teachers often believe that skills or knowledge taught in secondary school remain with young students and can easily be recalled when they are confronted with parallel challenges. Experience tells us the opposite (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2018).

If students at a further stage receive instructions to compare knowledge from different courses, they enhance their outcome of studying. Gerald Graff relates an example of this from the late 1960s in *How Periods Erase History*. In a class where he was teaching George Eliot's novel *Adam Bede* (1859) at a university, he challenged his students by asking them to try to spot a parallel to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). They failed to follow him from one novel to another written sometime earlier and read during another course because they had not been taught to do so. In other words, they were not able to identify any conflicting interests between interpretations of novels. Students in Norwegian upper secondary schools

are seldom instructed to apply the learning from one class and to parallel it or contrast it with the knowledge gained from another. Graff explains his students' reactions, or rather lack of them, as resulting from the fact that they are not taught to compare different historical periods, because teachers insist upon their individual freedom. Graff claims, "It is generally assumed that in order to have a coherent curriculum we would have to give up our freedom to teach in our different ways" (Graff 182). When we isolate our courses from one another, we steal the students' possibility of detecting a connection and variation between literary courses themselves, which is in itself crucial to any learning. Graff here draws our attention to the fact that we too often teach individually and within a vacuum, but the outcome of our teaching would reach a sounder level if we were able to draw parallels between our own teaching and that of our colleagues.

As a pedagogical strategy, some students are able to recall their own discovery of plausible connections between various subjects in school, and from that very moment on, their own attitude towards learning per se, and subsequently their personal approaches to knowledge, changed radically. What teachers talked about in their religion, Norwegian, English and history lessons had not just an isolated value of information in itself, but in addition, students understood the possibility of pairing it with pieces of knowledge teachers presented in other classes. This is exactly what Graff is trying to do when teaching Eliot's novel, by simultaneously trying to make his students reflect upon another novel by Austen taught in an earlier course. Graff tries to make his students reveal a possible "conflict" between the thinking behind the novels of Eliot contrasted with that of Austen. What had happened to the setting of the novels between the time when Austen wrote her novels and the time Eliot created hers?

In upper secondary school, several subjects have much in common, and this provides teachers with an opportunity to group knowledge on different hooks. Drawing on Graff's experience in two separate English courses, teachers too often regard the different lessons as separate and individual fields of knowledge. When students learned that, to their utter amazement, one could connect this knowledge in some way or other, learning suddenly became more engaging, and in addition adapting the information became less troublesome and more attractive. The vacuum within which the individual teachers had taught their separate subjects suddenly started to take in air. A text, a poem or a novel was read, understood and explained per se, but what about the context of this text, and what extra-textual influences had this text been subject to?

The Great Gatsby provides a good example for an illustration: In students' history lesson, the teacher focused on World War I and the fact that the world from 1914 and onwards never remained the same, and that it is forever named "The Great War", despite the fact that the world has witnessed several great conflicts afterwards. The everlasting evidences of the war live on in literature and art produced in its aftermath, an insight their English teacher parallels by broadening the picture of a war no one even thought possible before it was an inevitable fact. To grasp what Europe experienced throughout four years with its young generation wasting their lives in the muddy trenches, the young generation of today should encounter Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier", but this would merely provide a glamorous starting point at which the young British soldiers marched off in August 1914. It would be disrespectful towards the many victims to fail to present them with the *complete* picture. To tell the whole truth students should also be familiar with Siegfried Sassoon's "Does It Matter?" (1916), and not to forget Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est", published in 1920, to understand the implications of a world disaster that forever in world history is referred to as "The Great War". Amongst the numerous early victims was the young French author Alain-Fournier, whose only novel *Le Grand Meaulnes*, published in 1913, depicts the romantic ideal in the search for the unobtainable. Several references are applicable here to great or grand. In one sense to *The Great Gatsby*, which is diametrically opposed to "The Great War". To relate *Grand* or *Great* to persons and to a war, is a fact that implies a conflict in itself, or does it merely mirror "the inexhaustible variety of life" (Fitzgerald 24). The novel and its backdrop provide numerous "conflicts" that, when addressed in the classroom, produce adequate inspiration. Conflicts that are illustrated in literature through poems and novels that provide students with a nuanced picture of the historical period before, during and after World War I and that cover other curricular aims covering "a representative selection of texts from literary-historical periods in English literature" (Utdanningsdirektoratet).

Returning, once again, to the national curricula, by linking the choice of novel to an international conflict in the English-speaking world, teachers might seek to parallel it to students' lessons in modern history in the 13th grade. Young students might of course prefer literature closer to their own current time. They would also enjoy reading Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) and Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip* (2006) in 12th grade, and Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2001) in the 13th grade. These novels likewise address conflicts of war that students could parallel with their history lessons too, and thus gain an extra insight into the

context of these novels. Later on, the novels might also function as a catalyst when opening up for a more profound understanding of their historical context too.

In 2018, all students in the 12th and 13th years within International Studies and Social Studies of English obtained open access to the internet, for the first time, during their written exams. An inevitable consequence is that students are required to benefit from an open internet, and that they are familiar with the use and listing of sources. To face an open internet during your written exam is a great challenge to both candidates and sensors. It seems, however that the draft of the 2020 curricula suggests a written exam in two parts: one totally without any extra resources and the other with all resources available including an open internet. The internet is like an immense ocean of information, where the risk of making a false step is severe. This is an argument that supports the necessity of carrying out an in-depth study, according to the national curriculum, in order to accustom students to work with an abundance of available information to investigate and to use with care. To guide them into additional means to carry out an in-depth study, however, students should activate prior knowledge from what they remember of the time in between the two World Wars, and fit this information onto the aforementioned timeline, in order to visualize the time span. The wallpaper stretches from The Renaissance and William Shakespeare until the present. Our textbooks, both from Cappelen Damm, are *Access to English: Literature* (2015) and *Access to English: Social Studies* (2014). The former covers English literature from the Renaissance and Shakespeare and ends with contemporary literature, while the latter provides the reader with an overview of the historical and political UK/US in texts and timelines that offer an overview of the historical period from 6000 BC until the present day.

3.2 Reading strategies – “Can we ever have enough?”

Too often, teachers take it for granted that their students have been taught reading strategies in abundance when they reach upper secondary school. Experience proves that this is seldom the case, however. Teachers tend to regard reading strategies as diffuse tools that belong neither here nor there within the school system, and rarely do teachers feel that they depend on their didactic devices to implement them. Perhaps teachers even feel awkward when commencing a lesson introducing how to read. This might be the reason reading strategies, to some extent, are neglected within upper secondary schools.

In her 2015 dissertation entitled “How teachers teach and readers read”, L.M. Brevik takes her starting point in students’ first language, or their mother tongue Norwegian, L1, where

they learn how to read. When they decode letters into words, phrases and paragraphs, students' focus stays on the details, in order to reach the essential meaning expressed in the text. For teachers who focus on reading strategies in the 13th grade in English, the students' L2, teachers find it unnecessary to repeat this, according to Brevik. When I question my students whether they recall any reading strategies, their responses divide into two parts, and only half answer that teachers covered the use of reading strategies in 11th grade English lessons. Fortunately, English is a compulsory subject for all students in the first year of upper secondary school, but in my opinion, it should have stayed obligatory, at least for general studies, throughout. The general studies in Norwegian upper secondary schools, named ST, or "studieforberedende" in Norwegian, "prepares" students for further academic studies, where a proficient command of the English language is necessary within any field of study. English teachers within the Union of Norwegian Upper Secondary teachers share the same challenge in their report on the core elements of the future core elements in the English curricula.

When the majority of students in 13th grade answer in the positive when interrogated about an active use of reading strategies mentioned above, they recall the abbreviation "BISON", which is made up of the words in Norwegian for "Bilde – Innledning – Siste avsnitt – Overskrift - Nøkkelord". Translated into English this means "Picture – Introduction – Last paragraph – Headline – Keywords", a formula which correlates with a starting point for how to approach a text for the first time. The formula intends to make the readers aware of how much information to gain from a text, *prior* to the actual reading of the entire text. My classroom experience tells that the larger part of them remember the significance of the words, and some of them even recalled using this strategy when reading the short story "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" by Fitzgerald. Others even felt they used these strategies without thinking about the key words and what they signified, but claimed that they used the strategy to some extent. Quite a number of them revealed that they have found reading strategies useful tools when reading longer texts. Students even recall the first block of English lessons last year in the 12th grade, when they started out with essay writing (the 5-paragraph essay), responding to a task about learning strategies in International English called "what learning strategies should be used in school to achieve more effective English lessons" (Haugum and Kagge 58).

Learning strategies are more general activities related to any form of learning, and signify factors that might influence the results of apprehending something new, while reading strategies are applicable to subjects taught in schools, related specifically to the skill of

learning how to obtain ultimate results from the reading itself. Chapter 2 of Brevik's "Les mindre – forstå mer!" ("Read less – understand more!") covers a range of strategies for reading one paragraph, and deals with the difference between learning strategies and reading strategies. She refers to W. Grabe's *Reading in a Second Language: Moving from Theory to Practice* (2009), where he employs the term "strategies," and to describe it he adds, "Strategies are cognitive processes that are open to conscious reflection, but that may be on their way to becoming skills"(qtd. in Brevik and Gunnulfsen 54). Brevik develops this further, when explaining that students must use strategies consciously, and determine when and where to use them, in order to enhance their learning. She concludes by differentiating between learning strategies as an overall term, and reading strategies as particular type of learning strategies. Nevertheless, in my opinion, students are not concerned as much regarding *how* we label these strategies; the focal point must be whether students find them beneficial to the process of reading.

3.3 Note taking

The "BISON" – term that most students are familiar with is useful when preparing students for further extensive reading. L. M. Brevik, in her article called "Strategies and shoes: Can we ever have enough?" refers to the "Vygotskian thinking on the importance of tools and social interaction in learning" (Brevik 77) that are of great importance in enhancing comprehension. She stresses the importance of implementing reading strategies in the teaching process, through modelling a practical use of them, where students experience their benefits. It is not enough to introduce them to students; they need practice too in order to enhance their self-confidence. In her dissertation, Brevik reports, "reading was not a prioritised activity in the English L2 classrooms" (Brevik 20). Students who face long texts are asked to note down key words as they read, in order to check in the next lesson if they really are able to locate them. Students struggle, even in the 13th grade, to locate appropriate words that carry the central meaning in a text. Some students write down single words, while others copy complete sentences. The latter argue that it feel easier to include a whole sentence. Teachers should warn students against copying phrases. Instead, teachers must urge them to sum up a text in their own words after having read a paragraph, to make sure students understand it. Others, on the other hand, are familiar with notetaking, and practice it in class and on their own.

To discuss key words, compare lists and write them on the white board, seem worthwhile. Some students reach a higher level of self-confidence when teachers assure them that notes usually are individual, and that they might differ from one student to the other. The

significance of keywords is that students reflect on the importance of the word when they recall it later on. Since human beings differ according to background and life experiences, even within a group of the same age, their selections of keywords will seldom end up being identical. The only requirement is that they are adequate according to the contents of the text. This is why it seldom is successful to copy others' notes from a lecture students have not attended themselves. If it is necessary to miss a lecture, it will be best to ask the lecturer himself or herself for notes, instead of copying the listeners' notes or keywords.

Such exercises are useful when preparing for extensive reading, because students need to have confidence in themselves, and practise reading from their personal point of departure. For these reasons, students may profit from a form to fill in notes on *The Great Gatsby* as they read. This form is available on paper or on our learning platform, it's learning, if they prefer to take notes on their computers. The top of this paper lists some general facts about the novel: title, author, publishing year, and then the rest of the paper is available for students' individual notes chapter-wise (Appendix 2). A collection of keywords that spring from students' individual reading of a novel is of great value later on, when they are fulfilling the task of summing up the story. According to Brevik, teachers must supervise the students in their employment of reading strategies during the initial phase, but she claims it is also important to enhance their personal confidence, by urging them to work independently later on in the process. Another point stressed in her thesis, is that a "Vygotskian learner" is an active and not only a passive receiver, while the "Vygotskian teacher" "has to become the director of the social environment, which, moreover, is the only educational factor" (Brevik 24).

3.4 Extensive reading

According to I.S.P. Nation, "Extensive reading fits into the meaning-focused input and fluency development strands of a course, depending on the level of the books that the learners read."(49). Next, he proceeds with affirming that reading in general is a source of learning and enjoyment. Perhaps the latter would suit some students best and if by enjoying themselves they could learn something simultaneously, in addition, the challenge of teaching literature would be easy to overcome. "To lose yourself" in a story in English provides a time-out and activates your language learning at all levels within English as a second/foreign language. To read extensively takes you on a journey where your imagination is the only limit and provides an insight into foreign peoples and cultures. Nation concludes that "As a goal in

its own right, reading can be a source of enjoyment and a way of gaining knowledge of the world.” (49)

Recent researchers within literature, education and pedagogy have been questioning what digitalization do with our reading methods and “How does reading change when we go from screen to paper and what do we know about the differences between these two ways to read? (More about the academic background of the COST E-Read conference University of Stavanger) At the University of Stavanger, they have tried since 2014 to find the answer and a preliminary result is that “the current wholesale adoption of digital screens – in educational as well as leisure settings – is profoundly affecting our reading habits.” (University of Stavanger) Professor Maryanne Wolf refers to Patricia M. Greenfield who claims that “Every medium has its costs and weaknesses; every medium develops some cognitive skills at the expense of others... the Internet may develop impressive visual intelligence, the cost seems to be to deep processing: mindful knowledge acquisition, inductive analysis, critical thinking, imagination and reflection.” (University of Stavanger) She was the keynote speaker at a conference in Stavanger in October 2018, among those who provided more in-depth and concrete results on The COST E-Read closing conference. Wolf is concerned with the depth of reading in the future. In her lecture, she focused on the term “deep reading,” and her claim is that these processes that “require extra time and conceptual effort, may become threatened by a mode of reading that privileges fast processing of multiple forms of information with little time to allocate to slower and more demanding processes” (More about the academic background of the COST E-READ conference University of Stavanger). In an interview after the final conference broadcasted on the District Programme – Rogaland entitled “Lesing på papir og digitalt” Wolf answered the question “What processes are we gonna use for which reading?” with “Skim your emails; read your book!” (University of Stavanger)

The two editors of *Literature for the English Classroom*, Anna Birketveit and Gweno Williams, are experienced in studying literature at all levels. Chapter 3 in their book, entitled “Graded readers and the joys of extensive reading”, lists some principles regarding extensive reading. Two of them are that “Learners should read as much as possible,” and that “The teacher should value and encourage extensive reading.” In his chapter in the same volume, Tim Vicary is concerned with the fact that reading extensively “is not teaching something new; it is a time to practise what you already know” (79). According to him, it is simple: “You become a good runner by running a lot; you become a good swimmer by swimming a lot; you become a good reader by reading a lot” (Vicary 79). When teaching literature to my

students in their final grade I intend to make my students good readers by making them read a lot.

The 2017 results of The Norwegian National Tests in 8th year are now available. They reveal the fact that the students in the county of Nordland are the poorest readers in the country, and the only comforting fact is that they appear slightly more competent in reading English. To consider the results, together with keeping Vicary's slogan alive, the only conclusion from the results is that at least students in our secondary schools have not read sufficiently during their former years at school. Perhaps we have failed to follow the good advice from Vicary about the way to enhanced reading called "DEAR" – Drop Everything And Read or "DEAR Time – a time for reading that's really precious" (Vicary 79).

This is what Brevik parallels in her dissertation when she creates her theoretical contribution, entitled "Mode of reading continuum," which she also intends to "contribute to a nuanced view on the common tendency to separate reading skills and strategies" (Brevik 66). In Brevik's opinion, there is a danger if we regard strategies as ends in themselves, and forget that students must learn "to see strategies as powerful tools to enhance comprehension when needed" (Brevik 66). I find that her "Nike mode of reading" with the slogan "Just do it!" corresponds with Vicary's "DEAR": good advice, but at some point, young readers at the upper secondary level require supplements. In addition, Brevik's "Mode of reading continuum" consists of a surplus strategy named the "Sherlock Holmes mode of reading". This is a strategy that "has a broader vision of a deliberate puzzle resolution, reading like a detective by analysing the task, searching for clues not explicitly stated in the text, and monitoring comprehension before, during and after the reading" (Brevik 66).

Brevik's theory of a "Mode of Reading Continuum" implies that reading skills and strategies should work together in an everlasting process towards an enhanced reading comprehension. In order to reach the curricular aim of interpreting/analysing at least one/two major/lengthy works of fiction, students need practice and time. The Vygotskian student and the Vygotskian teacher need to meet in the classroom and test Vygotsky's theories on *The Great Gatsby*. The teacher, as the director of the social environment, challenges her students to sit and read for three ensuing hours in the classroom. Students are seldom anticipating reading activities, and they appear strongly sceptical, but afterwards some of them really read extensively, and one student claimed to have read altogether 50 pages, while another had read 30 pages from the novel during a reading session in class. Many students struggle to concentrate during long

reading sessions in class, because they are not used to it and perhaps this is reflected in the amount of pages read. A similar exercise in lower grades in primary schools is adequately popular among children, and in my opinion, it all starts with the introductory exercises related to extensive reading, and the hopefully positive memories from early childhood. Then, and perhaps only then, extensive reading might lead to a lifelong pleasure of reading.

3.5 Prior knowledge

Another reading comprehension strategy valuable to the outcome of extensive reading, according to Brevik, is to activate prior knowledge. During an initial discussion with students concerning what they knew already about the 1920s in the United States, a few pieces of knowledge came to their minds. When urged a little with some keywords, though, students seemed to possess quite a bit of knowledge already about this fatal period in between the two World Wars in American history, defined by “The Roaring Twenties” on one end and the Great Depression on the other.

To activate prior knowledge according to Brevik implies filling in some crucial events and years in a timeline, and by visualizing the period in question, the hope is that this will bring more knowledge amongst the students to the surface. Since some former exchange students have already been through *The Great Gatsby* during their year in an American school, this represents a fact that singles this novel out within American literature and culture, and adds value to its iconic position within the American school system. At first, these students seem uninterested in reading the same novel twice, but soon they perceive the value of keeping up with the others, and even reaching a deeper understanding of the text. Its historical, social and cultural setting is of great relevance to the novel. The author who wrote it, and his life, make up an equally important backdrop that the students ought to be aware of prior to the reading. Despite the fact that several of them have already watched the film from 2013 with Leonardo DiCaprio in the leading part, it seems that comparatively few have surplus references to the author and the historical period behind it.

Unfortunately, students have not yet reached World War I in their modern history lessons in 13th grade when we begin discussing the novel, but soon they will, and some of them do recall some information about it from former history lessons, and encourage the others in painting the picture of the 1920s in the USA. For English teachers in upper secondary school, it could be interesting to initiate an interdisciplinary project involving history and English literature in the 13th year. Tine Pedersen Lambela shares my point of view in her thesis “From Pemberley

Park to the VG3-classroom”, where she suggests the idea of “having a multidisciplinary project between English and history, using Austen’s works in either original or adapted form could be a great way to introduce the historical period of the early 19th century” (Lambela 45). As I see it, we very seldom teach subjects in combination, which is a fact that brings Gerald Graff’s experience back to mind. “What do you think Jane Austen would have said about Adam’s statement?” he asks his class, but their response is only “Silence!” (Graff 177). His students are unable to follow their teacher’s association of George Eliot’s *Adam Bede* with Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* because they have not been instructed to do so.

Within the Norwegian school system, there exists a parallel that T. P. Lambela offers a solution to in the above paragraph. Teachers do work out their subjects within a vacuum, to some extent, and if we do not combine e.g., history and English for our students, to prove that they intersect with each other, they will scarcely be able to draw useful parallels themselves. The criticism raised towards the present Norwegian curricula tends to underline the fact that the curricula comprise too much, the students are confronted with too many curricular aims that merely have a propensity to scratch the surface, and they end up with little to no in depth learning. At present, we do not know whether the newly modified curricula of 2018 will alter this fact, or if we will have to wait until 2020 for the completely revised ones. To possess knowledge on the surface, in several fields, seems outdated today. In the future, the increased demand for in depth knowledge will rise. Furthermore, the skill of recognizing and combining information received in their lessons about modern history with a novel read in their English lessons will most likely furnish our students with a skill applicable to other subjects too. Most importantly, it will prepare our students for the demands already present within most professional careers too, and most likely, the future demand for this ability to conceptualize knowledge and make connections between seemingly unrelated subjects will grow in the time to come.

I claim that learning strategies are required for studying in depth. To activate several tools to assist students in their examinations of unfamiliar ground, to explore it, question it and to extract the necessities needed for their study, will assist students beyond superficial learning. From a pedagogical point of view, it would be interesting to parallel the historical periods in English classes with those covered in their Norwegian classes. Teachers could simply group several of these external factors together in one major project that covers curricular aims in more than one subject taught in upper secondary schools. Especially when recalling the new curricula that are due in 2020, where according to the NOU 2014 : 7, chapter 3, emphasis in

future schools should be placed on learning certain items in depth rather than learning in abundance superficially. There are numerous strategies, although we will never have enough, and in my opinion, there might still be several out there not yet contrived.

4 A historical-biographical three-step process

“So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.” (Fitzgerald 115) serves as a metaphor for the teaching of nearly a century old novel to students in 2018.

4.1 A text within its context

Teachers’ mandate is to read a novel with students because our curricular aims require that all students within Social Studies English and English literature and culture in the 13th year interpret at least one major work of fiction. In addition to the study of a novel, the same curricula state that “The aims of the studies are to enable the pupil to analyse and assess a film”, likewise to enable them to “present a major in-depth project with a topic from Social Studies English and assess the process” or “with a topic from English literature and culture and assess the process” (Utdanningsdirektoratet 7). Regarded pedagogically, *The Great Gatsby* provides us with an opportunity to combine numerous curricular aims, which are to interpret a major work of fiction, analyse a film and present an in-depth study of its social, political and economic aspects. In the following, I seek to prove the practicality of choosing *one* novel that is applicable to meet not merely one singular curricular demand but several. Additionally, it allows students the benefits of working within one historical period over a certain time, in order to achieve a deeper understanding of how literature interacts with society’s political, historical, social and cultural aspects. To teach the internal elements of fiction in combination with the external factors, and stress the point that these components work closely together, will enhance the students’ appreciation of studying them unified within one discipline to improve their learning.

The history of reading, according to Anniken Telnes Iversen, starts from the utmost origins as she points out the transformation of listening as a social event, from sitting around the fire and entertaining each other with stories that come to mind, to the modern individualist private reading that appears in the 19th century, as a result of a Western lifestyle and that today comprises an important school activity. The personal outcome of reading is a chance to gain knowledge about other people, while the reading at institutions of higher learning usually implies analysing a book. When I introduce the reading of novels in class students sometimes claim they stop enjoying the activity the moment the verb “to analyse” is applied. If this is true, teachers should be careful with the analyses in the initiating phase of a reading project, and give students a chance to “enter” the novel before teachers start labelling the elements in the story. The didactic strategy of postponing clues and labels until students start making up

an image of the novel's fictitious world in their own minds protects the readers' individual imagination from professional hints, and thus augments the pleasure of reading. In short, teachers should leave the students with a chance to enjoy the wonders of a novel that commences to inhabit their minds and that provides them with an appetite and a curiosity for further perusing of pages. Teachers should beware of the danger of killing students' curiosity prior to the reading process.

Telnes Iversen proceeds to outline various pedagogical approaches to novels, and notes that the focus on external or internal factors has varied throughout history, but she claims that today an “*eclectic* approach is common” (Telnes Iversen 213). In her opinion, there is at present a tendency to vary methods instead of focusing on *one* theory or critical school. In my opinion, this seems the best path to success. Success within this field brings us back to the starting point of this thesis, and the very reason for choosing to approach the challenge of reading English literature in Norwegian upper secondary schools. The more concepts we introduce students to in the opening phases of entering a novel's fictitious world, the more they seem confused and search desperately for clues applicable to certain interpretations of it. Why not leave each student to enjoy their first rendezvous with a clean slate before teachers start introducing various theories, and let them experience this sacred moment when a young mind encounters a “-fresh, green breast of the new world” (Fitzgerald 115)? Some would perhaps argue that it seems rather farfetched to compare the Dutch sailors' discovery of a new and untouched continent with a young reader's first acquaintance with a book. In return, the opposite might be a young passionate reader left on his or her own and far away from the good intentions of benevolent guidance into a mysterious world. Experience sometimes proves that literary concepts are in themselves tools to build a wider comprehension of a novel, but the only peril is that teachers must take care not to suffocate young students on the threshold of gaining a glimpse into the world of fiction. In other words, we should take Goethe's warning seriously, when he reminds us “All beginnings are delightful; the threshold is the place to pause” (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*), and perhaps this is crucial as to what eager teachers should keep in mind when introducing novels to students. Teachers should, in other words, leave students with the delightful beginning of a book at least, and allow them to read the first chapter autonomously.

Prior to this, it is necessary to provide students with a tight reading schedule consisting of four weeks followed by a written test (Appendix 1). In between the reading, they receive the above related empty form to fill in with key words from each chapter, and subsequently,

based on those, to sum up the novel in three equal parts that they are to hand in successively (Appendix 2). Last year students worked on summing up texts, which is a useful skill when accomplished by students as a written or oral exercise. The skill to be able to present a short and concise summary is vital in drawing out the essence of a story or factual text. Their textbook in International English for 12th grade presents an excellent set of instructions on how to sum up the contents of a text in its Reference Section (Haugum and Kagge 307). Anyhow, students need practice, and above all to refrain from rephrasing the story. Somewhere into the novel teachers could sum up the first chapters with students in plenum, and help with central key words on the white board, stressing the fact that these words will help them when summing up the novel in the end. Gradually, some bewildered eyes appear among students and it is time to leave them to their own progression in the reading. At this stage, students read at different tempos, lessons consist mainly of reading individually in class, and teachers should be available for answering questions. It would be wrong to leave them completely on their own, however, because they still need some supervision despite the fact that they are in their final year of upper secondary education. Additionally, the exercises are supposed to urge students into keeping up the good work, and to allow them to know where they are in the process. This focuses on the internal elements of fiction (See Fig 1. A. Telnes Iversen 213) that are recognizable for the students from their Norwegian lessons too. Students are provided with the necessary instructions for the period of reading the novel, and are urged into notetaking throughout, while focusing on the challenges of writing summaries based on their notes. Their final focal point at this stage in the process is the compulsory written test when the reading is accomplished (Appendix 3) that covers most of the internal elements in Figure 1 (42).

4.2 Text - Internal elements (the elements of fiction)

To focus on the text without any other interfering tasks or challenges is crucial to the aim of entering the world of Fitzgerald's fiction. Some would claim that the students would benefit from a parallel class revolving around the social and historical development as they read along, but to go deeper at this stage would only confuse them. Fitzgerald's text is demanding in itself, even if it seems, at least at first glance, a short read. Several students have claimed that they had to reread passages once or even twice and concentrate in order to understand the plot. Additionally, students claim that they often come across unfamiliar vocabulary that interferes with the comprehension of what they are reading. These circumstances delay the reading progress, and some claim that they are not able to keep up with the schedule. Both

pedagogues and students might argue against a tight reading schedule, but on the other hand, there needs to be progress in the reading process too, otherwise readers would lose out on the plot. Finding the balance between the progression in reading altogether nine chapters, adding up to 115 pages in all, and gaining the necessary vocabulary to understand and follow the development in the narrative, usually arouses an endless argument and the process is seldom smooth sailing. At this point, it is crucial that students do not read for detail, but read for an overview to start with.

Furthermore, a reminder might be necessary about not having to understand *every* word on each page, as long as they are able to follow the dramatic development of the plot. Some words, though, central to the plot, need to be looked up and fully comprehended. These words are often new to most students in the group, and to reach a mutual understanding of them seems necessary as they read along. At this stage in the studying of the English language, students should be aware of the benefits of using dictionaries either online or in paperback, that will help them in finding synonyms and explanations in English, or that it will enhance their vocabulary in general. It should not be necessary to employ any Norwegian words, and, of course, teachers should refrain from using any Norwegian vocabulary themselves in the English classroom. The more students practice and deliberately focus on employing English in all circumstances, the better English speakers they become eventually.

At some stage in the reading process, students report a need to sort out the major and some of the minor characters too. Students agree upon the fact that there are three main characters: Nick Carraway, Daisy Fay Buchanan and Jay Gatsby, and four minor characters: Tom Buchanan, Jordan Baker and Myrtle and George Wilson. One student comments that she finds it bewildering when Nick says, “Daisy was my second cousin once removed” (Fitzgerald 6), especially given the fact that they were close in age and belonged to the same generation. Some of her fellow students offer realistic examples of how and why this sometimes occurs. Consequently, at this moment the appropriate instant emerges to introduce parts of an overview of the *fabula* of the three main characters offered by James Phelan in *Approaches to Teaching Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby* (101-2). When students are equipped with the chronology of the lives of Nick, Daisy and Jay, they try to provide a detailed description of them. Curiosity encourages them to write on the whiteboard for a mutual understanding of what personal impression they have so far of the main characters. How would the young generation of today characterize each of them?

Despite the fact that they feel it takes quite a bit of the novel before they actually “meet” Jay Gatsby, all of them find it easy to describe him. It is undeniable that he is in love with Daisy and often uses the expression “old sport”. As to the origins of his money, they find it hard to agree, and several consider him rather mysterious. Students contrast and compare him with Tom as far as personal characteristics are concerned. On at least one occasion, Tom employs the expression “old man”, similar to Gatsby’s “old sport”. He uses the expression when he enters George Wilson’s garage in the Valley of Ashes, as Tom strikes a friendly tone with “Hello, Wilson, old man,” “said Tom, slapping him jovially on the shoulder” (Fitzgerald 17). On visiting the husband of his mistress, Tom puts on a jovial attitude on purpose, but underneath, Tom is far from jovial.

Students remark that Daisy hides behind humour, and upon inquiry as to the meaning of Daisy’s being “a beautiful little fool” (Fitzgerald 13), which she says about her daughter, they unanimously deny it. Both sexes end up agreeing that in Daisy’s case, it would be wrong to judge the person according to her appearances. Especially, when talking about her, students feel that the reader do not really get to know her because she takes on a role expected of her from the environment. During Tom’s positive assessment of the book *The Rise of the Coloured Empires* by an author named Goddard, which contains a warning against the loss of white dominance, according to Tom who takes this seriously, Daisy mocks him with sarcasm. “We’ve got to beat them down”, whispered Daisy, winking ferociously towards the fervent sun” (Fitzgerald 11). Daisy is playing the “beautiful little fool” while hiding the fact that she does not agree with her husband. In this connection it is necessary to point to the fact that here Fitzgerald talks through Daisy in demonstrating contempt for a contemporary author named Lothrop Stoddard.

Well into the reading process and mutual reflections in class involving both the white board and a timetable around the novel’s historical period, it might be helpful to present an illustration on the white board, deliberately placing a copy of the novel itself within the white frame in the middle named “Text” (*Fig.1*). This figure represents a visualization intended to make students understand that no text or novel is created in a vacuum. To focus on merely the internal elements means omitting the fact that any text belongs within its period of history. By means of this figure including Fitzgerald’s novel in the middle, I make it possible for the students to identify the two separate courses of specializing in English studies 13th year too.

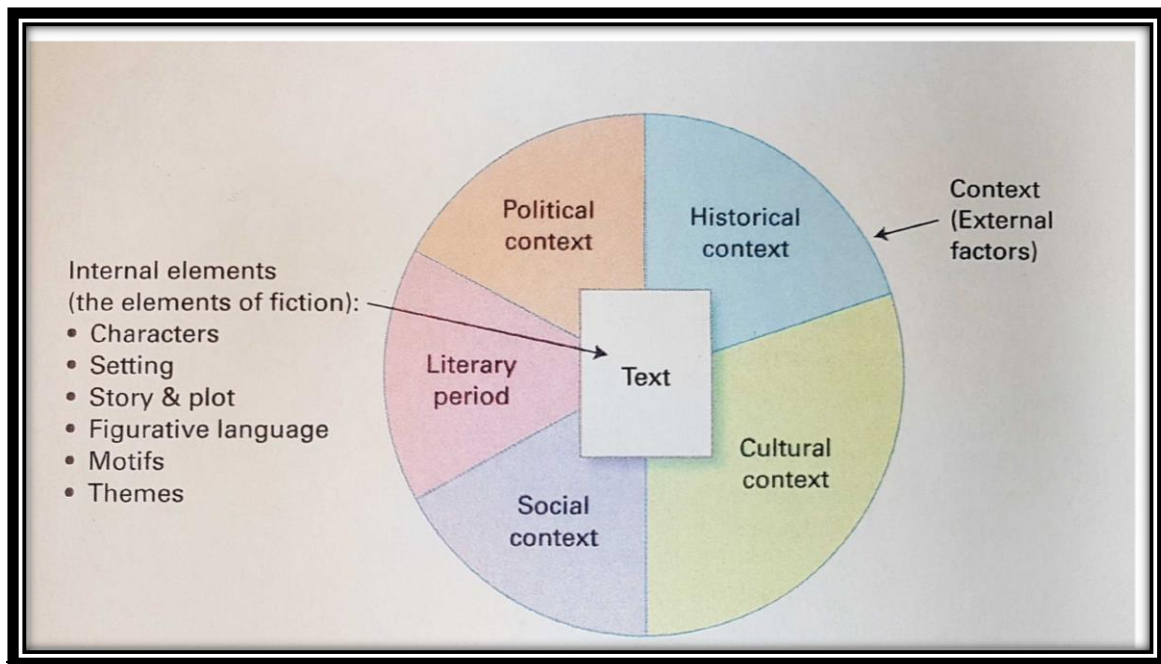


Figure 1 A. Telnes Iversen 2013 Text and context

The students that prefer Social Studies English point to the external factors of political, historical and social context as the most interesting, while students of English literature and culture select the external factors of cultural context and literary period as the ones that interest them the most. The illustration combines the overall factors that influence any literary text, and the diagram helps students discern that both studies of English have crucial elements in common. Regardless of what field students prefer within specialization of English, all elements here come into question. At a further stage in the reading of the novel in class, an introductory element containing an aspect of the 1920s in America that has a relevance to the text per se opens every session. The method here offers a parallel provision of illustrations with additional details belonging to the external factors of the context.

For instance, when students notice that Fitzgerald depicts how Tom Buchanan re-enters his home to fetch a bottle of whiskey wrapped up in a towel before they drive into New York and hire a suite at the Plaza hotel, they do not understand why this would be necessary at a hotel. Could they not simply order the drinks they desired in the bar? In their minds, Tom's wealth would presumably enable him to treat all his guests to several drinks in the bar. It requires some additional inquiries and responses before they understand the context: Prohibition – an expression that depicts not merely the ban on alcohol to be sold over the counter in the US, but also touches on one of several themes in the novel. The origin of Jay Gatsby's fortune is a

puzzle to his friends and readers too throughout the story. “But young men didn’t – at least in my provincial experience I believed they didn’t - drift coolly out of nowhere and buy a palace on Long Island sound” (Fitzgerald 32), the narrator observes. Likewise, according to Tom Buchanan, Jay Gatsby’s wealth is not “old money”. “Who is this Gatsby anyhow?” demanded Tom suddenly. “Some big bootlegger?” (Fitzgerald 69). Even when Nick contradicts this, Tom persists with his newly found wisdom that “A lot of these newly rich people are just big bootleggers, you know” (Fitzgerald 69). Tom, who represents old, wealthy families, exhibits nothing but scorn towards people who did not inherit their money, which is to say “old money”, but who have worked themselves up from “rags to riches” and acquired “new money”. Filling in the historical context, together with both the political and social aspects of the novel, adds relevance to the reading of it. When I remind students that in Norway there was a ban on alcohol too (1916-27), and that the Norwegian society in the 1920s equally suffered severely under the illegal buying and selling of it, there is a parallel here between the two countries. This, again, leads students to question why, strangely enough, or rather paradoxically, when something is illegal, it seems to float around in abundance, as if it was legal, increasing consumption, and in its wake causing dramatic negative economic and social consequences.

As mentioned above, the initiating hindrance to overcome among students appears when they struggle with the reading of the novel itself. Some students claim, still far into the novel, that the text appears very dense, that each paragraph or even phrase contains heaps of information, and that the language is demanding and time consuming, because they often have to look up unfamiliar words in order to discern simply what they are reading. Others occasionally claim they even feel the need to reread the novel, before they reach an understanding of it.

Approximately halfway through the story students yearn for an overview of the narrative at this stage in the reading process. Nick Carraway, Daisy Buchanan and Jay Gatsby are previously identified as the main characters. To decide on the protagonist among the three causes some dissidence within the group, when some insist that Jay Gatsby is the main character. Students claim that everything in the novel evolves around him, his past, his hope and dream in a story that even carries his name. The narrator, though, they unanimously settle upon as Nick. James Phelan offers a narrative chronology on each of the main characters in his chapter in *Approaches to Teaching Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby* (2009) entitled “Narrative Structure and Style” (101) that functions as a starting point. Phelan is concerned with the importance of the narrative perspective in the novel and points out that Nick has a

double function “the way Nick functions as character and as narrator” (Phelan 100). The fact that he steps in and out of the story confuses the reader and makes it difficult to understand the narrative layers of the novel. Nick is within the story as perhaps the most central to the plot of the main characters. On the other hand, he is without question an outsider on several occasions that are awkward and embarrassing to him. In chapter two, Nick accompanies Tom to a flat in New York Tom has purchased for his mistress Myrtle. Nick feels himself an observer or a “fly on the wall,” staying behind reluctantly when he had wanted to leave.

Yet high over the city our line of yellow windows must have contributed their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets, and I saw him too, looking up and wondering. I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life. (Fitzgerald 24)

As they read, the diverse narrative layers in the novel confuse students. To them, it is hard to understand Nick’s part when later on he has the same notion of being within and without, when to some extent washing his hands of what he himself has agreed to stage in favour of and for his friend. Through Jordan as a go-between, he opens his humble cottage to host a secret meeting between two former sweethearts that the war and social conventions had split. One of them is Nick’s cousin Daisy, and Nick, on his part, hesitates when inquiring, “Does she want to see Gatsby?” (Fitzgerald 51). This was perhaps an appropriate question in the 1920s, but in the 21st century, young people do not understand Nick’s moral reluctance. He does not really want to meet Tom’s mistress either, and feels that since Gatsby after all is a stranger, he does not want to be involved in anything unlawful. When Nick’s part in the plot is settled, students find it easier to sort out Daisy’s and Gatsby’s too. Parallel to the three there are three minor characters if they incorporate Mr. and Mrs. Wilson. By turning the Wilsons into one character, it helps the readers to simplify the plot and stress the fact that both have a mutual interest in trying to escape their natural habitat according to the thinking of 1920s society. Listing the events related to the major characters in chronological order helps relieve students’ confusion related to the time sequence in the plot. Many of them struggle with the time perspective, and it helps to present them with an overview of what happens and when, related to Nick, Daisy and Jay.

Despite the fact that the person giving his name to the novel appears rather late on the scene himself, he turns out to be *the* character most thoroughly described. Before the reader encounters Jay Gatsby in person, students claim to have a strong feeling of already being

acquainted with him. He is introduced in the initiating page of his story, later explained and excused as the novel proceeds, and it finally ends with the end of Gatsby's life too, including his experience in life as a prototype of the American 1920s. Even though Gatsby singles himself out and was singled out amongst fellow human beings, there exist aspects of all humankind within his story. When reading about his life together with teenagers of the 21st century, it is crucial that this man becomes a human being in their eyes, and that they believe in him and are able to identify with him. Students do not find it difficult to picture a different outcome of this American tragedy today. According to them, Daisy would have had various other options than to stay by her man, and there would have been another outcome for her after the accident. Some even suggest she might not have stayed with him at all after his many escapades but would rather be living as a single mother with Daisy and Tom's daughter, Pammy.

There is no denying the fact that Gatsby belongs to the American Dream of the 1920s. On the other hand, Fitzgerald has furnished him with heaps of human features, which are parts of all human beings, and the more readers admit that he is one of humankind, the more they understand of his behaviour. In order to draw on Norwegian literature, I know that students are familiar with the Norwegian author Sigrid Undset, one out of altogether three Norwegian Nobel laureates in literature in 1928. She is the only woman among them, who acknowledged the fact that numerous human conditions had changed throughout history and would inevitably continue to do so, but that human hearts would forever stay the same into eternity.

One crucial feature related to Daisy that appears to escape the eyes of students, though, seems to be Fitzgerald's continuous hints regarding her voice throughout the novel. A fact, which singles Daisy out from the beginning and that later film directors have interpreted differently. From the opening of the book, the author draws the readers to her with "there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget; a singing compulsion, a whispered 'Listen', a promise that she had done gay exciting things just a while ago since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour" (Fitzgerald 8). In chapter 7, the author explains what implications her voice might hide of excitement and fun. Previously, in chapter 6, too, the author highlights Daisy's tricky voice, when he lets her show off her talent at Gatsby's party. Here they both attend because Tom appears struck by jealousy.

Daisy began to sing with the music in a husky, rhythmic whisper, bringing out a meaning in each word that it had never had before and that it would never have again. When the melody rose, her voice broke up sweetly, following it, in a way contralto voices have, and each change tipped out a little of her warm human magic upon the air. (Fitzgerald 69)

It seems, however, that Fitzgerald struggled to find the right description of Daisy's voice when stressing it as one of her crucial features. He selected his words cautiously when relating what exactly her voice really "was full of" (Fitzgerald 76). Since we are talking here about one of the main characters' central features, it is required to demonstrate to students how many times Fitzgerald revised his works, and thus prepared for the later comparison of two diametrically different film adaptations of the novel. By drawing on James L. W. West III's essay "The Composition and Publication of *The Great Gatsby*", where he relates the three attempts the author made on *one* dialog in the novel, intentionally hoping to prove to students, with an idea of the toil behind an author's work, and "how sensitive his ear was for dialogue" (23). Finally, in the third version, Fitzgerald succeeds, and the perfect result reads:

"Shall we take anything to drink?" called Daisy from an upper window.

"I'll get some whiskey," answered Tom. He went inside.

Gatsby turned to me rigidly:

"I can't say anything in his house, old sport."

"She's got an indiscreet voice," I remarked. "It's full of -" "I hesitated.

"Her voice is full of money," he said suddenly. (West 24)

According to West, "All is changed by the revision" (24). The fact is that Fitzgerald's revision concerned only the second half of the quote, and as far as "He went inside" all three versions are equal. Gatsby's emotions account for the rest of the dialog from "Gatsby turned to me" onwards, which needed revision twice to make coherence between his sentiments and what he ultimately utters. To reveal to the reader, gradually, the mystery in Daisy's voice, the author uses three attempts before he finds the exact choice of words. In several ways, Fitzgerald, in Gatsby's final word "money", stresses the ultimate theme of the novel according to many students. It falls on Daisy to carry the grotesque motive for why Gatsby acts as he does. He needs money to win this woman, which corresponds precisely to what the author himself experienced. It is utterly important to stress this point in class, because it is central to why Daisy appears attractive to men. Furthermore, students should keep this in

mind for the later comparison of two film versions of the novel, where to a certain extent, the latest of them has ignored one of Daisy's major personal features, which is her voice.

When preparing students for a written test (Appendix 3) I find it useful to focus on the details in James L. W. West's point here in "The Composition and Publication of *The Great Gatsby*". The test takes place immediately after the completion of the reading. Students often seem, at least at this stage, preoccupied with the basic internal aspects of the plot: the where, what, when and why are challenges enough to overcome in the reading phase. Students easily name the historical period but fail to explain why this background in particular is crucial to the plot. An aspect adding up to an inevitable consequence of a deeper focus on the historical backdrop of this novel. Students usually succeed in identifying the main characters and the minor ones too, but deciding upon whether any of them changed or developed during the story appears a greater challenge to the majority of students. In this case, it is easy to spot a division between the more experienced readers and those less experienced. Some students may have already been through the novel during an exchange year in the US, and thus seem more independent and less insecure in both their reading and interpretation of the novel. These students are familiar with the story already, they feel they are in a well-known setting too, since they have experienced this culture from within, and are in possession of the vital background information on which to base their understanding.

Usually the majority of students list the possible themes in the story without much difficulty, but some struggle with the message, and yet some may be without an answer to *why* the author wrote the story. The final question asks them to present their personal assessment and to tell whether reading this novel adds to their appreciation of reading novels in particular by this author, or in general. Few, if any, will seek out another novel by Fitzgerald, while some feel an extra boost in their interest in reading novels in general, and yet a few claim that reading novels is usually not one of their favourite spare time activities. A temporary conclusion to the reading of the novel, based on the results of the written test, will be that students grasp the internal elements to a rather superficial degree, and perhaps they had not actually read the book entirely, or they do not find this story about a self-made man during the American 1920s sufficiently interesting. One factor, though, too obvious to be circumnavigated, might be to consider how both the plot and the language in which it is related appear distant from 18-year-olds. Alternatively, perhaps my didactic reflections should warn against proceeding with reading the novel first, and only afterwards constructing an interpretation of it, following the advice offered by Fjellestad and Wikborg (189).

Fjellestad and Wikborg insist on the fact that students should be acquainted with the plot before they proceed with the reading of the novel. “By the time they turn to the book, they have achieved a certain distance from the events of the story, which makes it easier for them to observe the narrative strategies of both text and film” (Fjellestad and Wikborg 189), a piece of advice offered in their essay titled “Fiction and Film: Teaching the Aspects of Narrative in *The Great Gatsby*.” It would be pedagogically interesting to try out their advice and start out with a film version, if only to learn whether students obtain a deeper understanding of the internal elements of the novel. T. P. Lambela refers to using both novel and film in teaching Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), but prior to watching the film she wants “to make double sure that the pupils have some knowledge about the original piece and its qualities as a text” (Lambela 37). To choose a novel successfully filmed appears a safe choice, but what if while reading a novel they consult the movie version instead? Few teachers would regard this as a pedagogical handicap, but merely consider it an additional resource useful to students inexperienced with extensive reading. On the other hand, there are strong pedagogical arguments related to stay with the original version of the story to be read *before* students watch an interpretation for the screen.

4.3 Context (External factors)

To adapt a novel to the film screen involves more than interpreting the internal factors of a novel. A film director responsible for his interpretation will automatically draw on the novel’s external factors too, contemplating which external factors to highlight over others in his interpretation, as well as he himself represents a historical and cultural factor that view fiction differently. A fact proved in the here chosen film adaptations of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s short story “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” (2008) and the diametrically different versions of *The Great Gatsby* from 1974 and 2013 respectively.

4.3.1 Comparing literature and films

The short story entitled “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” serves the purpose as a lead up to Fitzgerald’s authorship through its film adaptation. Contrary to the universal theme of lost love in several of Fitzgerald’s short stories, the story about Benjamin Button proves the strength of persistent love in all aspects of life. Benjamin manages to muddle through because of a strong love of life and will to survive. The setting is the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the story commences in a traditional way around the protagonist’s birth. So far so good. Nearly halfway through the first page, the reader detects a notion of uneasiness on the part of the newly fledged father. This newborn baby is not quite the full shilling at all. Benjamin is

born old and spends his life not growing older but, “diminishing younger”. He lives his life in reverse. This is illustrated in the 2008 movie version by the huge clock on the railway station going backwards. Fitzgerald here elaborates on another universal theme: the fact that time runs ahead of us and that we chase it has intrigued philosophers and artists throughout civilisation. Several early 20th century painters were concerned with the passing of time. For instance, the cover illustration of *Approaches to Teaching Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby* (2009) shows the painting by Gerald Murphy called *Watch* from 1925, the very same year that Fitzgerald published *The Great Gatsby*. Artist and author were both concerned with the theme of time. Murphy painted in a cubist style, while Fitzgerald wrote his novel about a man obsessed with the past and how to recapture it. In addition, “The novel is “time-haunted” permeated with hundreds of references to the escape of memory from our lives” (Berman 91).

Pedagogically, it is preferable to challenge students with the original short story about Benjamin Button to read *before* they watch the film, and thus to compel them somehow to form their own images in their minds of this indeed curious and challenging story. Fjellestad and Wikborg insist that students should watch the film adaption first in their “Fiction and Film: Teaching Aspects of Narrative in *The Great Gatsby*” (189). In this way, they claim “students not only satisfy their initial propensity to read for the plot, but also see explicitly many of the themes and issues that in the novel emerge only gradually and obliquely” (Fjellestad and Wikborg 189). Fjellestad and Wikborg utilize the 1974 version of *The Great Gatsby* directed by Jack Clayton and with the screenplay by Francis Ford Coppola. Their introduction to their study states that “More and more students first meet the classics on the screen. Indeed some of their – and our – most vivid memories of a work may be cinematic” (Fjellestad and Wikborg 189). They continue by questioning whether the director’s comprehension of a novel in his screen adaption leads to a simplification of the story. A film adaption is seldom a duplicate of the novel. The director will have to make some choices concerning priorities. Fjellestad and Wikborg intend to make their students focus on “the how of the representation rather than the what” (189). Due to a limited time to work on the novel, students focus on a small number of issues. These include the narrative point of view and how gender is represented. The initial question, however addressed, is about central themes and issues, additionally also the crucial differences between Fitzgerald’s original story and the film adaption. Here Fjellestad and Wikborg touch on the usefulness of a film adaption and state that watching movies is mainly regarded as having fun during our spare time, as a leisure

activity, but while amusing ourselves, the brain works and we benefit from thoughts and feelings that open up for an access to learning.

An access to learning legitimating my use of film adaptations in the classroom, and that Tine Pedersen Lambela profits from in her thesis “From Pemberley Park to the VG3-classroom” (2013), where she relates novels within the British literary canon to their corresponding screen adaptations. “Austen’s fiction is quite frequently reinvented and presented to a new audience via the medium of film” (Lambela 34). Here she insists on viewing certain clips from film adaptations of Austen’s novels, parallel to a detailed study of the author’s original portrayal of the main characters in the novel. Her only fear is that “Passiveness when reading or watching a narrative may cause one to miss several important underlying themes or points” (Lambela 34).

Employing the film medium pedagogically should always imply an assignment on the students’ part. This is why teachers should insist that spending time in class on watching films must require students’ tasks related to the viewing. In this case, the task to compel students to present a comparison of the two film versions in class. Lambela claims that “When film is used simply as entertainment, when there is no real educational agenda behind it, it loses its purpose” (Lambela 35). Watching movies merely to beguile time should never be an adequate activity at an upper secondary level. On the other hand, interpreting a film would arouse interest per se, since it involves interpreting the demanding task of transferring a plot from page to screen. To invite students to take part in an argument over screen adaptations of a familiar novel would compel them to form an opinion, and to ask why certain decisions are made. To encourage students to rely on their own judgements and to give reasons for them is crucial to the development of an integrated individual, and will serve them well with necessary confidence in themselves during final exams, whether written or oral.

Fjellestad and Wikborg focus on a dilemma related to teaching literature in upper secondary school. Students often prefer filmed adaptations and forget that they are not the originals. When they read the short story pictures start forming in their minds and they end up with their personal interpretations of the plot. How will students’ imagination be able to picture Benjamin as a newborn baby, and when he gradually turns younger students will face an even stronger provocation. This may be one of Fitzgerald’s most challenging stories to adapt to the film, surpassed only by perhaps “The Diamond as Big as the Ritz”. The former has been

successfully adapted to the screen, what remains is only to decide whether it is possible to believe in Fitzgerald's story or not.

Students find it hard to settle the theme of Benjamin Button's curious case. After reading the short story and watching the film from 2008 starring Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchet, who portray the main characters convincingly, students struggle to provide a possible theme of the story and the film correspondingly. They seem filled with amazement as to the adaption in itself of the short story. In their opinion, they could recognize only the frame of the original story. To their surprise, they experience a significant variation between the book and the film. In students' opinion, the overall message could be infinite love and its strength to conquer even time. The final point is symbolized in the film by a huge city clock at the railway station going backwards, which could be mankind's wish to recapture the past and revive its unnecessary and meaningless losses of a whole generation of young men during World War I. Only in our dreams may we revive them and meet them again. Several students draw engaging thoughts and questions from the film and later relate new information to some of the minor actors in the film as well. The pedagogic principal to seek out the original story prior to watching the film adaption, culminate in a debate about the liberties a director could allow himself before he ends up with a completely new story. Pedagogically this allows for an example to be stored for later use in anticipating comparisons of major literary works and their film interpretations when studying *The Great Gatsby*. Additionally, this proves a useful means to combine text and film in the classroom, and how Fitzgerald's story about Benjamin Button illustrates the Greek aphorism "ars longa vita brevis".

Every adaption of literature for the screen represents a director's personal interpretation of it. In this case, David Fincher has presented his audience with how he pictured the life of Benjamin Button, which implies that the director himself has read the original story prior to his adaption of it, and the students should follow suit. The story about Benjamin Button equally provides an excellent example of studying female characters. The obvious parallel between the main female character Daisy Fuller in the film version, and Daisy (Fay) Buchanan of *The Great Gatsby*, prepares the ground for that story and the film versions of it. In fact, the portrayal of Daisy Fuller in this film version bears a clearer resemblance to Fitzgerald's wife Zelda Sayre, whom he met in 1918, than the story's original female protagonist Hildegarde Moncrief, who plays a minor part in the original script. Zelda "had studied ballet from ages nine to seventeen and loved to swim; she was fearless, pretty and outspoken; and she was voted 'The Prettiest and The Most Attractive Girl' in her senior class"

(Sanderson 148). Fitzgerald's world of fiction consisted of numerous notable women. He was among the first to introduce the independent free woman in literature and referring to her as a flapper. This might be the reason Fincher included an old news report in black and white presenting the first woman to swim the British channel in his film version of "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button". Last year's issue of TIME magazine focused on the female sex too and presented a cover story entitled "*Firsts - Women Who Are Changing the World*".

To approach purposely *The Great Gatsby* with students while insisting initially on a main focus on the original text, which correspond to the internal elements of the novel in question, appears pedagogically best because this is the natural point of departure. Fitzgerald's novel is a work of art created in a talented individual's mind that represents his unique imaginativeness. While referring once again to Figure 1 A. Telnes Iversen Text and Context (42), where some might pinpoint the necessity to begin with the external factors, since clearly they appeared first. When Fitzgerald sat down to write his novel, he had experienced parts of the political, historical, social and cultural factors that he depicts in his story. In *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, there is a chapter by Ronald Berman, where the opening lines read: "*The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925, seems to speak directly to its current audience about love and existential freedom. Yet the ideas we bring to the story may *not* be the ideas that the story brings to us" (Berman 79; my emphasis). Since 1925, several of the external factors have undergone radical transformations during a period of 93 years, and students cannot help applying their 21st century mind-set during a first rendezvous. The literary period between the two World Wars carries the label 'modernism'. Presently in their Norwegian lessons, students are studying the same period simultaneously. It appears convenient to draw on and benefit from the fact that this second decade of the 20th century is of great importance in their Norwegian and history lessons too.

The fun loving of the 1920s or the roaring twenties comprise the popular concept of this period in American history. Students seem eager to watch this iconic fun loving historical period on the screen and they have been looking forward to it throughout the reading of the novel. Like Gatsby's solution to the entertainment in the novel's chapter 5 where Daisy is visiting for the first time and Nick appears once again somewhat apart in the situation, the lyrics of the song repeat the slogan of this contrasting decade in American history.

"Don't talk so much, old sport," commanded Gatsby. "Play!"

In the morning,

In the evening,

Ain't we got fun – (Fitzgerald 61)

In the classroom students usually find it more alluring to watch films than reading books. Why all this talking and reading when students could have fun watching film versions of *The Great Gatsby* instead? A main challenge in Norwegian schools, especially today, is perhaps students longing for entertainment rather than instruction. Summoning students into the film room obviously appears more engaging than reading in class. Additionally, it corresponds more to the wishes from students about their expectations for the coming year of specialization in English. There exist altogether five film versions of this classic, and the first one actually belongs to the period of the silent movies and was produced in 1926, the year after the novel was published. The appearance of the films corresponds with the popularity of the novel. It sold well to begin with, but eventually the sales declined, and so did the general attention towards Fitzgerald and his authorship. It was not until after the Second World War that the overall interest re-escalated. The next film adaptation appeared in 1949, followed by the iconic 1974 version starring Mia Farrow and Robert Redford, another in 2000, and finally so far the latest 2013 version.

Comparing the novel to two film versions that each represents a diametrically different interpretation of *The Great Gatsby*, with a nearly 40 years' time span makes them technically unlike with an altered narrative perspective, serves a pedagogic purpose when insisting on the 1974 and 2013 versions. Several students are familiar already with the 2013 version starring Carey Mulligan and Leonardo DiCaprio. Personally, some prefer the 1974 version to the 2013 version, but rather than watching the movies chronologically, it ends up the other way around. Prior to the viewing of the two film versions, students receive an oral task of comparing the aforementioned versions to the novel in the first place, and then secondly relating the two versions to each other. Finally, students should include in their comparisons their personal preference and to state why in their individual presentations in class. (Appendix 4).

Assignments that imply a comparison between two or three items appear challenging to students. They require a profound knowledge of the elements in question, together with the students' personal motives for their statements. Nearly all presentations introduce the novel and the two movies in question initially, while some spend comparatively more time on the introduction than others do, which results in brief comparisons. Students manage easily to compare the actors' interpretations of their characters, and there is a unanimous approval of

Sam Waterston's portrayal of Nick in the 1974 version of the film, as compared to Tobey Maguire's Nick in the 2013 version. Several students are unconvinced by Tobey Maguire as Nick, although some feel the opening scenes with Nick in a sanatorium, relating the story about Gatsby in retrospect adds to their comprehension of the different layers of the narrative perspective in the novel. A perspective that appears challenging to students during their initial reading of the novel. According to students' opinions regarding the actors, Sam Waterston seems more trustworthy and believable than a former "Spiderman".

Another issue discussed by Fjellestad and Wikborg is gender. Regarding the 1974 version, they note that "Many students feel that in the movie the visual impact of the love scenes between Daisy and Gatsby, especially those with no dialogue (dancing alone in Gatsby's house, heads together in the swimming pool), activates love clichés that tip the romance over to sentimentality" (Fjellestad and Wikborg 190). To some students, this comes as a result of Robert Redford's poor acting, which triggers smiles and even laughter on their part. According to young people of today Redford's interpretation of Gatsby appears only sad and calls for pity. In their eyes, the actor is not able to convince them that this is a man haunted by love and desperately seeking to restore the past and his own youth. When Nick finally encounters him in the 1974 version, the whole scene ends in a colossal anti-climax. They prefer Leonardo DiCaprio's portrayal of Gatsby and the way he enters the scene in the 2013 movie. In their opinion, Redford appears too mysterious, reserved and formal even after the ice breaking between him and Daisy. According to the students, his acting does not agree with the novel, and they find him rather pathetic when he and Daisy finally end up alone in his huge mansion touching fingers. Having invited a married woman home, Redford should act the "Don Juan", according to gender roles, while Mia Farrow still, though married, secrets herself behind "the beautiful little fool" role. To put an end to this romantic reunion between two former sweethearts, towards the end of chapter five in the novel, we find that Fitzgerald repeatedly revolves around Daisy's voice when:

As I watched him he adjusted himself a little, visibly. His hand took hold of hers, and as she said something low in his ear he turned towards her with a rush of emotions. I think that voice held him most, with its fluctuating, feverish warmth, because it couldn't be over-dreamed – that voice was a deathless song. (Fitzgerald 62)

The two films also differ in the fact that Gatsby's father does not turn up in the latest film version of the story. He represents the ultimate key to Gatsby's early history. It is through

Gatsby's father that we learn the truth of his early life. Perhaps the "franklinesque" "SCHEDULE" on the flyleaf of a ragged copy of *Hopalong Cassidy* that his father came across coincidentally turns out as a reliable witness: "Look here, this is a book he had when he was a boy. It just shows you" (Fitzgerald 110). It shows not only Nick, but the reader too, that this young boy possessed a strong will, and developed a great personality through several resolves. Both film versions have skipped characters. For example, "Owl Eyes" is not in the 1974 version and Pammy too together with Gatsby's father, are absent from the 2013 version.

These characters' are significant to the plot. Both carry decisive contributions to Gatsby's fate. Especially remarkable is the incident when Gatsby meets Pammy, Daisy and Tom's daughter, in person and both he and the narrator "... in turn leaned down and took the small reluctant hand" (Fitzgerald 74). We realize that this is a sacred moment. Jack Clayton deliberately makes Gatsby hesitate several barely endurable seconds before he awkwardly accepts this hand of an unavoidable obstacle to his dream in an unforgettable moment that seems to make less impact on teenagers today than on former generations. "Afterwards he kept looking at the child with surprise. I don't think he had ever really believed in its existence before" (Fitzgerald 74). It is obvious that this neglected child embodies a strong impediment to the happiness of Daisy and Gatsby. In students' opinion, though, Pammy does not seem a significant obstacle, until I confront them with the fact that the law would not look favourably on Daisy's claim of a divorce. In the 1920s, a woman who wanted to leave her husband would most likely be compelled to leave her child behind too. The reader might suspect that the author foreshadows parts of Daisy's dilemma prior to the accident. In order to make students understand parallel challenges for women in world literature, it seems rewarding to compare her to Henrik Ibsen's Nora in *A Doll's House* (1876) in Norway, where the "lark" had to give up her children when insisting on leaving the nest. (In Germany, prior to a performance of the play, audiences would not accept that a mother could leave her children behind, even in a loveless marriage, and Ibsen was even compelled to alter the ending before a German stage performance. He produced an alternative end to his play where Nora stayed by her man.)

To some students it is evident that the quintessence of Daisy's personality is obvious already in chapter 1, when she says, regarding her daughter, "All right, "I'm glad it is a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool – that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool" (Fitzgerald 13). Eager and observant students add to this that in both film versions Daisy is blond, too, while according to Fitzgerald she is not, because "once he kissed her dark shining

hair” (Fitzgerald 95). When Daisy is having a tête-à-tête with Nick they do *not* discuss the Nordic race at all, but rather the role of women in the American 1920s. Followed by Tom’s warning, “Don’t believe everything you hear, Nick” (Fitzgerald 15), it is impossible to avoid the inquiry about women’s place in society in this novel, when studying it in the 2018th classroom. Added to the fact that “rich girls don’t marry poor boys”, at least not according to Fitzgerald, students perceive that Daisy is a key figure who carries the message in the novel. The whole story pivots around her fate. What other options did “a pretty little fool” have?

The Nineteenth Amendment granted American women the right to vote in 1920, but “Rome was not built in one day”, and unfortunately for Daisy, her destiny seemed arranged by the culture into which she was raised. The emerging flapper culture was no consolation prize to her, either. Jordan Baker experiences a lucky escape into the golf sport, accessible to women, but according to Nick, she is not to be trusted, though, even if “Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply” (Fitzgerald 38). In other words, women were apt to be dishonest. It could not be helped because this was part of their nature. Nick’s attitude towards Jordan reveals women’s position in society, and suggests that most likely tiny Pammy would choose wisely in following her mother’s advice. The foundation on which the whole society rests will stay unshaken, and the status quo will be restored. Daisy stays with her man, despite his many escapades, simply because he is the only one who can save her. To students it is clear that Daisy hides behind humour, and that she is everything but “a beautiful little fool”. The majority of female students find Daisy clever and opportunistic. When trapped in a corner, she chooses what seems right to save herself and her daughter. For students of the 21st century to comprehend Daisy’s choice, they need to know more about the American society almost a century ago. This close relation between the novel and its historical period, or between internal elements and external factors, corroborates Fitzgerald’s words that “we *are* (My emphasis) borne back ceaselessly into the past”, and brings us to the third step in our novel study: A call for a closer look at the past.

4.3.2 In-depth study

In his thesis on teaching literature in upper-secondary English class, where “The biggest constraint perceived by the teachers were unmotivated and uninterested students,” Simon Granath “finds it increasingly important for teachers to connect to students’ needs and interests when incorporating literature” (Granath ii). In Sweden, as in Norway, there is a stress on reading fiction according to the curricula in the upper secondary schools. On the other hand, the Swedish curriculum specifies more *what* kind of literature, but similar to the

Norwegian curriculum, it does not specify *how*, a fact that implies that it remains up to the Norwegian and Swedish teachers to choose among personal preferences within literature and decide how to implement it. Due to our close border on the Scandinavian Peninsula, we share both cultural and historical interests, which makes it natural to compare fundamental social and political developments.

To legitimate an introduction of a 1925 novel in the 2018 classroom, the choice takes its point of departure on the book's closeness to the students, due to a film version from 2013.

Furthermore, *The Great Gatsby* profits from its rich references to modern culture, which bears some resemblance to the world of the young generations of today and, additionally, its timeless focus on human relations under strained circumstances makes it a good choice.

Finally, yet most importantly, teaching this classic novel through reading, watching and in-depth studying, anticipates the call for new curricula in Norwegian schools since:

“Blant annet viser forskningen at det å lære noe i dybden, reflektere rundt egen læring og bruke læringsstrategier fremmer elevenes læring og kan gi dem et grunnlag for å lære gjennom hele livet.” (NOU 2014:7 31)

“Among other things, research reveals that learning something in depth, reflecting upon your own learning and using learning strategies, enhances students learning and may provide them with a basis for a lifelong learning.” (My translation)

The Official Norwegian Report NOU 2014:7 carries the title “Students learning in future schools”. Chapter 3 is about “Students’ learning”, and begins by affirming that learning research in the last decades has provided a robust scientific knowledge regarding how students learn in schools and other fields of learning. The committee behind the report, presided over by Sten Ludvigsen, presents an overview of core elements for enhanced learning. Its list contains altogether seven qualifications, where the in-depth learning and relations to prior knowledge amongst students are of the utmost importance.

Furthermore, the committee’s research reveals what distinguishes an expert from a newcomer within different subject matters. Experts’ in-depth understanding demonstrates their ability to draw immediate information and conclusions from new knowledge, because they attach ideas to already familiar conceptions and principles. Learning something in-depth is often described in contrast to superficial learning that accentuates factual knowledge. According to Keith Sawyer, superficial learning is merely regarded as a transmitting of facts (NOU 2014:7 35). It

is a method of learning that brings back older generations' memories of information learned by heart, without any other purpose than memorizing information such as German prepositions, the names of Norwegian fiords, or even the wheres and whens of The Second World War. These are pieces of information stored in your memory forever, and of course, they were helpful back then in the 1960s and 70s, since they were required in order to pass your exams, which at that time were fact-based. The technological revolution has turned the whole society upside down. What young boys and girls were compelled to learn by heart earlier is readily available on the web. The fundamental challenge today is to *apply* the abundance of information. What to do with it? Or rather, how to employ it? Answering this question will be part of the students' challenges when carrying out the in-depth study related to the historical period of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

Sawyer lists altogether six principles that differentiate in depth studying from superficial learning. The overall focus of in depth studying is that students relate new ideas and terms to prior knowledge and experiences and draw conclusions. This happens when new ideas mix with already familiar knowledge, and students organize their knowledge into conceptualized systems that are connected. Students look for patterns and underlying principles, they consider brand new ideas and attach them to conclusions. Finally, but perhaps not less importantly, students reflect upon their own understanding and process of learning. There might be arguments against some of these principles, but when prior knowledge blends with brand new information, this is precisely what occurs. Parts of what is new strike some familiar chords, while the rest still has to be domesticated. The prior knowledge a student possesses will somehow create possible echoes within unfamiliar grounds. When applying an in-depth focus to hitherto unknown ground, as in Frost's "In leaves no step had trodden black" (Frost), students complete patterns and form underlying principles. To be able to associate already familiar knowledge with supplementary information adds to a more holistic perspective that will guide students further in their lifelong learning. To assist students when organizing personal knowledge into coherent patterns and underlying principles, teachers should prevent them from treating knowledge as consisting of separate elements. In the end, this will enhance the students' learning strategies, and hasten the process of breaking new ground.

This thesis seeks to address the relevance of the political, social, and historical context of *The Great Gatsby*, which correlates with “Teaching *The Great Gatsby* in the context of World War I”. Here Pearl James begins her study with “*The Great Gatsby*, provides a useful opportunity to teach students to think and write about the complex relation between literature and history” (32). To prove her point, she proceeds with “By making my students familiar with the history of World War I, I enable them to place literary texts in a larger historical context” (James 32). Again according to Fitzgerald, “we are borne back ceaselessly into the past”. We cannot repeat the past, as Nick states, but Gatsby contradicts him on the spot with “Why of course you can!” (Fitzgerald 70). At least Gatsby tried to recapitulate it, which is exactly where he failed to understand that this is impossible. This is the reason why it is necessary to insist on students’ knowledge about the past, to urge them to understand it and seek to avoid repeating it, at least not its failures. A focal task of educational institutions is to strive to enlighten the young generations, and thus save them from repeating the failures committed by their ancestors.

These are the reasons for insisting on students’ in-depth studies being rooted in “the roaring twenties” in this instance too. When limiting the historical frame of their in-depth study to the interwar period, they regard it as an obstacle to their creativity. Having been through a novel and two film versions makes them perceive somehow that now they know all there is to learn about this period. “Not again!” echoes students’ spontaneous reaction to the beginning of a compulsory in-depth study, as a main challenge during the second term. There and then, students urge whether time has come to concentrate on another historical period. Additionally, it would be an advantage if this coincided with students’ study of history and Norwegian. It is a mere coincidence that in their Norwegian lessons, they now are into modernism, but unfortunately, they have not reached the First World War yet in their history lessons. Teachers involved in 13th year teaching in Norwegian, history, religion and English could obviously have planned their study within definite historical periods in advance when starting up in August. Seeking parallel curricular aims to put in place simultaneously during the school year might have required some extra work in the initiating phase, but would have provided students with broader perspectives when perceiving the interrelationships between school subjects, and would have made them intent on uncovering even further connections themselves. This represents a pedagogic idea that corresponds with Lambela’s in her “From Pemberley Park to the VG3-classroom” naming “a multidisciplinary project between English

and history, using Austen's work to "introduce the historical period of the early 19th century" (Lambela 45).

Finally, in relating a compulsory in-depth study to the period between the First World War with its aftermath on the one hand, and the Great Depression that led up to the Second World War on the other, students within Social studies of English receive the challenge to find a suitable topic and a thesis statement to go with it. Exchange students often revive topics they have been studying during history classes in the US. They settle on "Prohibition and *The Great Gatsby*" while others concentrate on major events during the beginning of the 20th century. Yet other exchange students focus on "The Crash on the New York Stock Exchange", while others address "Immigration and the Great Depression", and compare the movie "Cinderella Man" to a documentary about Norwegian immigrants called "The Bitter Desert". Students seem to have a realistic starting point as to what to concentrate on, while others struggle more before they make final decisions. Regular students chose to write about "The Flapper Culture", or "The American Dream", and yet another "Women's Liberation during the Interwar period". As soon as they start working in-depth on their individual topics related to the period in between the two world wars, they seem to enjoy the project and the fact that somehow many of their individual topics touch on the others'.

Students within the study of English literature and culture group face significant challenges. According to their curricular aims, they still have another major work of fiction to study, which they will have to postpone until later. During students struggle to settle an in-depth study, a final agreement settle upon introducing the literary period of modernism with its central features, followed up with illustrating examples of short stories. Chapter 6 of their textbooks, titled "'Make It New': The Modernist Revolution" (Burgess and Sørhus 270), introduce the period. Students decide to focus on James Joyce's "Eveline" and compared it to Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants", and discuss where they differ and what they have in common, other students experience some lack of enthusiasm. These students take pleasure in writing fiction themselves. Finally, they choose to begin with an introduction of the literary period, preceding a short story written by themselves, where students deliberately make use of some of the characteristic literary features of the period. In addition, when working on the study they profit from the *NDLA* resources on our learning platform and the resources under "Literary skills", where Jan-Louis Nagel offers an article on "How to Write Your Own Short Story" (Nagel). The students' individual choices enable them to include the final external factors (Fig. 1 Telnes Iversen 42), namely the cultural context and the literary

period in which to place *The Great Gatsby*. Facing some problems in the initiating phase, all the students eventually set off to accomplish their work, within the allotted time limit of three weeks (Appendix 5).

4.4 Presentations in class – an assessment of the process

When students present an individual topic of their in-depth studies in class it is essential that they include an assessment of the process, because it represents a final and crucial part of the curricular aim in question concerning their in-depth study. Few, if any, would deny the enhanced value of an in-depth study when scrutinizing its process. Usually the presentations take place based on personal preferences. In retrospect, there should perhaps be a chronological sequence of the presentations to secure an enhanced understanding of the timeline, but many of the topics presented covered the same interwar period, and presentations tend to improve when based on individual preferences. It is useful to drill students in advance, however, and tell them what they should prepare for anticipating an oral exam. There is a pedagogic necessity for raising questions after presentations, to ensure the students' knowledge and understanding of their topic. Their responses reveal to what extent they have acquired a deeper insight into their topic. Furthermore, posing questions provides a chance to check whether they really have come to grasp the relevance of their claim. When entering a dialog based on their presentations, students have an opportunity to clear up any inconsistencies, philosophise on their study, and simultaneously teachers may test to what extent the students are able to carry on the conversation, by bringing further elements into the discourse.

In the following overview, on the other hand, I strive for a chronological or logical sequence of the students' presentations within Social Studies English, which is the reason why it begins with a short overview of the World Wars that frame students' in-depth studies. To approach in-depth studies of the interwar period, students need an overview of the wars in question that framed this period, the historical reasons for their occurrence on the world scene, and their consequences. There are reciprocal benefits to gain from encountering crucial historical events that shaped world history, and investigating how they appear within several school subjects. For example in-depth studies like "The Second World War – The Reasons Behind It" and "How did major events in early 20th century affect America?" form an adequate introduction to the historical time period in question, and emphasize the importance of the timeline's focal point. Additionally, students report that they feel closer to, and reach a deeper understanding of, the decisive events when they reencounter them in their history lessons.

Now they have images that guide them in their attempt to secure an understanding of central events in world history. Students may even people the First World War with Nick and Gatsby, and imagine those sharing memories from a disaster both were among the fortunate ones to escape without seemingly more visible scars than when coming across each other later on: “Your face is familiar,” he said, politely. “Weren’t you in the First Division during the war?” (Fitzgerald 31).

In the final third step of this process, students find it interesting to study in-depth the flapper culture of the 1920s. A natural point of departure is to begin by introducing “the Gibson girl”, which is an expression alluded to by Fitzgerald in one of his short stories entitled “The Lees of Happiness” from “Tales of the Jazz Age” (1920). “The Gibson girl was the predecessor of the flapper, and refers to the creator of her image Charles Dana Gibson, who in the 1890s defined her characteristic physical appearance. It seems relevant to question whether Daisy fits the definition of a flapper. According to her creator, she would perhaps fit the description of Fitzgerald’s wife Zelda, named to be the first flapper, and both Daisy and Zelda represent women who dared where their mothers and grandmothers held back, while today we still think of them as trapped within a male world. Relating to one of the most debated issues in the Western world since October 2017, there was an agreement amongst students regarding the necessity of the still ongoing battle for a mutual respect between men and women. Obviously, according to the students, there are still inescapable battles to fight at sundry arenas of society where men and women meet. Students who select this theme for their in-depth study conclude by stating the irrefutable fact that even though the flappers were never the ideal ambassadors for female emancipation, they were amongst the first to address the issue of equality between men and women.

The prohibition during the 1920s and 1930s is another relevant topic for students to focus on. To parallel it with the film “Water for Elephants”, based on Sara Gruen’s 2006 novel, where the transportation of liquor between Canada and America provides parts of the plot, and refer to *The Great Gatsby*. Here the question relating to the origins of Gatsby’s fortune, namely whether he *is* a bootlegger or not, connects with the main theme of money. Drawing once more on the study of Fitzgerald’s novel, students recall last year’s classroom discussions, and while adding newfound knowledge to them and completing the picture, enhanced the benefits of this study. Students conclude that they enjoy the project and find that they gain a deeper insight into Fitzgerald’s novel too. In retrospect, there should not be any reason to remind

them of the reluctance when facing this challenge, rather taking it as a confirmation of the pedagogic effect of insisting on working more deeply within certain historical periods.

The American consumer economy of the 1920s and asking how it contributed to global warming comprises another historical approach to *The Great Gatsby*. Connecting the blooming industrialization to the roaring 20s, recalling the challenges of global warming from last year's curriculum too and an in-depth study in International English seems rewarding to students. This time an urge to go behind the phenomenon, and investigate the *reasons* for global warming, rather than defining what it implies appears challenging. The mass production of, amongst other things, cars, especially the Model T-Ford, enabled many people to enjoy the liberty and luxury of exploring the countryside during their spare time. The car symbolized a mobility and new-won freedom for the younger generation, a phenomenon that spread to Western Europe, initiating a consumer economy that escalated after the Second World War, and that proportionally affected global warming. With Fitzgerald's portrayal of "The Valley of Ashes," where "[...] ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens" (Fitzgerald 16), he anticipates the rapidly growing wastes from the modern way of living and its consequences. He depicts the awakening of a modern world while envisaging its glamour and its darker aspects. As a representative of the younger generation, the students stress the fact that it falls on them to clean up the mess of former generations, who have been unwilling to face the by-product or the downside of the consumer economy. Students' individual study open up for a deepened insight into the significance of the 1920s' influence on the present world.

The American Dream provides another central historical backdrop of life in the 1920s. To reveal how the vision of the American Dream evolve from the Roaring Twenties into the Depression seems necessary to understand the development of a modern American. Here students may draw on *The Great Gatsby* and the concept of the self-made man, where money is the essential ingredient in life. Paralleling and contrasting the lives on Long Island's East or West Egg with the challenges of life in the Valley of Ashes where human lives seem of less worth, students have the opportunity to relate the plot of the novel to the concept of the American Dream. They can even call to mind Trump's first "State of the Union Speech," on the 30th of January 2018, where he insisted on the fact that "there has never been a better moment to live the American Dream" (Trump). Students oppose the president of the US strongly, and insist on the fact that to many Americans today, this dream seems merely a bleak mirage of the past, a past where President Herbert Hoover in *his* "State of the Union

Address” in 1929 talked about “prosperity and the lessening of poverty”. While rather than talking of an American Dream today students would instead name it an American nightmare.

The Stock Market Crash inspire students to draw inspiration from their study of economy and history and concentrate an in-depth study on what led to the crash in 1929. To focus on “Black Tuesday” and the inevitable consequences of it deepen the understanding of the theme of money in *The Great Gatsby*. Whether to employ crash and crack as synonyms equally relating to what happened in 1929 initiate questions about a difference in meaning between the two. Looking into the *Concise Oxford Thesaurus*, which reveals that crash is the only idiom related to a collapse in the economy finally make them settle on crash as the most appropriate expression. To have more than one student choose the same topic and make them refer to each other’s presentations, in order to create continuity secure a further development of the theme. Furthermore, a stronger attention in class usually appears amongst those who share a common topic.

Among female students, there is no surprise that at least some of them would favour a study of Women’s Liberation in the Interwar period and today. To broaden the picture it seems rewarding to connect this topic to an emerging flapper culture at the time. To focus a study on the situation for women in the US, the UK and Norway in the 1920s and today, reminds students of another central theme in *The Great Gatsby*. In this way, to provide an overview of the development of the liberation of women brought it, not only up to date, but also home. It appeared inevitable to touch on the #me- too-campaign. Students update their study with the fact that the “founding mothers” of the campaign gained the honour of “Persons of the Year” by TIME magazine last year. To young women of today, there are still numerous barriers to fight before we may truthfully apply the term ‘equality’ between men and women in the US, the UK and even Norway. A work initiated by the suffragettes’ call for women’s right to vote, the flappers uproar in the 1920s and pursued by feminists fight for equal rights into the 21st century.

To look into how the immigrants experienced the Great Depression appears interesting to students. Starting off with two real life stories located in “The Bitter Desert” (NRK 2017) and the movie “Cinderella Man” (2005) provides a sound picture. Urging students into choosing topics that are part of a broader picture provides the beneficial effect of a deeper insight into why some historical events occur as a result of another. This results in a pedagogic approach that usually adds enhanced learning. To build on something familiar seems usually a good

starting point, and renewed and improved knowledge often augments the pleasure of learning. A result that corresponds with the aforementioned report NOU 2014:7 and Keith Sawyer's principles on studying in-depth (32). Few students are familiar with the fate of the Norwegian immigrants in "The Bitter Desert", a real life "valley of ashes", located in New York in the 1920s. Comparing their experience with that of the Irish immigrant in "Cinderella Man" illustrates well the fate of the immigrants during the Great Depression. The former were rather hopeless, trying to survive in yet another "valley of ashes," while the latter found hope and a way out of the depression.

Students within "English literature and culture" base their in-depth studies on the literary period in the interwar years labelled "modernism." Students struggle to find a solution to the challenge, but ultimately together decide on an introduction of the literary period where the authors broke with the past, initiating a sort of modernist revolution, and wrote according to the slogan: "Make It New".

Here students set out to compare short stories by James Joyce and Ernest Hemingway. To try to aim at pinpointing the differences between their narrative techniques, though both authors belong within the same literary period appear challenging. In "Eveline," students claim, Joyce relates most of the story through the main character's thoughts, by means of an interior monologue technique that diametrically opposes Hemingway's portrayal of the young couple waiting for the train at the railway station. The young girl and the man, who definitely seems older than she does when taking a superior position in their argument, find themselves at a crossroads both literally and symbolically, but through his iceberg-technique, the author leaves it up to the reader to detect why. Here the students benefit from Brevik's *Mode of reading continuum*, in particular the "Sherlock Holmes mode of reading" (Brevik 66), and in the assessment of the process claim to prefer Hemingway's style to Joyce's, because they enjoy reading with focus on details, and subsequently only gradually unmasking the plot. Debating the employment of any of these techniques in *The Great Gatsby*, it appears to students that Nick's story about events during the summer of 1922 springs like events from his memory that he still finds hard to relate. A conclusion reveals that students are ultimately happy with the results of their in-depth studies, because they experience an identification of the modernist traits that characterize the short stories of this literary period and subsequently are able to compare these traits to Norwegian modernist writers too.

The statement “Creative writing can be fun, but writing a good short story takes talent, skill and work” (Nagel) agrees with the experiences of students, who want to try their hand out on “Modernistic Literature in the 21st century”, when writing a short story that clearly contain characteristics of the modernist period. According to an evaluation of the study, the conclusion acknowledges that it was more challenging than anticipated. This is not the first time students try their hand at short story writing, but it is the first time their creativity is limited to characteristics of a certain literary period, and this turns out to be awkward since this is not how authors write literature. To achieve at extracting the main characteristics from modernistic literature, and then in the next step to employ those in their own short story too appear challenging to students. A thesis statement reads: “By studying the characteristics of modernistic writers and literature, I can create a short story reflecting the same values and genre tendencies deriving from a hundred years ago, today, in 2018.” A short story entitled “The Lightbulb Moment” contains several features of the modern genre of a hundred years ago, but its values reflect our present time. To assess the process, a central claim is that its most challenging aspect is to be bound to some already recognizable traits or characteristics that limit the creativity. Although students enjoy writing, and have often missed the opportunity of creating fiction themselves in their English and Norwegian lessons, this task put them to the test in simultaneously achieving something in the spirit of Ezra Pound’s dictum “Make it new”. To place oneself a century back in history and venture into creative writing merely enhance an insight into modern literature, but to approach a challenge of employing a recreation of already familiar developments within literature turns out demanding or perhaps even awkward to a young student in 2018.

4.5 Flappers and philosophers in the classroom

At the final point in the three-step approach to teaching *The Great Gatsby* in upper secondary schools, there is a change of atmosphere in the classroom compared to a certain lack of enthusiasm after the extensive reading of the novel, and likewise the additional watching of the two film versions. *This* time the students appear more attentive during their in-depth studies, they pay closer attention and it is possible to perceive a change in their questions and answers concerning the backdrop of the novel. Students are now able to philosophize over the conditions of men and women, and amongst them flappers, during the Jazz Age in America. The path to this enhanced understanding of the novel’s text and context has passed through an extensive reading of Fitzgerald’s novel, a classroom watching of two screen-adaptions and

ultimately an in-depth studying supported by theoretical and pedagogical tools presented earlier in part 3.

This is the second time I teach *The Great Gatsby* with students in the 13th year of secondary upper school to students specializing in English, and the results of this study show that the final in-depth study did make “all the difference”. During the second time of teaching *The Great Gatsby* with students in Social Studies English and English literature and culture in the 13th grade of upper secondary school the students’ understanding of the consequences of the deep alterations of the after war society in the American 1920s increase when investigating the external elements or context of the novel. When reading the novel with students for the first time, I missed the expected deeper understanding of the story after having viewed two film versions and compared them to the previously read original story. For a compulsory in-depth study, however, all students at first preferred a change of setting, and wanted to settle on the Cold War. At that time, it seemed inspiring for students to work in-depth within a historical period closer to themselves. In afterthought, the American 1920s and its iconic novel appeared to be hanging in thin air. Somehow, we lost the novel to the Cold War. Pedagogic reasons pointed at another choice next time. The outcome of studying closely the historical period of *The Great Gatsby* too, has brought students to a sounder understanding of how a text is closely rooted in its context and thus enhance their knowledge of the 1920s in the US and make them able to parallel this knowledge to Norwegian history too.

It is noteworthy that on the 21st century students’ part when philosophizing, they conclude that the American Dream of the last century has by and by lost some of its glory. At present students talk less of a dream and more of a nightmare and the significance of Fitzgerald’s green light appears to a smaller degree alluring to young students today than it must have done to Dutch sailors’ eyes, though it guided students through *The Great Gatsby*.

5 Validity

The final experience of this three-step process through a historical-biographical approach to the reading of Fitzgerald's novel illustrates, in my opinion, to what extent students depend on the teachers' capability of metacognitive reflections, and our interpretation of the curricular aims. To what extent do teachers understand their mandate to *teach* "one major work of fiction, one film, present a major in-depth study and assess the process"

(Utdanningsdirektoratet 7), and how do we incorporate this in our everyday classroom-activities? How to succeed in stirring the interests of today's youth and, above all, to provide them with tools for working in-depth? These questions should be on every pedagogue's mind persistently similar to Gilbert Highet's claim about the reason why teachers have failed their work. Teachers fail their work when they do not frequently reflect upon their professional pedagogic challenges. (11)

The significance of my discovery of an enhanced understanding of the novel in question and its context when reading *The Great Gatsby* for the second time and including an in-depth study is limited to a pedagogical teaching of reading literature in 13th grade English studies based on a historical-biographical approach in three steps. The feedback from students refers to the value of dialogue and adequate questions on both parts. No matter how thoroughly prepared a teacher is when she meets with her students in class, there should at all events be an opening for revising and altering methods of teaching literature according to the echo of students' preferences.

Generally, a teacher does not necessarily have to be solely in charge of every classroom activity. A main task for teachers according to their mandate listed in the curricula is to initiate pedagogic activities and then on occasion leave the floor to the students. Students granted this confidence take responsibility, which enhances the pedagogic outcome of a classroom activity. Teachers should not leave students on their own but rather observe how they are able to work independently while we stay on as instructors.

6 Conclusion

An effect of synergy in a three-step process

My approach to teaching *The Great Gatsby* demonstrates that it is solely through the final in-depth study that students reach the ultimate understanding of the strong interrelationship between a text and its context. According to the primary results of this study, students had only scratched the surface of the novel and its context when merely concentrated on reading the text and watching two film adaptations of it. Linked to a three-step process I want to prove that to work in-depth on a text provides an insight into the context that is crucial in order to comprehend the contemporary society into which the author has staged the plot.

When teaching *The Great Gatsby* for the second time among 13th grade students within “English – Programme Subject in Programmes for Specialization in General Studies” (Utdanningsdirektoratet), through a three-step process, there was a perceptible difference between students’ comprehension of the strong social, political and cultural context of the novel. They were now able to draw parallels between our study of the Interwar period in American history, and their study of the First and the Second World War in their history lessons. An effect of synergy appeared in the classroom when this novel became subject of a three-step process. When students experienced an overlap of knowledge acquired in their English lesson with new ideas and concepts in their history lessons, they discovered patterns and underlying principles that are useful to complete the picture and draw conclusions. Then students have acquired a skill that is transferable to yet other novels and their contexts.

My final conclusion to this strategy must therefore be that only when reading *The Great Gatsby* in class, watched two film versions *and* limited students’ in-depth project to the Interwar period, did my students discern the significance of a text and its context. By insisting on teaching in-depth the American Interwar period and stress the fact that no author writes his novels in a vacuum, I finally make them understand how a text is rooted in its context.

While awaiting the new curricula in 2020 let us hope that our students will deduct several parallel traits between their own world and that of earlier times, and as philosophers single out universal lessons about humans and their lives under changing conditions. Thus to reflect

deeply upon lives spent nearly a hundred years ago becomes valuable to young students today.

When research on reading (University of Stavanger) on paper versus reading on different screens reveals that some of the closeness to and empathy with the fate of human beings read about tend to diminish when reading on screens. Thus “The ‘constant flicker’ of the American scene” (Reynolds V) in the modern world depicted already by Fitzgerald nearly a hundred years ago might threaten the empathy that arises in the reader towards the characters’ suffering. Readers in future classrooms risk growing similar to Nick who is beginning to like New York with “the racy, adventurous feel of it at night, and the satisfaction that the constant flicker of men and women and machines gives to the restless eye.” (Fitzgerald 37) Nick who is at first resting in the darkness when he is watching Gatsby at his dock for the first time in the opening chapter of the novel. “Involuntarily I glanced seaward – and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness” (Fitzgerald 16). I hope that the new curricula will secure a deeper studying of humanity’s heritage and illuminate all future classrooms for empathetic philosophers after 2020.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

ST3A/B ACCESS to English: Social Studies/ **Literature and Culture**

- **Analyse and discuss a major literary work and a film/analyse at least two lengthy works of fiction/analyse and assess a film**
- **the novel, its summaries in your log, the written test and the comparison of the two film versions**

Week 41:

Mon. 9. Oct.: F. Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby* – Chapter 1. – A Summary: Setting – Characters – Plot –

Homework: Read Chapter 2 – and take notes for the summary.

Wednes. 11. Oct.: A Summary of Chapter 2 – comparison of notes in class.

Homework: Chapter 3 – A Summary of Chapters 1 – 3 on **it's learning by 16. Oct.**

WEEK 42

Mon. 16. Oct.: Chapter 3 – A Summary – Setting – Characters – Plot – Point of view - Theme

Homework: Read Chapter 4 and take notes for your summary.

Wednes. 18. Oct.: **Individual Reading – always bring your book with you, please!**

Homework: Read Chapter 5 and take notes for your summary.

Fri. 20. Oct.: **12.20 - 15.35: Individual reading in class – remember to bring your book, please!**

Week 43 International Week: Nigeria (24. – 25. Oct.)

Mon. 23. Oct.: Individual reading in class – start reading chapter 6.

Homework: Read Chapter 6 – and take notes for your later summary of the chapters.

Wednes. 25. Oct.: Individual reading – start reading chapter 7

Homework: Read Chapter 7 – A Summary of Chapters 4 – 6 **on it's learning by 30. Oct.**

Week 44

Mon. 30. Oct.: Chapter 7 – sum up the chapter in groups of four.

Homework: Read Chapter 8 – and take notes for your summary.

Wednes. 1. Nov.: Chapter 8 – sum up the chapter in class.

Homework: Read Chapter 9 – and sum up Chapters 7 – 9 **on it's learning by 6.Nov.**

Week 45

Mon. 6. Nov.: **A Written Test! F. Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby* (1925)**

RST

Appendix 2
(1925)

F. Scott Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby*

Chapters	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
Main characters	
Plot	
Setting	
Theme	
Summary	

Appendix 3

ST3 SF ENG & ENG LIT: F. Scott Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

Please answer the following questions in complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper:

1. Setting: Where and when does the story take place? Is time and place important to the story?
2. Characters: Who are the main characters? Is there a protagonist/antagonist in the story? Does any of the characters change/develop during the story?
3. Point-of-view: Who is telling the story? What triggers the action? Is there a point of no return?
4. Plot: Why do things happen? Not in details but the main action?
5. Theme: Is there an underlying theme in the story? What is it really about? Are there several themes?
6. Message: Does the novel carry any message? Why does the narrator tell it?
7. Personal assessment: What is your opinion of the story? Did it enlarge your knowledge? Did it give you an appetite for reading other novels by the same writer?

RST

Appendix 4

ST3 Social Studies & Literature and Culture: *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

Comparing novel and film versions:

- **Analyse and assess a film/ interpret at least one film**

After having read the novel and watched two different versions of it, I would like you

- to write a comparison between the book and the two film versions:
 1. Introduction: the novel – title, author, published
the films – title, director, facts
 2. Characters: are all characters in the novel portrayed in the film versions? Do you believe in them?
Any characters left out or added?
Main/minor characters – how are they portrayed?
 3. Setting: time and location(s) – is the setting well depicted?
 4. Plot: is the plot coherent and easy to understand – is it according to the novel?
 5. Special techniques/effects: the music – does it follow the theme
the use of close-ups – overview
 6. Theme(s): according to the novel – any added themes.
 7. Your personal evaluations of the two versions: which one is closest to the novel?
Anything added that is not in the novel? Anything left out from the novel?

RST

Appendix 5

ST Vg3 EN II Social Studies/**literature & culture**

Doing Project Work - America in the 1920s – in between two world wars/**Modernism**–

A written part handed in and an oral presentation using PowerPoint, overhead, poster, wallpaper or key words on the white board

1. Analysing a topic from your curriculum
2. Organising and planning the actual work to be done
3. Presenting your work
4. Evaluate the process

Culture, society and literature

- Present a major in-depth project with a topic from Social Studies English/**English literature and culture** and assess the process
- elaborate on and discuss how key historical events have affected the development of American and British society/**analyse at least two lengthy works of fiction**
- analyse a regional or international conflict in which at least one English-speaking country is involved/**interpret a representative selection of texts from literary-historical periods**

Access to English: Social Studies: Writing expository and Analytic texts: (156-160) Writing Introduction: (232-236) Writing Conclusions: (346-348) Evaluating Sources: (424-428)

Essay Writing Course 6: Introductions and Conclusions (329 – 336)

Note: Avoid Plagiarism – no (basis for my) evaluation

Your in-depth study: Your approach to the problem to be handed in on it's learning **31. Jan.**

Brainstorm your topic

Draw an outline of your study.

Note the dates and deadlines for your project.

Start working on your first draft:

Evaluation of your project: Written part: **it's learning 16. Febr.** Presentation: **Mon. 26. Febr.**