

# Exploration on English Literature Teaching Model Based on the College Students' Mental Health

Ying Gao<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Zhejiang Yuexiu University, Shaoxing 312000, China

Correspondence: Ying Gao, Zhejiang Yuexiu University, Shaoxing 312000, China.

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## Abstract

Shaping students' sound and wholesome personality is the most basic requirement of the talents developing in Chinese colleges, and promoting students' good psychological qualities is also an important aim of carrying out ideological and political education in colleges and realizing the education goal of moral cultivation. The process of learning English literature is also an emotional experience process of feeling, understanding, evaluation and aesthetic. Reading, studying and appreciation of literary works can play a positive role in maintaining students' mental health problems, which can help to correct, adjust and even cure some psychological problems. Based on the current situation of college students' mental health, this paper analyzes the psychological care function of English literature course, introduce the psychotherapeutic function of literature and explores how to integrate psychological care function into the teaching process.

**Keywords:** psychological qualities, mental health, English literature, teaching model

## 1. Introduction

Shaping students' sound and wholesome personality is the most basic requirement of the talents developing in Chinese colleges, and promoting students' good psychological qualities is also an important aim of carrying out Ideological and Political Theories teaching in All Courses in colleges and realizing the education goal of moral cultivation.

In May 2020, the Ministry of Education of China issued the Guidelines for Ideological and Political Construction in Colleges and Universities, which clearly states that ideological and political education construction in the higher education curriculum should be comprehensively promoted. Ideological and Political Theories teaching in All Courses is a kind of comprehensive education teaching idea, and its connotation is profound and extensive. Ideological and Political Theories teaching in All Courses is not simply to preach and explain the major national policies to students in classroom teaching, but to achieve the positive guidance of students' life ideal, values and spiritual pursuit imperceptibly while teaching students professional knowledge, so as to truly implement the Three-Overall Education—new pattern of whole-person, whole-process and all-round education. This is also one of the main goals of the current national curriculum reform in colleges and universities.

## 2. The Current Status of Mental Health Problems of Chinese College Students

According to the 2020 Chinese College Student Health Survey Report, among college students, the proportion of students suffering from mental health problems increases as the grade increases. Among senior students, emotional distress accounted for up to 47%; Half of all master's and doctoral students don't get enough sleep. The report shows that college students' psychological troubles come from academic pressure, interpersonal relationship, personality, employment stress, romantic relationships, family relationships and other aspects. Academic performance was the most important source of stress, followed by interpersonal and personality

pressures.

And according to the 2022 National Blue Book on Depression, the lifetime prevalence rate of depression disorders among Chinese adults is 6.8%, among which the rate of depression is 3.4%. At present, 95 million people suffer from depression and about 280,000 people commit suicide every year, among which 40% suffer from depression. 30% of people under the age of 18 suffer from depression; 50% of depressed patients are in school. Anxiety and depression are the most common mental health problems among college students that affect their daily lives. It should be noted that the majority of anxieties reported by college students was mild rather than severe. This means that through appropriate and effective psychological correction, adjustment and treatment, we can help students to recover a healthy emotional and psychological state.

The mental health education of college students should be attached great importance comprehensively. Students' mental health education is not only what psychologists, homeroom teachers and counselors should pay attention to, but also what many teachers of humanities should pay attention to and integrate into the professional courses!

In China, English majors in most colleges would offer English literature courses after students' junior year. At this stage, more students probably would be under great psychological pressure or even suffering from mental illness. Therefore, literature courses should pay more attention to students' mental health and study how to play the psychological health function of this course.

### **3. Mental Health Education Function of English Literature**

The study of literature course can promote students' mental health and improve their personality qualities. English literature course belongs to the category of humanities. Its teaching goal is not only to teach the literature knowledge of English-speaking countries, but also to build the healthy personality of students, expand students' English language and literature vision, cultivate their literary aesthetic analyzing ability and cultural consciousness, improve their humanistic feelings, critical thinking ability and moral quality, and inherit and carry forward China's core socialist values as well. This function of literature course is based on the psychological function of literature.

The essence of literature is to reflect human nature. Through effectively reading and learning literary texts, students can gain deeper understanding the charm of classic literature works, and in-depth reading and understanding can often help readers vent their repressed feelings, soothe the trauma of the soul, deepen the experience of life and feel the beauty of human nature and the world.

Bibliotherapy opens a new perspective for the teaching of literature courses. Bibliotherapy, also known as "reading therapy", refers to planned, guided, and controlled reading of books and other materials under the guidance of a physician to aid in the treatment of disease, particularly mood and emotional disorders. With the deepening of the research on reading therapy in recent decades, western scholars have made definitions and explanations on various aspects of reading therapy. Reading therapy mainly refers to the self-implementation method of patients with psychological problems under the condition of little or no contact with psychotherapists, with the help of the suggestion of written materials. The assumption is that the patient will be able to extract information, experience and problem-solving methods relevant to their needs from the written material. Researchers have found that reading therapy is effective in helping people adjust to cultural differences. Holman (1995) found that Portuguese adolescents were able to develop a higher self-concept and national self-esteem with the intervention of reading therapy (using guided discussion to help readers integrate the emotions and perceptions aroused by the work). At the same time, Holman points out that maintaining sensitivity to cultural differences is an important factor in the success of his research. Although the literature course does not directly focus on psychotherapy, from the perspective of the teaching mission of Three-Overall Education, the education of mental health should be the basis of our attention.

### **4. The Psychotherapeutic Function of Literature**

According to the research of modern psychology, literature not only has the function of enlightenment, cognition and entertainment, but also has the function of treatment. The therapeutic function of literature mainly refers to that If readers have certain psychological trauma, they can actively accept, absorb and reshape the emotional experience from the literary texts through reading literary texts, so as to radiate a positive life attitude and form a psychological healing effect.

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In the field of literature, many writers and scholars have long recognized the therapeutic effects of literature. As

early as in ancient Greece, the famous thinker and philosopher Aristotle recognized the healing power of literature, and he made his points on the 'purifying' function of tragedy in his *Poetics*. He believed that tragedy can inspire people perceive sympathy and phobia, thereby stimulating people's aesthetic experience and achieving purification function. In 1913, Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel Prize for Literature for his poem *Gitanjali*. Tagore's poems brought spiritual comfort and spiritual healing to people after the First World War, and made people realize that they should get out of the shadow of war and embrace a better life. Therefore, his works were also welcomed by people all over the world at that time. Influenced by this, the great writer Romain Rolland once wrote to Tagore that his poetry had opened his writing inspiration in the scarred Europe. Sigmund Freud, the famous Austrian psychiatrist, psychologist and founder of the psychoanalytic school, used psychoanalytic theory to explain that art and literature can play a certain role in people's spiritual healing.

At the end of the 20th century, Chinese scholars also began to study literary therapy. It was Shuxian Ye who first proposed the concept of 'literary therapy' in his paper. In his *Literature and Therapy*, he explores the relationship and function between literature and therapy from the perspectives of psychology, anthropology and narratology. Shuxian Ye believed that literature therapy can help literature recipients relieve or eliminate their own psychological pressure and psychological distress through literature reading or literary creation, so as to effectively stabilize the mind and promote physical and mental health.

### **5. On Exploration on English Literature Teaching Model Based on College Students' Mental Health**

First of all, the course design should be based on the aesthetic psychology of literature. The aesthetic appreciation of literature is a complex psychological process, which can cultivate students' good sentiments, enrich their minds, stimulate their imagination and creativity, enhance their thinking vitality, and leave them a broad space of thought.

Secondly, in the selection of teaching materials, some chapters or fragments with strong psychological therapy should be selected from excellent classic English literary works. *Robinson Crusoe*, which is the earliest English novel, for example, is a good choice for teaching. The eighth chapter of *Robinson Crusoe* describes how Robinson, who was stranded on an island, started a new life in the face of adversity. Defoe used detailed and true descriptions to reproduce how Robinson recorded time, how he arranged his food, clothing, shelter and transportation, how he sorted out tools, books, seeds and daily necessities from the shipwreck, and how he regarded dogs and cats as his companions. Robinson also analyzed that when facing adversity, one must learn to contrast the misfortune (Evil) with the blessing (Good), face it calmly, and look at the world with a positive and optimistic attitude. This pioneering and striving spirit are a good incentive for senior college students who are facing employment and graduation pressure.

Thirdly, thematic teaching can be carried out according to the characteristics of the theme, plot and language style of literary works, combined with targeted psychological guidance. The story consists of two lines revolving two main characters, Tom and Eliza, and they are both persecuted and trafficked slaves. They share the same crisis at the beginning, but end up with different destinations. People with different personalities have different fates. Some of them choose to endure and eventually lose everything, while some choose to fight bravely and finally usher in the spring of life. When studying literature on the theme of childhood, teachers let the students discuss their own rough experiences at a young age. This sometimes brings back memories of past trauma, and from a therapeutic point of view, it's a good opportunity for catharsis. Licking the wound is inevitable pain, but the growth of people always has to say goodbye to the past. How to distinguish right from wrong from past experience and lessons, and how to become brave and strong is the eternal theme of life everyone should learn. As the protagonist of Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, Oliver is a sensitive, gentle but brave and strong boy, whose real identity is actually the illegitimate son of a rich merchant. Oliver suffered from bullying when he was a child living in a workhouse, but he always kept a pure and kind heart. When he arrived in London, he was taken to Fagin's crime gang. Although Fagin tried his best to make Oliver go into the dark, Oliver still has a innocent heart that is not stained by the mud. In a dark and sinful world, He is always considerate and grateful to those who have helped him. All kinds of suffering could not make him degenerate, and he has not been contaminated by that sinister society. Oliver then goes through a series of setbacks and hardships again and again, and in the end all the bad people are brought to justice. When Oliver visited Fagin before he was hanged, he once again showed his kindness and prayed to God with all his heart to forgive the wrongdoer. After all the difficulties, justice has triumphed over evil, and the kind little Oliver finally lived a happy life with his aunt.

Fourth, before teaching, teachers should build and prepare the teaching atmosphere according to the teaching theme. To arrange the teaching environment in advance, multimedia means can be used, such as preparing some music, pictures, movies, etc., to create aesthetic effects suitable for different teaching themes. Teachers should try their best to make all students feel moderately relaxed, so that they can get emotional experience in the works, get psychological satisfaction in the literary works, recognize the weakness of humanity, experience the truth, goodness and beauty in life, feel the light of human nature in some dark plots, keep the hope and ideal in the

heart, and get emotional purification and cathartic. All of these can relieve students' anxiety and anxiety in reality to some extent. During the teaching process, teachers should pay attention to their appearance, clothing, demeanor and behavior. When guiding and interacting with students, teachers should also pay attention to their own emotions and expressions, and should be kind and tolerant. Teachers should use literary works to arouse students' empathy and be ready to listen to students' feelings at any time.

Table 1. English Literature Teaching Procedures

Teaching Procedures		
Preparation	The formation of literary appreciation attitude.	The formation of psychological attention
Implementation	Through reading to obtain literary cognition and role identity, situational symbiosis, stimulate imagination and thinking.	To generate psychological resonance and recognize negative emotions, and
Judgment	Deep appreciation and evaluation of works.	To improve self-cognition and learn psychological and emotional adjustment
Precipitation	Engaging in thinking, reflection, discussion, sharing, writing and some other activities etc.	To get emotional catharsis and purification, spiritual comfort

Fifth, at the beginning of teaching process, teachers can use imaginary realistic scenes similar to the plot of the works, or assume that the characters or authors are students themselves. After arousing the resonance and similar experience of students, teachers can introduce the works and content outline. The author and background are briefly introduced, and then the aesthetic conception and readers' aesthetic attitude are established according to the theme of the works. Avoid instilling concepts and guide students to read and taste the original pieces. Some witty words and key scenes can be suggested to catalyze students' empathy, and allow students to recall and reflect on similar life experiences together or express their feelings in combination with reality. Students can be guided to express their personal confusion and distress in reality. Sometimes, they can review their own lives and correct their deviant personal views by combining the ups and downs of the characters in the works. Students should be encouraged to think about their past, present and future, and let students record the harvest and understanding of thinking after class, or record their own special experience, and become one of the ways to cope with life crisis in the future, which also trains the English language expression and writing.

## 6. Conclusion

The ultimate goal of the interaction between literature and mental health education is to guide students to get psychological adjustment and healing through literary reading and appreciation, and to acquire natural language and literature by integrating into the English context. This kind of teaching mode and method is worth exploring and discussing if it can integrate into curriculum teaching effectively and realize curriculum education.

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