

ENHANCING KEY COMPETENCES IN 5TH-7TH GRADERS THROUGH CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

^aTAMILA YATSENKO, ^bOLESLIA SLYZHUK,
^cNATALIIA HOHOL, ^dNATALIIA HRYCHANYK,
^eTETIANA KLEIMENOVA

^{a,b}*Institute of Pedagogy of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine.*

^{c,d,e}*Oleksandr Dovzhenko Hlukhiv National Pedagogical University, Hlukhiv, Ukraine.*

*email: ^atamilakod@ukr.net, ^bolesja_2014@ukr.net,
^cnatashagol75@gmail.com, ^dgrichanik73@gmail.com,
^etataklym@ukr.net*

Abstract: The critical aspects of the effectiveness of contextual study of contemporary literary works in forming key competences in students of grades 5-7 are highlighted. Pedagogical, marketing, and economic-mathematical methods were used for the research. An analysis of scientific publications on this issue was conducted. The main aspects of contextual study of literature by adolescents were outlined. Approaches to classifying types of contextual study of literary works were summarised. The critical competences in the contextual study of contemporary literary works were identified and characterised. A list with a detailed description of competency-oriented tasks for teenage students in the study of literature was provided. The main directions of the methodological system of the New Ukrainian School were determined. The results of a case study analysis of the study of literary works with an emphasis on context among students of grades 5-7 in Kyiv were presented. The features of forming critical competences in grades 5-7 students in contextualising literary works based on the research results were highlighted. The study showed that the contextual approach to literature study effectively forms the competences of grades 5-7 students. It improves reading literacy, critical thinking, motivation to read, communication and creative skills, and the ability to work with information, making learning more exciting and modern.

Keywords: Students of grades 5-7, Key competences, Methodological system, Competency-oriented tasks, Contemporary Ukrainian literature, Adolescent literature, Context, Contextual study of literary works

1 Introduction

Modern educational standards require teachers to cultivate knowledge and key competences in students, such as critical thinking, communication skills, and social responsibility. Contextual study of literature contributes to achieving these goals. Emotional intelligence is one of the critical competences necessary for successful socialisation and professional activity. Literary works allow students to gain a deeper understanding of people's emotions and motivations, fostering the development of empathy and interaction skills. In today's world, where cultural diversity is the norm, it is essential to instil respect for other cultures and traditions in students. Students can better understand and accept cultural differences through contextual study of literature. Modern students live in a world where access to information is virtually unlimited. It is essential to teach them to evaluate information critically and to be able to search for and analyse it. Contextual study of literature promotes the development of these skills. Today's society faces numerous social challenges, such as discrimination, poverty, and environmental problems. Literature that reflects these issues can become an essential tool for fostering social responsibility and an active civic stance in students. Creativity and an innovative approach are becoming increasingly important in modern education. Studying literary works through the lens of context allows for the use of various creative methods, making learning more exciting and compelling.

The study of contextual study of contemporary literary works in forming key competences in students of grades 5-7 is highly relevant. It meets modern educational process requirements and promotes the comprehensive development of students, preparing them for life in a complex and rapidly changing world.

2 Literature review

Using authentic dilemmas and contemporary issues, the authors encourage teachers and their instructors to raise and explore questions based on inquiries focused on teaching various literary texts, both classic and modern, traditional and digital (Beach et al., 2020). To make the study of literature and culture a socially,

politically, and economically relevant scientific activity today, humanities scholars must turn to contextual and scientific work. Moreover, they argue that comparative cultural studies – a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach using new media technologies – will achieve global presence and social significance for the humanities through enhanced scholarship (Zepetnek & Vasvári, 2014). Context is a specific term in literary studies that helps understand the meaning of a literary work. Context can be social, economic, cultural, historical, literary, biographical, etc., and many contextual categories exist. Scholars propose a cognitive approach to contextual discourse (Bovsunivska, 2011). An attempt was made to justify the contextual approach's importance in the literature study and its impact on the development of students' competences (Utami et al., 2023). The contextual approach evolves with social and school changes, aiming to effectively use new opportunities to achieve the "old" goal: to make literature lessons enjoyable for students, to form a qualified reader who can enjoy the art of words and enrich their moral and aesthetic experience (Gladyshev, 2022). Emphasis is placed on the conceptual paradigm of school literary education in Ukraine, which is based on a cultural approach to studying foreign literature. The implementation of this approach in textbooks and anthologies is discussed, where the main emphasis is on biographical, historical-literary, and cultural-artistic contexts. It is proved that the main ideas of the cultural approach in the study of Ukrainian literature are systematically embodied in literary-critical and explanatory materials and the methodological tools of textbooks for grade 10, recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (Hohol, 2019). It is noted that the methodological achievements of past historical periods are effectively integrated into modern strategies for creating and using teaching materials in school literary education (Hohol, 2021). An analytical-critical review of publications on the comparative approach to the study of literature in theory and practice of methodological science was carried out in the monograph (Hrytsak, 2019, 2020). Forming civic competences in schoolchildren through studying contemporary Ukrainian literature will contribute to their personal development, fostering active citizens, understanding universal and national values, and striving for tolerance. Implementing lesson models and extracurricular activities that develop civic and social competences is promising (Slyzhuk, 2024a). The system of competency-oriented tasks in Ukrainian literature aimed at developing the critical competences of the New Ukrainian School was investigated, with a focus on the competency potential of fantasy literary works and approaches to integrating learning tasks into the process of literature lessons in grade 7 were proposed (Slyzhuk, 2024b). Attention is focused on the importance of the rational organisation of each Ukrainian literature lesson, which is part of a unified methodological system aimed at developing critical and creative thinking in student readers, skills of conscious reading, perception, comprehension, and evaluation of literary works, and the ability to independently form their reading circle (Yatsenko & Slyzhuk, 2022).

The issue of updating the curriculum and methodological support for the school course of Ukrainian literature based on the cultural approach is relevant. Emphasis is placed on the artistic context as a methodological principle of integration into studying literary works in senior classes (Yatsenko, 2021). The problem of implementing a competency-oriented model of school literary education and the importance of preparing innovative educational materials for Ukrainian literature in the New Ukrainian School is highlighted. The content of the new textbook for grade 5 from the Institute of Pedagogy of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine, aimed at forming students' key competences, is revealed. The features of organising the educational activities of fifth graders for the consistent formation of 11 key competences are demonstrated (Yatsenko & Pakharenko, 2022). The problem of contextual

study of Ukrainian literature in school is considered from a relevant perspective, and it is proved that the use of historical context in lessons of contemporary Ukrainian prose contributes to the development of civic, social, and cultural key competences and the formation of an understanding of the interconnection of historical events and the literary process.

Contextual teaching and learning is one prominent approach that can help students understand the significance of educational materials based on personal, social, and cultural contexts. This can give students the knowledge and skills to actively develop their understanding of the materials. The research aims to determine and justify the role of the contextual study of contemporary literary works in forming key competences in students in grades 5-7.

3 Research methods

Various methods were used during the research to achieve a deep and comprehensive understanding of the problem. Pedagogical methods were applied to systematically observe the educational process and student behaviour while studying literary works. The survey and questionnaire method allowed data collection from students, teachers, and parents regarding the perception and understanding of literary works and the impact of the contextual approach. Conducting interviews with students and teachers contributed to a deeper understanding of their experience and attitudes towards the contextual study of literature. The case-study method helped analyse specific instances of studying literary works in Ukrainian literature. Implementing the contextual study in the educational process and comparing the results with a control group, where traditional teaching methods were used, allowed for a correlation analysis to identify the direct relationship between the contextual study of literature and the level of formation of critical competences in students of grades 5-7. These methods can be combined to obtain a complete picture of the role of the contextual study of literature in the educational process and its impact on the development of critical competences in students of grades 5-7.

4 Results

Implementing the principle of contextuality in the school teaching of Ukrainian literature involves the interrelation of a literary work with extratextual information, ensuring a qualitative comprehension of the material and the development of skills to analyse and interpret a literary work considering its ideological and artistic-aesthetic integrity. The current Ukrainian literature curriculum includes biographical, historical, and artistic contexts actively implemented in textbooks. The analysis of the current educational provision highlights this aspect of

subject methodology (Tryhub, 2020b). Implementing the principle of contextuality in teaching Ukrainian literature focuses on connecting the work with extratextual information, which ensures a deeper understanding of the material and the improvement of skills to analyse and interpret a literary work. The current curriculum includes biographical, historical, and artistic contexts actively implemented in textbooks (Slyzhuk, 2024b).

The contextual study of contemporary literary works plays a significant role in forming critical competences in grades 5-7 students. This involves analysing literary works considering cultural, historical, social, and psychological contexts, contributing to the development of various competences (Figure 1).

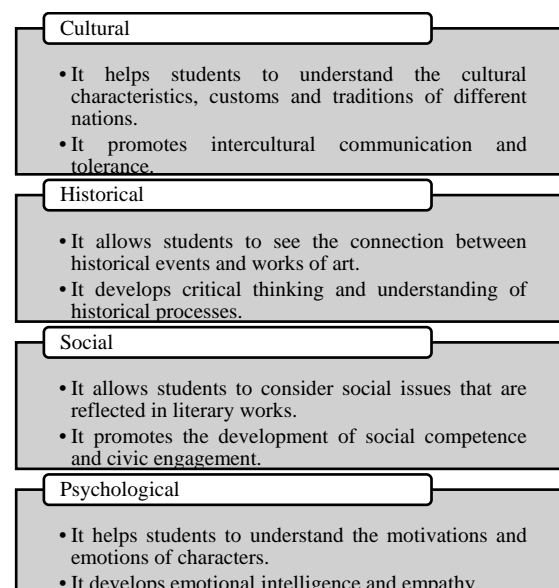


Figure 1. Critical aspects of contextual study of literature by adolescents

Source: compiled by the author based on (Jacqueline & Sue, 2012; van der Zanden et al., 2020)

Ten main types can be distinguished (Figure 2) based on the generalisation of scientific, theoretical, and practical approaches to adolescents' contextual study of contemporary literature.

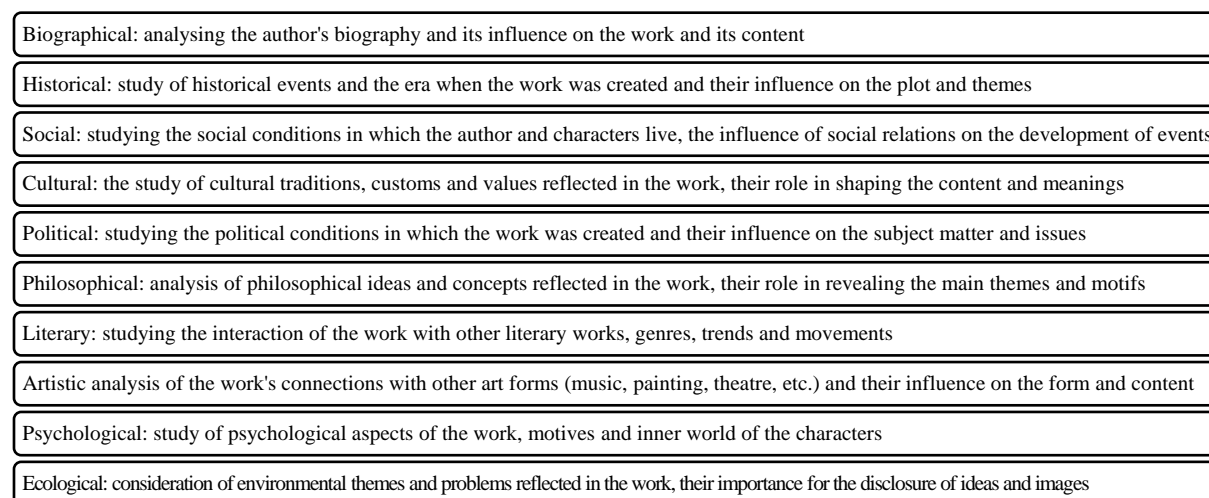


Figure 2. Classification of contextual study of a contemporary literature work

Source: compiled by the author based on (Jacqueline & Sue, 2012; Zepetnek & Vasvári, 2014; Beach et al., 2020; Yatsenko, 2021; Slyzhuk, 2021; Tryhub, 2020a)

The contextual study of literary works in grades 5-7 contributes to students' comprehensive development, helping them better understand texts, develop critical thinking, and expand their worldview.

Experts note that literary context is critical in specialised education. The peculiarity of school literary analysis of a literary work in philological-oriented classes lies in the necessity to consider the enhanced level of creative abilities and cognitive interests of senior students, which implies a deeper study of Ukrainian literature at the specialised level (Tryhub, 2017).

According to Tryhub (2017), the literary context systematises and deepens the educational process, ensuring senior students grasp subject-specific knowledge. History, literary theory, and literary criticism contribute to the formation of reading competence, the acquisition of subject-specific knowledge, and the improvement of competences necessary for the successful self-realisation of students in society (Tryhub, 2017). As a result of this approach, adolescents develop several particular competences (Figure 3).

1. Communicative competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis and discussion of literary works develops oral and written language skills • It promotes the development of argumentation and debate skills
2. Social and civic competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study of social themes in literature develops an understanding of social processes and active citizenship • It helps students to realise their role in society
3. Cultural competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to different cultures through literature broadens students' cultural outlook • It promotes respect for cultural diversity
4. Information competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with texts, searching for and analysing information develops skills in dealing with information sources • It promotes the development of critical thinking and the ability to analyse information
5. Emotional intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studying the psychological aspects of characters develops the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions. • It promotes the development of empathy and mutual understanding.

Figure 3. Forming key competences in the contextual study of a contemporary literature work
Source: compiled by the authors based on (Gladyshev, 2022; Utami et al., 2023; Hohol, 2019, 2021)

Competence-oriented tasks play an essential role in teenagers' learning process, particularly in the study of contemporary Ukrainian literature. Their significance can be considered from several key aspects: development of critical thinking, formation

of self-learning skills, improvement of communication skills, increased motivation for learning, development of creative abilities, preparation for life in modern society, and connection with real life (Table 1).

Table 1. Competence-based tasks in literature study by adolescents

Focus	Tasks	Criteria
Analysis of a literary work	Read a selected work by a contemporary Ukrainian author and analyse it	The plot and composition of the work. Images of the main characters. Main themes and issues raised in the work. Stylistic features (language, metaphors, similes). Personal attitude to the work and its relevance in the modern world.
Writing a review	Write a review of the work you have read	A summary of the work without spoilers. Evaluation of the author's writing style and language. Personal opinion about the work with justification. Comparison with other works by the same author or genre
Interview with a character	Pretend to be a journalist and interview one of the characters in the story.	Prepare questions that would reveal the character's motivation, feelings and thoughts about the events in the story
Creating a book trailer	Create a short video (book trailer) that would interest your peers in reading the selected work	Main plot points without spoilers. Visual and sound effects that convey the atmosphere of the work. A call to read.
Creative writing	Write your sequel or alternative ending to the work you have read	It is essential to preserve the author's style and the logic of the development of events and characters
Discussion based on the work	Organise a class discussion on the topic raised in the work	Choose a moderator to lead the discussion and prepare questions for discussion in advance
Reader's portfolio	Create a portfolio	Brief descriptions of the readings. Personal impressions of each work. Illustrations or creative works related to the readings. Feedback and reviews.

Source: compiled by the authors based on (Jacqueline & Sue, 2012; Yatsenko, 2018, 2020, 2021)

Competence-oriented tasks help students develop critical thinking, one of the most essential skills in the modern world. Analysing literary works, comparing different authors and works, and discussing complex topics stimulate students to think deeply and critically approach information. Through such tasks, students learn to work independently with literary sources and

find and analyse information, a crucial skill for their future studies and lives. They also develop the ability to organise their learning process and manage their time effectively. Tasks that involve group work, discussions, writing reviews or interviews improve students' communication skills. They learn to express

their thoughts clearly and convincingly, listen to others, and collaborate in a group.

Competence-oriented tasks are usually more exciting and engaging for students than traditional forms of learning. They include elements of creativity, interactivity, and real-life situations, making the learning process more exciting and motivating. Tasks that involve writing essays and creating book trailers or illustrations contribute to developing students' creative abilities. They can experiment with different forms of expressing their thoughts and ideas, stimulating their imagination and creativity.

Competence-oriented tasks help students develop skills necessary for successful functioning in modern society. This includes academic knowledge, social skills, the ability to adapt and solve problems, and the ability to work in a team.

Such tasks help students understand how the knowledge and skills acquired in school can be applied in real life. For example, analysing contemporary literary works can help them better understand social issues and phenomena they may encounter.

Competence-oriented tasks in studying contemporary Ukrainian literature by teenagers significantly impact their educational process, contributing to the development of essential skills and competences. They make learning more enjoyable, practical, and relevant to the demands of modern society.

The contextual study of contemporary literature helps make the learning process more exciting and compelling, contributes to students' comprehensive development, and forms vital competences necessary for successful adaptation in the modern world.

Active searches for influential factors in implementing the competence-based approach necessitate creating and implementing a methodology for effectively organising competence-oriented learning of Ukrainian literature, which will contribute to improving the quality of modern school literary education in school practice (Yatsenko, 2018).

In Ukraine, several measures have already been implemented to contextualise contemporary literature to form key competences in grades 5-7 students. Textbooks "Ukrainian Literature" for grades 5, 6, and 7, created by Yatsenko et al. (2022), are a modern and effective tool for teaching that meets the requirements of the new Ukrainian school. They contribute to developing key competences, integrating the contextual study of literature, and providing an interactive approach to learning, making them valuable and exciting for students and teachers (Yatsenko et al., 2021, 2022, 2023a, 2024). An essential step in improving the educational process and meeting modern

requirements and challenges is the publication of Model Educational Programmes in Ukrainian Literature for grades 5-6 (Yatsenko & Kachak et al., 2021) and for grades 7-9 (Yatsenko et al., 2023b), which are recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. These programmes aim to form a comprehensively developed personality who possesses not only knowledge of literature but also crucial competences necessary for a successful life in modern society.

The updated educational programmes include works by contemporary Ukrainian authors, allowing students to become familiar with modern trends in literature. The programmes include works of various genres - from poetry to prose, which contribute to the diverse development of students. The programmes envisage the creation of projects based on the read works, where they explore themes, symbolism, and cultural context of the work, conduct research, and analyse its historical and social context. An important aspect is interactive teaching methods: staging excerpts from works and role-playing games based on plots help students understand the texts more deeply, using presentations, video materials, and audiobooks for greater immersion in the material. In the context of digitalisation, the use of educational platforms (for example, "Na urok", "Osvita.ua") is becoming increasingly important, where materials are available for deeper study of literature, and students can create video reviews, virtual exhibitions, blogs, on the topic of read works. Literary clubs operate in schools, where students discuss contemporary works and share impressions and critical comments. Holding debates on topics raised in the works of contemporary authors helps to form critical thinking and communication skills.

Organising meetings with contemporary Ukrainian writers allows students to communicate directly with authors, ask questions, and learn about the book-writing process. Students participate in literary festivals and competitions at the school, regional, and national levels. Encouraging students to write stories or poems based on read works or motifs. Creating illustrations for works and comics helps students better visualise what they have read and develop artistic abilities. Thanks to implementing these measures, students in grades 5-7 in Ukrainian general education institutions better understand contemporary literature and develop key competences, such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and social skills. This contributes to the comprehensive development of personality and preparation for active life in society.

Researchers at the Institute of Pedagogy of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine conducted case studies of specific cases of literary works with an emphasis on context among students of grades 5-7 in one of the general secondary education institutions in Kyiv (Table 2).

Table 2. Results of case study of teaching artistic works focusing on context among students of grades 5-7 in Kyiv

Work	Context	Methodology	Results
I. Franko "Zakhar Berkut" - novella	Historical, socio-political	Using the historical context to understand the work	Students developed critical thinking and skills in analysing historical events and their impact on the literary process.
I. Nechuy-Levytsky "The Kaidash Family" - novella	Cultural and everyday life	Focus on the everyday and social aspects of life in a nineteenth-century Ukrainian village.	Students increased their understanding of the cultural and social conditions of the time, which contributed to the development of social competences.
I. Franko "Moses" - poem	Philosophical, religious	Integrating philosophical and religious ideas into the process of analysing the novel	Students developed the ability to think philosophically and to have a deeper understanding of spiritual and ethical issues.
I. Bagryany "Tiger Hunters" - novel	Political, historical	Studying a novel in the context of the political history of Ukraine in the twentieth century	Students learned to analyse political events and their impact on people's lives, contributing to developing civic competences.
T. Shevchenko "The Cherry Orchard by the House" - a collection of poems	Literary, cultural	Interpreting poetry in the context of the national revival	Students strengthened their national consciousness and developed aesthetic perception, which contributed to the formation of cultural competences.

Source: author's research

In all cases, studying literary works emphasising context contributed to developing key competences in students, such as critical thinking, social and civic skills, cultural awareness, and philosophical understanding. During observations, records were made of students' activity during discussions and text analysis, as

well as students' reactions to various elements of the work (characters, conflict, themes) in the form of analytical notes. As a result of summarising observations throughout the academic year, specific patterns were identified (Table 3).

Table 3. The results of observing the learning process and behaviour of grades 5-7 students in the study of a work of art

Results of the observation	Description of the result
Students reactions to the theme of the story	The students were highly interested in discussing the topic of the work. Most students showed interest in the topic's relevance and reflection in modern life.
Understanding of the characters and their motivations	Students showed diversity in their understanding of the characters. Some students showed a deeper understanding of the main character's motivations, while others paid more attention to the dialogues and interactions between the characters.
Participation in discussions	It was observed that some students actively participated in the discussions, often asking questions of each other and expressing their opinions about the events in the novel. Others took a more passive role, listening to the discussion.
Demonstration of critical thinking	The analysis showed that some students displayed high critical thinking, questioning the author's position and expressing their opinions about the characters' actions.

Source: own observations

This analysis demonstrates how systematic observation of the educational process can help understand the impact of studying literary works on students' academic achievements and development in grades 5-7. The correlation analysis conducted (data analysis package in Excel) based on the assessment data of students in grades 5-7 (50 individuals) by the level of formation of critical competences (scale of 50-100 points) and the contextual study of literature (scale of 2-5 points) showed that there is a strong positive relationship between them (correlation coefficient 0.87). This means that more frequent use of the

contextual approach is associated with higher student competences.

The results of the correlation analysis can confirm or refute the hypothesis that the contextual study of literature influences the formation of key competences in students of grades 5-7. However, correlation does not imply a causal relationship and additional studies may be necessary to confirm the results.

Table 4. The results of the correlation analysis of assessing students of grades 5-7 by the level of formation of key competences and the contextual study of literature (data analysis package in Excel)

	Contextual literature study	Competence level
Contextual literature study	1	
Competence level	0,877715579	1

Source: calculated by the authors

5 Discussion

The formation of key competences in students of grades 5-7 is an essential stage in their development. During this period,

students transition from primary to secondary school, which requires adaptation to new forms of learning and increased independence. Below are the main features of forming key competences at this age (Table 5).

Table 5. Features of forming key competences in students of grades 5-7 through the contextual study of literary works

Competence	Features
Reading with understanding	
Development of analytical thinking	Students learn to analyse texts, understand character motivations, plot structure and literary devices
Critical thinking	The ability to question and discuss what they have read, express their own opinions and give reasons for them
Cultural and literary competence	
Introduction to literary heritage	Understanding the significance of literary works in the context of national culture and history
Aesthetic perception	Fostering a love of literature and art, developing emotional intelligence
Communicative competence	
Development of language skills	Ability to express thoughts orally and in writing, participate in discussions
Social skills	Working in groups, listening and understanding other points of view
Information and digital competence	
Working with information sources	Learning to use libraries, online resources and e-textbooks
Digital literacy	Using digital tools to create presentations, projects, etc.
Civic and social competence	
Development of national identity	Fostering patriotism, understanding the importance of literature in shaping national identity
Social activity	Involvement in social and cultural projects, studying the problems of modern society through the prism of literary works
Practical methods	
Project work	Creating projects based on the readings
Role play and theatre	Re-enacting scenes from literary works
Discussions and debates	Discussing the themes raised in the stories
Creative tasks	Writing essays, creating illustrations, literary criticism

Source: own observations

The formation of key competences in studying Ukrainian literature contributes to students' comprehensive development, enhancing their education and preparing them for active participation in public life. Forming key competences in grades 5-7 students is a complex but necessary process that ensures their successful development and preparation for future learning and life.

6 Conclusion

The contextual approach to studying literature significantly improves students' reading literacy. They better understand texts, can identify main ideas, and can analyse and interpret the content of works.

Through the contextual study of literature, students develop critical thinking. They learn to evaluate literary works from different perspectives and discuss the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they were created.

The contextual approach allows for integrating knowledge from various subjects, such as history, culture, and geography, contributing to a better understanding of literary works and their context. This helps students see connections between disciplines and apply the knowledge gained in new situations.

Contextual literature study makes learning more exciting and motivating for students. They see the practical value of literature and understand its connection with real life and contemporary issues, which stimulates them to read more actively.

Students participating in discussions, presentations, and group projects develop communication skills. They learn to express their thoughts, listen to others, argue their position, and work in a team.

The contextual study of literature involves working with various sources of information, which promotes the development of skills in searching, analysing, and synthesising information. Students learn to use different sources to deepen their knowledge and understanding of literary works.

Contextual tasks, such as writing their works, creating projects, and other creative activities, contribute to developing students' creative abilities. Students have the opportunity to express their imagination, creativity, and individuality.

Research has shown that the contextual approach to studying literature effectively forms various competences in grades 5-7 students. It improves reading literacy, critical thinking, motivation to read, communication and creative skills, and working with information. This approach makes the learning process more exciting and relevant to modern requirements.

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