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LITERATURE AND ITS ROLE IN DISSEMINATING VALUES AND ETHICS AMONG STUDENTS

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Introduction:

Throughout history, various forms of literature, such as Arabian stories like Ali Baba, have been instrumental in imparting moral values. Religious holy books have long served as a source of wisdom and moral guidance, with the stories of prophets, from Father Adam to Prophet Mohammed, offering valuable lessons for life. Literature possesses a multi-dimensional potential to contribute to society by fostering behavioral development, problem-solving skills, and the appropriate handling of social situations. By extracting moral lessons from ancient stories, literature can play a significant role in nurturing and enriching moral awareness. This paper emphasizes the importance of value-based education and explores how literature can effectively cultivate ethics and values among individuals while also serving as a means to transmit these values to students.

The Importance of Value-Based Education:

One of the significant challenges we face in our daily lives is a crisis in moral values. Values such as humanism, kindness, honesty, justice, patriotism, and truthfulness are essential for maintaining a well-ordered society and positively influencing human lives. Unfortunately, there has been a decline in the appreciation of moral values in our society, leading to a crisis in values. To address this problem, we need to recognize and raise awareness about the deep-rooted ethics and moral values that should guide our society.

In today's modern society, material possessions and social status have taken precedence over important emotions like mercy, sympathy, and kindness. Human values have been disregarded and have lost their meaning in day-to-day life, as people have become mere assets in the pursuit of wealth. People are so consumed with acquiring material wealth that they have little time or inclination to consider the well-being of others. However, human values should be the foundation of social well-being, and those who demonstrate respect for human values should be recognized and valued by society.

The need to address the crisis in human values and prioritize social values is a pressing issue in our daily lives. We must work together to create a better future for the next generation by emphasizing excellence and quality in education as core values that can transform our world.

Value education involves fostering positive habits and behaviors by instilling moral values and promoting virtuous actions. It begins in families and continues in schools with the help of educators. Therefore, teachers, families, and educational activities all play vital roles in values education. Families serve as the primary source of role models for children and should be mindful of their behaviors and attitudes. Teachers also have a crucial role to play in shaping the values of young people, as their actions and teachings have a significant impact. Educational activities such as organizing seminars and



conferences on value-based themes can be beneficial, and families can actively participate in these initiatives to foster a positive harmony among families, educators, and educational programs.

The inculcation of value-based education has become an urgent necessity, and it cannot be solely the responsibility of teachers. The promotion of essential values and the guidance towards leading a healthy life are crucial for individuals to improve their overall quality of life and become responsible citizens.

The Importance and Value of Literature:

Literature holds significant importance and value as it reflects society's perspective. Throughout history, literature has captivated students of all ages. The true essence of literature lies in both entertaining and educating its readers. While literature provides pleasure, its ultimate purpose is to impart wisdom. By engaging with literature, students gain an understanding of diverse cultures and universal human emotions such as love, anger, jealousy, and greed. As students develop emotional intelligence, it enables them to strike a balance in their personal and professional lives. In essence, literature serves a dual purpose by facilitating language acquisition and instilling core values.

Literature can be a powerful tool for character education. It lends itself well to teaching moral dilemmas and examining various character traits. Through literature, students can empathize with characters and gain a deeper understanding of different qualities, leading to a cathartic experience and a connection between the reader and the characters. Literature can also serve as a platform to discuss challenging topics such as incarceration, bullying, death, and abuse. It provides emotional and social support to students facing such issues, making it an effective approach to address difficult subjects. Bibliotherapy, or therapeutic reading, offers students the opportunity to find solutions by relating to the characters and conflicts within a story, ultimately helping them cope with their own thoughts and problems.

Additionally, children's literature plays a crucial role in character education. Picture books, in particular, appeal to children and effectively communicate ideas. The visual images leave a lasting impression and aid in understanding abstract concepts taught in character education stories. Children often relate to the characters and illustrations in picture books, enhancing their effectiveness as educational tools. Storytelling is especially impactful for children, as they perceive it as a gift from the teacher. Consequently, they are more likely to internalize and remember the lessons conveyed through these stories.

In summary, literature holds immense importance and value in society. It serves as a medium for both language acquisition and character education. By engaging with literature, students gain knowledge, develop empathy, and acquire essential life skills.

Teaching Values through Literature:

Teaching English Literature introduces students to a whole new world and fosters the development of core ethics and values. The importance of instilling these values in the younger generation is recognized worldwide. Studying literature, whether through short stories or novels, enables students to discover moral lessons beyond the texts themselves. By providing students with rich literary materials to read, they can learn to evaluate their own behavior by analyzing stories and fables that carry underlying moral messages. Each myth or reading material with a moral imparts a profound impact on their young minds, allowing them to internalize these values in their everyday lives.

Children's Literature:

According to Donna Norton (2010) in her book *Through the Eyes of a Child*, children's literature holds immense value. It provides young students with opportunities to engage with literature based on their intellectual capacities. Additionally, it allows them to appreciate their own culture, as well as other



cultures they may not have encountered personally. Children's literature plays a crucial role in nurturing emotional intelligence and creativity. It also contributes to the growth and development of students' personalities and social skills. Moreover, it serves as a means of transmitting important literature, themes, and values from one generation and culture to another.

Children's literature is instrumental in strengthening emotional intelligence in young minds. Stories often present moments of crisis, where characters must make ethical choices and reflect on their decisions. This modeling of ethical decision-making is crucial for adolescents (Norton, 2010).

For instance, "Guji Guji" by Chen (2004) tells the story of a crocodile adopted into a family of ducks. The protagonist faces a dilemma of either betraying his adopted family or returning to his own species. Ultimately, he remains true to his beliefs and chooses not to betray his family.

"The Scar" by Moundlic (2007) is a poignant book that explores grief as a young boy copes with the loss of his mother. This theme requires a level of emotional and mental intelligence, as death can be a challenging concept for young teenagers. While more suitable for older students, discussing the theme of death is important.

"Selma" by Bauer (2002) is another book that encourages emotional intelligence. It delves into the pursuit of happiness for a young sheep, presenting a philosophical exploration of its meaning.

Likewise, "The Big Box" by Morrison (1999) tells the story of children whose freedom is taken away when they are confined to a box. The book addresses deeper issues related to the absence of freedom.

Children's literature prompts students to delve deeper into their emotions. It plays a vital role in fostering character, morality, and social development. During their formative years, children are highly impressionable, and children's literature can help shape them into compassionate, thoughtful, and empathetic individuals. As children transition from the pre-operational to the operational stage of cognitive development, they become less egocentric and more capable of understanding others' feelings and perspectives. Developing the ability to consider others' viewpoints and avoid selfishness is crucial, as appropriate relationships require such understanding (Norton, 2010).

Children's literature also facilitates social development by encouraging acceptance of others and their differences. Books like "And Tango Makes Three" (Parnell Richardson, 2005), "Molly's Family" (Garden, 2004), "Heather Has Two Mommies" (Newman & Souza, 1989), and "Daddy's Roommate" (Wilhoite, 2000) present situations that encourage students to adopt a more liberal and open-minded attitude towards different types of families, emphasizing that love is the essential element in a family. Furthermore, children's literature can inspire students to develop social relationships and foster social interactions. "Loop the Loop" (Dugan, 1992) portrays an unlikely friendship between a young child and an elderly person, who bond over their shared joy of playing with a yo-yo. In "A Couple of Boys Have the Best Week Ever" (Frazee, 2008), the boys learn to consider the needs of others as they create a diorama for a grandfather who is passionate about penguins. Literature motivates students to be thoughtful and kind individuals, contributing to their moral development and shaping them into morally upright citizens.

Poetry:

Poetry is an incredibly potent educational tool and a timeless art form that can impart knowledge at any age. It serves as a universal medium for expressing emotions and passions, allowing individuals to delve into the beauty and essence of existence. Only poetry has the ability to convey timeless truths and illuminate cultural diversity within humanity. Throughout history, poetry has explored a wide range of themes, including social issues, war, love, the wonders of nature, and spirituality. Its primary purpose is to evoke experiences, engaging the senses and evoking memories and emotions. Poetry serves as a powerful catalyst for fostering creativity among students, pushing the boundaries of language and



expanding their aesthetic horizons. It cultivates empathy and encourages individuals to appreciate the complexities of the world from fresh perspectives. Poetry should hold a significant place in our lives, not only for the aesthetic pleasure it brings but also for its capacity to awaken our senses, forge connections with ourselves and others, and guide us in leading more meaningful lives.

Conclusion:

The preservation of social and moral values is of utmost importance for the cohesive functioning of any society. Without these values, modern society cannot sustain itself. Therefore, it is crucial to prioritize and uphold human values. Unfortunately, in today's world, human values are losing their significance and gradually deteriorating over time. This decline in ethical standards within communities results in a loss of moral integrity. It is imperative to raise awareness through socio-cultural organizations about the importance of preserving traditional customs and heritage. English literature plays a significant role in instilling ethics and morals through value education. It helps individuals understand the intangible aspects of life such as values, beliefs, and attitudes, which are essential for a sustainable existence. Furthermore, it facilitates the building of bridges between different cultures, promoting mutual understanding and harmony.

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