

KAUNAS JONAS JABLONSKIS HIGH SCHOOL

*The Use of Literary Texts in
Developing Learners'
Thinking Skills*

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Why include literature in English lessons?

- Developing vocabulary;
- Observing grammatical structures;
- Widening one's worldview;
- Enabling students' language production skills (speaking and writing) – providing arguments, examples and ideas!
- Developing students' critical thinking skills.

What do I want to teach students through literary texts?

- To be able to consider different viewpoints. Understand that others may be right too.
- To be able to provide substantial, evidence-based and reliable opinions on various matters (helps in exams but more importantly in life);
- To learn to deal with adversity;
- To be able to resist injustice, inequality and unfairness;
- To learn to be courageous in expressing their opinions, views and attitudes. If there's no courage, no other virtues matter.

(NB: Good exam results are the bonus / side effect of a proper education, not the goal).

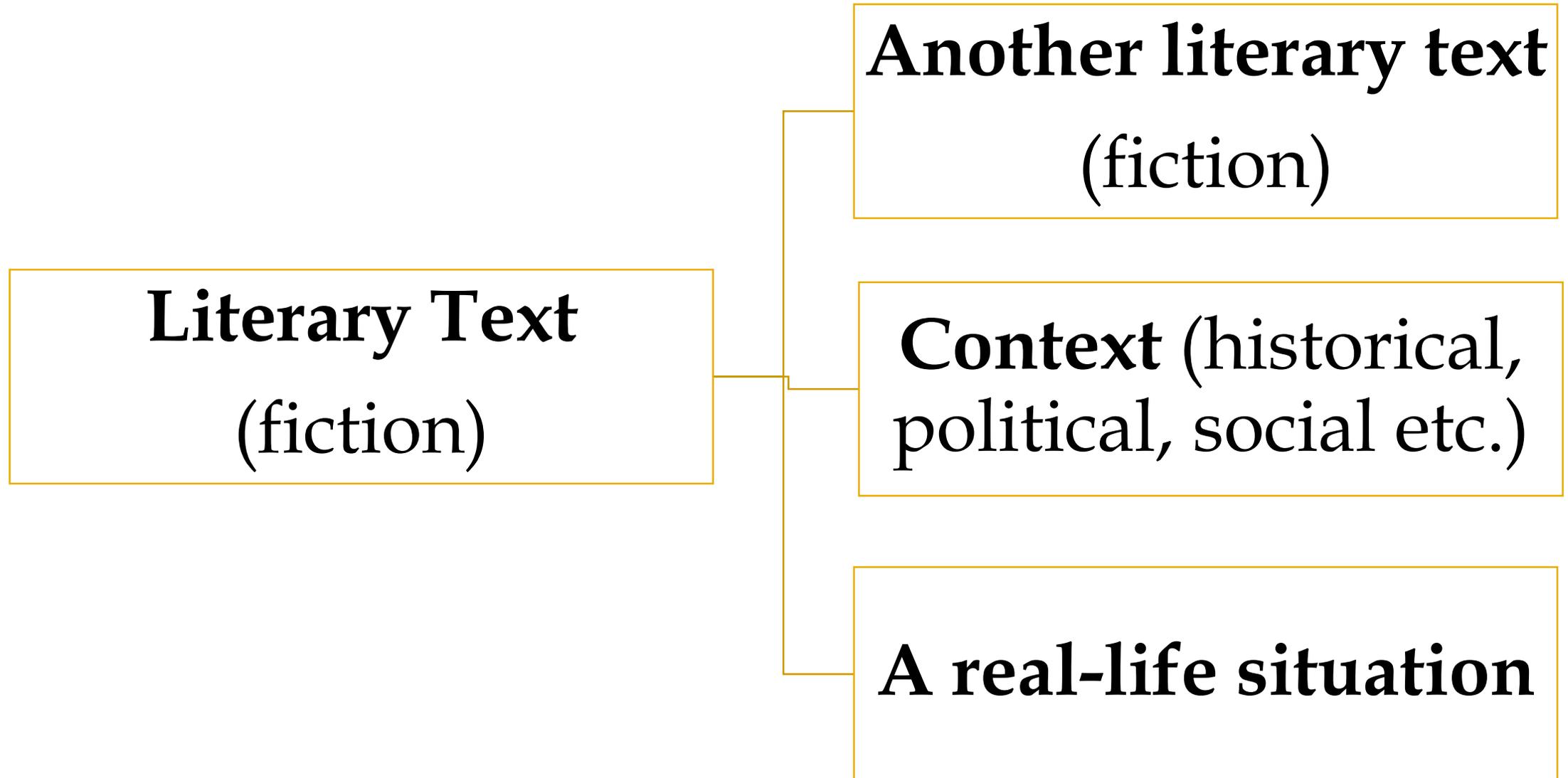
Lesson samples: grades 9-10

- Unit on **The Bible** (4 stories: Adam and Eve, Noah's Ark, Moses, the Maccabees, Jewish / Kabbalistic interpretation vs. the Christian interpretation);
- Unit on **Holocaust literature** (reading Elie Wiesel's *Night*, excerpts from Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, "The Hangman" by Maurice Ogden, "Terrible Things" by Eve Bunting etc.)
- Unit on **Identity** (reading "Going Home" by Archie Weller, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde, *The Wasp Factory* by Iain Banks, "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou, *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah, translating passages, e.g. from Justinas Marcinkevičius' poetry (see "Description of Jurga") etc.)
- Unit of **Relationships** (reading "The House is Not the Same" by Henry Normal, "The Company Man" by Ellen Goodman, "Andrew, Jane, the Parson and the Fox" by Thomas Hardy, "Kirvis" by Agota Kristof etc.)

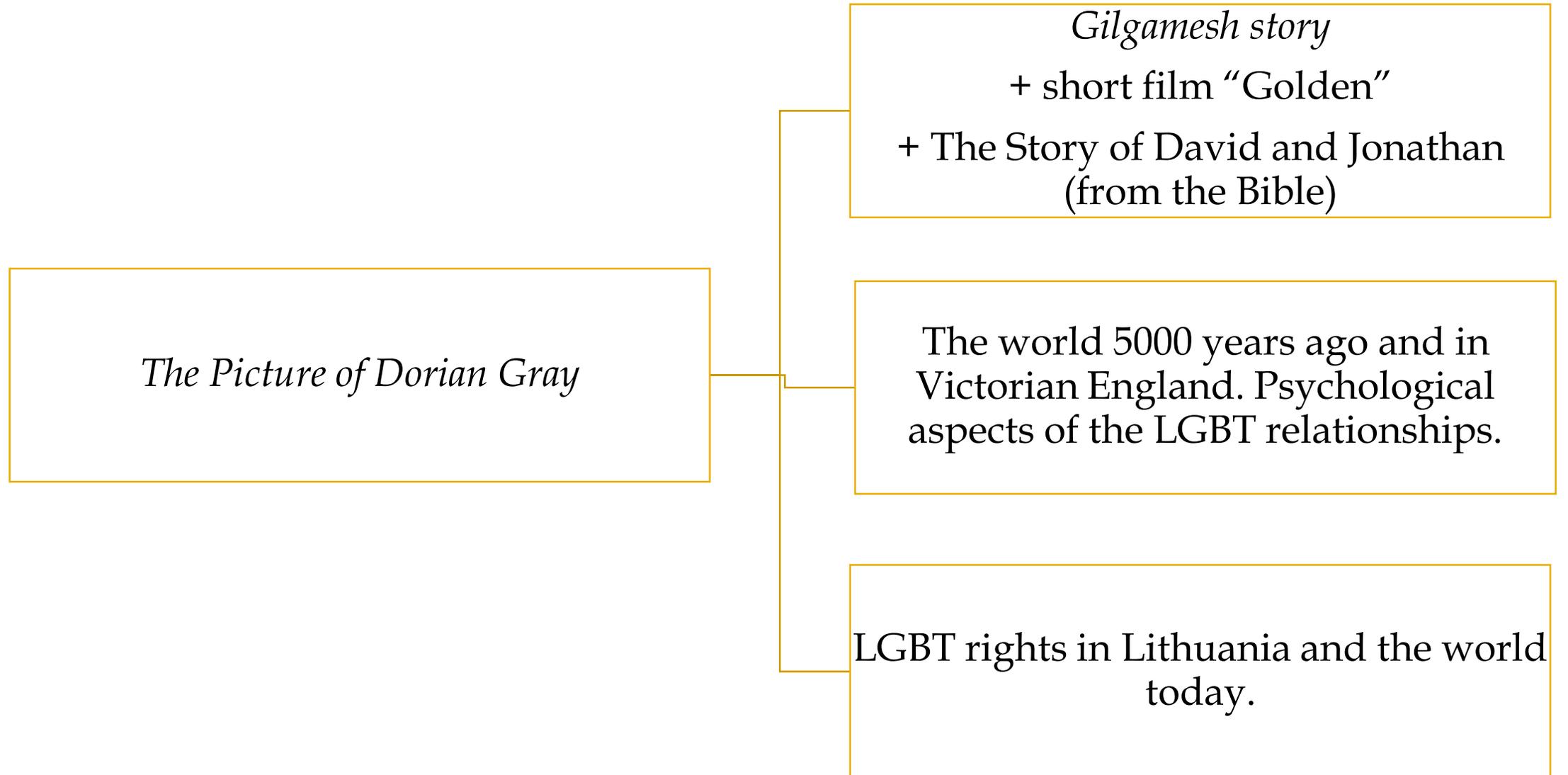
Lesson samples: grades 9-10

- Unit on **Globalisation** (“Kalbos” by Dag Solstad, “Paper People” by Harry Baker);
- Unit on **Statehood** (Analysing **national anthems** of 5 countries);
- Unit on **Totalitarianism. Utopia and Dystopia** (reading *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood);
- Unit of **Myths and mythology** (reading excerpts from *Gilgamesh*, some Biblical stories (“The Tower of Babel”), applying theories by Erich Fromm and Sigmund Freud);
- Unit of **Fairy Tales** (reading (watching?) “Beauty and the Beast”, “Jack and the Beanstalk”, comparing Russian, English, Jewish, Japanese fairy tales, discussing Vladimir Propp’s theory).

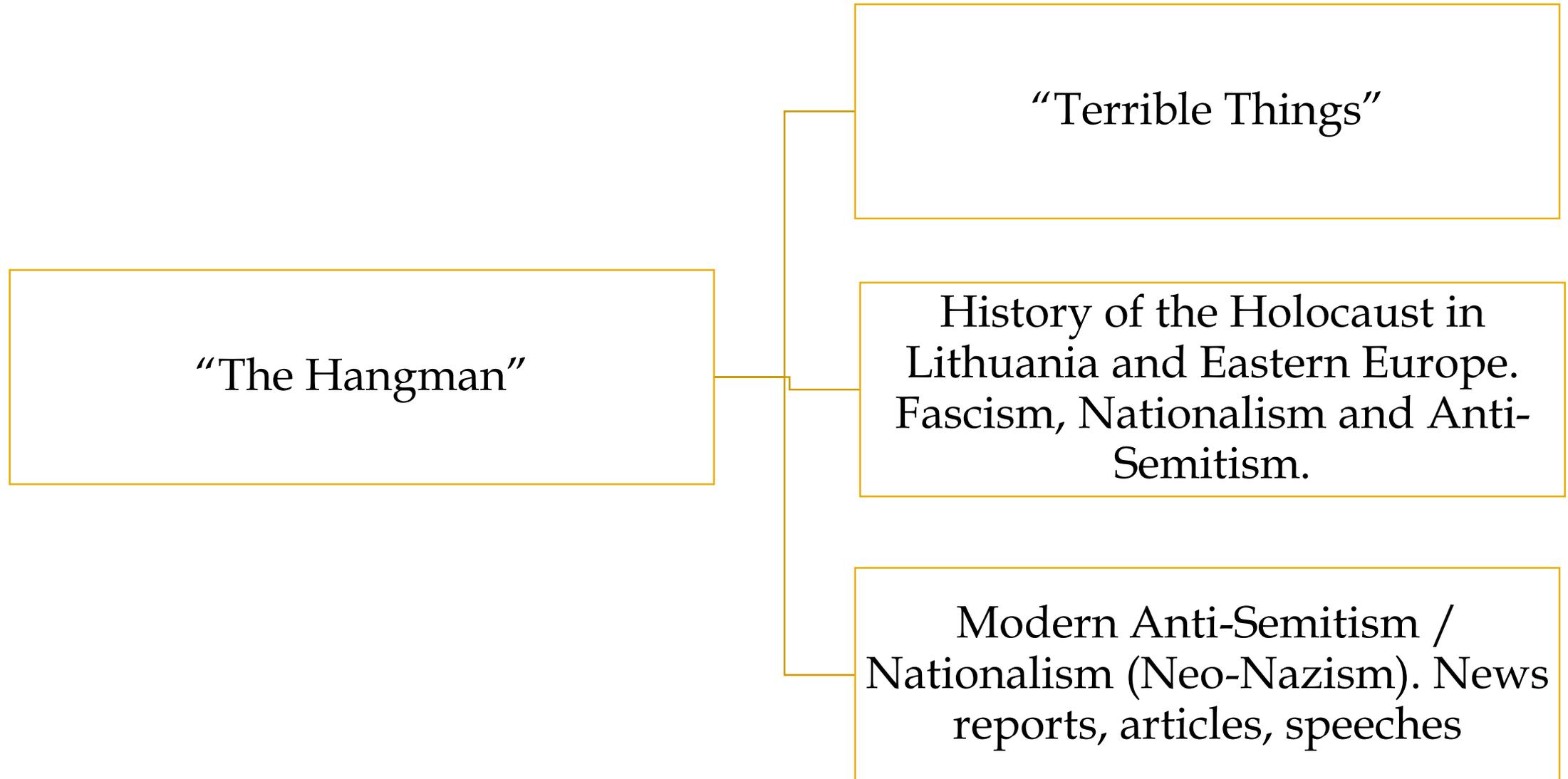
Literature teaching framework: making connections



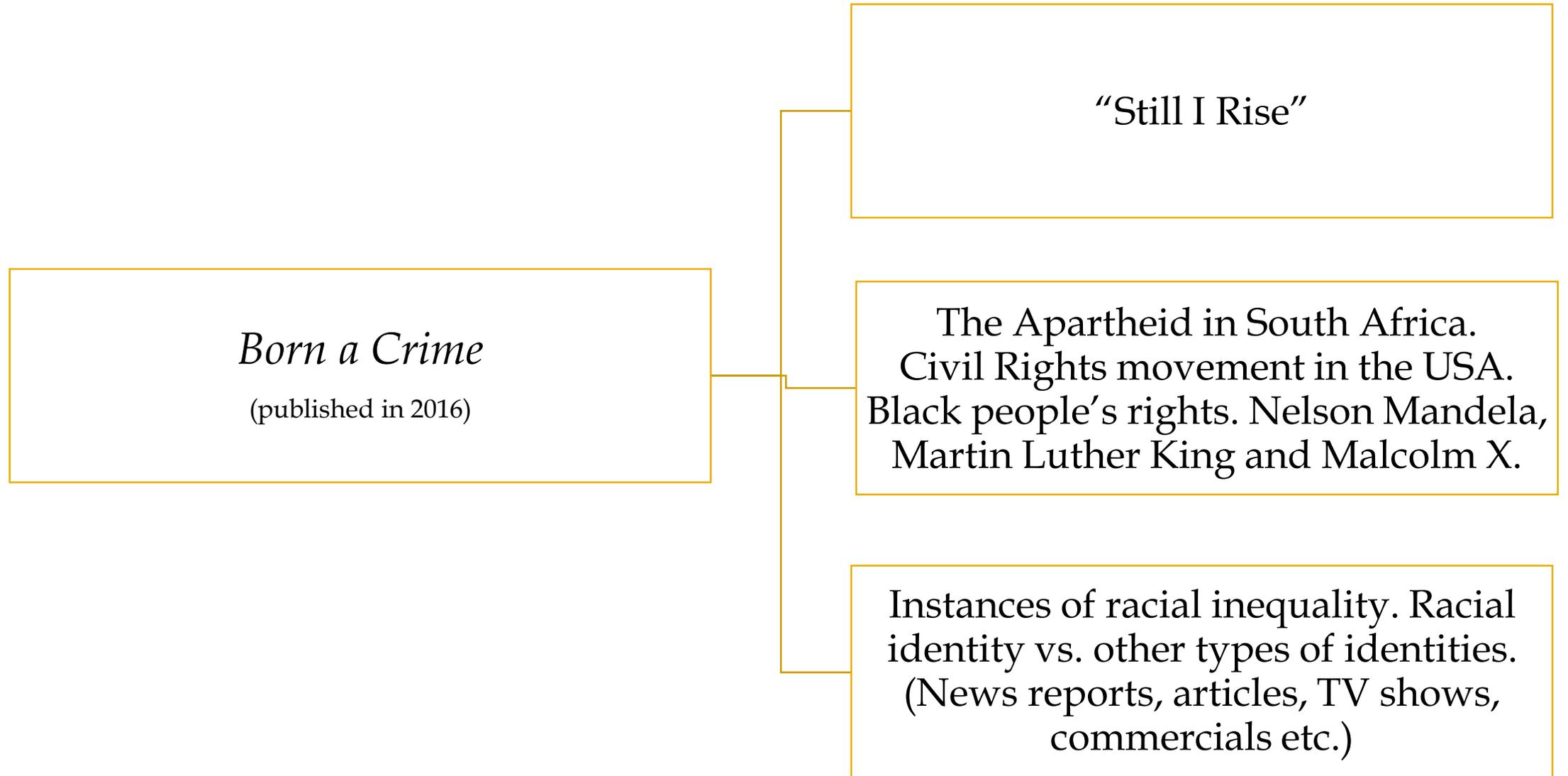
Literature teaching framework: Sample 1



Literature teaching framework: Sample 2



Literature teaching framework: Sample 3



My advice:

- Link you **English** syllabus with **Lithuanian / Ethics / History / Art** or some other subject (you may produce a single, integrated subject plan);
- Show in class the things you enjoy learning about (health and fitness, healthy diet, art, politics, history, literature, cars, fishing etc.);
- Make links with the real world – soon your students will be doing the same;
- Literature: use songs, poems, short stories, excerpts from novels, use other languages (Lithuanian), use images, paintings, sounds – anything – based on **your** preferences, ideas, passions and aspirations. Don't try to find something that might be of interest to the students. You'll most probably fail.

In conclusion, just read.