

## SECTION IV. INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND LINGUISTICS

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### **PENELOPE DELTA, RECENTLY DISCOVERED WRITER**

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to present a Greek writer, Penelope Delta. This writer has recently come up in the field of the studies of the Greek literature and, although there are neither many translations of her works in foreign languages nor many theses or dissertations, she was chosen for the great interest for her works. Her books have been read by many generations, so she is considered a classical writer of Modern Greek Literature. The way she uses the Greek language, the unique characters of her heroes that make any child or adolescent identified with them, the understood organization of her material are only a few of the main characteristics and advantages of her texts. It is also of high importance the fact that her books can be read by adults, as they can provide human values, such as love, hope, enjoyment of life, the educational significance of playing, the innocence of the infancy, the adventurous adolescence, even the unemployment, the value of work and justice. Thus, the educative importance of her texts was the main reason for writing this article.

As for the structure of the article, at first, it presents a brief biography of the writer. The information of her personal life focuses on the facts that affected her way of writing. A characteristic example is her relations developed with other writers and the Ion Dragoumis, a great fighter who defended the liberation of Macedonia. In addition, many elements of her writing method can be presented by the letters she had sent to those personalities.

The second part of the article is the presentation of her book *O Trelantonis* (*Ο Τρελαντώνης*), which is proposed as an appropriate text for teaching at school or even a seminar or lecture. After the presentation of the hypothesis, the author presents a teaching method of this text in a great detail. This method is called *interpretative* and it is suggested to be used as a teaching technique of the collaboration and team-work. This means that the teacher reads the text, while the students have to note the literature personalities and/or their main characteristics, their emotions and/or thoughts and reactions.

## РАЗДЕЛ IV. МЕЖДИСЦИПЛИНАРНЫЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ В ЛИНГВИСТИКЕ

On the other hand, it may demand the basic elements of the form of the text, such as the narrative techniques, the organization of the text and the plot of the story. Thus, the students have a general idea about the story and they are able to explain it. After that, the teacher arranges a dialogue with the students and they interpret the text. Posing and answering questions, expressing personal opinions, defending their position with argumentations are necessary for understanding the text. This method has as a result not only the interpretation of the text, but also the cultivation of the dialogue and the free expression and thinking. The students understand the importance of democracy and their self-confidence can be developed in the frame of the free expression and argumentation.

After analyzing the text, the students are divided into groups. Each group must consist of students of all levels in order to have a balance. Each team has its name, which is considered essential. In this paper, there are proposed the following teams:

**Philologists:** They will have tasks as far as it concerns the narration, the language and the interpretation of the text on the whole.

**Historians:** This team will examine the historical frame of the text and if it can be used as an historical source.

**Sociologists / Psychologists:** The students of this team will have to examine the psychology of the characters and the impacts the events have on them. This psychological / sociological approach of the text will make them understand better the characters and explain their thoughts and emotions. So, the emotional intelligence of the students is also cultivated.

**Artists:** The members of this team will be directors and/or actors. The students will think how the plot could be a movie or a theatrical piece, write the script, imagine or even create the scenes and play roles. Thus, the artistic abilities of the students are developed.

These are the teams proposed. Undoubtedly, there may be a lot of other teams with different tasks to do. Any teacher can imagine and create teams with various names and exercises to do.

After the collaborative work, each team presents its results to the others. In this part, the students tell their points of view, find mistakes or point out the strong elements of the work done. The free expression of feedback by all the teams is considered valuable for the improvement of themselves and their way of working. Students of each team write down the feedback told by their classmates and they use it for the amelioration of their projects. After having completed them, the second presentation is arranged, where there can also be given a chance to discuss again. The results can be presented orally, but the most common method is the presentation in power-point. In this case, bringing tablets to the school classroom and using them for finding information could be proved extremely useful and as an attractive teaching method.

**Key words:** Greek literature; Modern Greek Literature; Greek language; biography of the writer; writing method; interpretative method



Picture 1: Penelope Delta, age 33,  
 holding her baby daughter  
 ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penelope  
 Delta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penelope_Delta), accessed 24.05.2015)

### 1. Introduction: Penelope's Delta Biography and main characteristics of her works

Penelope Delta (1874-1941), the third child of Emmanouil Benakis and Virginia Choremis, was born in Alexandria, Egypt. Her family consisted of many children as it was typical in her days: two daughters, Alexandra and Argene, and three boys, Alexander, Antony and Konstantinos. She was nurtured with severity, but she had many experiences from her childhood, which are presented in her stories. She travelled also all over Europe and she had lessons in Greek and foreign languages too. Having obtained a strong education and being familiar with European culture and educational system, she believed strongly that children in Greece needed good books, written in simple language, in order to be educated. So, she decided to become a writer of children's literature. She was married with Stephan Delta, a businessman and educated man, who was a strong supporter of Greek demotic dialect. So, Penelope was influenced by him. She also managed to create a remarkable social environment consisting of significant personalities of her

time, such as Ioannis Psycharis (a writer), Ion Dragoumis (a famous warrior for the liberation of Macedonia), Kostis Palamas and Argyris Eftaliotis (poets) and others. Thus, she was influenced by them and she understood the importance of learning, speaking and writing and on the whole, expressing in demotic dialect, the language spoken by all Greeks in their everyday life. All those personalities and others too were also friends in correspondence with Penelope Delta and their letters found and published recently are considered a valuable source for understanding her work and her attitude as far as it concerns her way of writing. Loving children very much and trying to educate them led her in writing pedagogical studies, as the educational system in Greece was not appropriate for the children's needs of that time and it was not sufficiently developed because of the tragic consequences of the Second World War.<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion, it must be remarked that Penelope Delta understood the need of writing qualitative books for children in their simple, everyday spoken language. As a result of her educational background, she incorporated all the periods of Greek history (Ancient, Byzantine and Modern) to her stories. So, the children who read or are reading till nowadays her books had and have the opportunity to learn Greek history in an attractive and fun way.

The aim of this paper is to study a specific work of this writer and explain its importance for children's education and how it can be used in the educational system of almost every country. Undoubtedly, the educational systems of each country are completely different, but the suggestions proposed are general and can be adapted in any school in the world. However, the most important is to activate any teacher of language and literature to think about the teaching methods for language and literature used to make the lesson more attractive and contributive for children and adolescents. Finally, the material used for the research was found on sites and in books of Penelope Delta, but it must be noted that the existing sources are in the Greek language as this writer has not only been diffused in the external

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ekebi.gr/> (assessed 09.05.2015). For more information about her biography, see also , Beaton, 1999. Her works can be retrieved from <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/> (assessed 09.05.2015) · <http://archive.org/search> (assessed 09.05.2015) · <https://librivox.org/author/> (assessed 09.05.2015).

yet, but also she is not known in scientific circles in Greece, too. So, it is hoped to motivate both Greek and foreign researchers to discover her literary stories

## 2. *Ο Τρελαντώνης (O Trelantonis):* A children's story in education

The story of this book takes place in Kaste-la, a city of Piraeus in Greece in the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Four siblings, Antony, Alexander, Pouloudia and Alexandra, are having a great time during their summer holidays in their aunt's and uncle's house. The chief of this group is Antony, who is the noisiest of all and always has problems. Their entertaining adventures are like a hymn of the innocence of the childhood. This book is based on autobiographical references and personal experiences Penelope Delta had, so it has a personal and familiar style. As it is understood, the familiar style of the novel and the fact that the protagonists are children are its main characteristics for considering it the best choice for teaching in the classroom, especially for students of the last classes of Primary School or in the first class of Junior High School. The children in this period of their life are supposed to be ready to reach the adolescence so, the stage of pre-adolescence is the "final light" of the childhood and teaching a novel similar to fairy tales and expressing experiences of their lives is the best choice. It is thought that children will be identified with the heroes of the book and as a result, they will understand it better and express themselves using the text taught. It is also hoped that children will be motivated to buy the book or find it in the Internet and read it all during their Christmas or Easter or summer holiday and express their points of view about it. These are the main reasons for making that teaching choice.

## 3. Teaching the first chapter of the book: Proposed pedagogical methods and activities

One of the most appropriate chapters to teach is the first one, because it offers the teacher the opportunity to make his/her students think, try to understand the completely different society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the characteristics and way of life in Greece at those times and to compare it with these days. In addition, children can do a great deal of activities in order to create their creativity and critical thinking.

The teaching method which can be used is the cooperating method for the interpretation of the text. So as the teacher has the chance to give a different instruction-activity to each team and make them understand the text from many different aspects. The teacher reads the text after having given an instruction to the class. During the reading of the text, students must have a motivation to concentrate on the text to understand it. As the focus on it is difficult, especially if there are children who have the syndrome of lack of attention, it is essential to arrange an instruction-activity [Σπανάς, 2010, 102-105].

The second stage of the teaching is the interpretation and the detailed comments of the text. The teacher asks the students of their first questions and comments on the messages transferred. The first things the students have managed to understand must be written down, so as to be compared with their conclusions after having understood the whole text. The interpretation of the text is developed slowly with the dialogue between the teacher and his/her students. In any case, the teaching-centered method is not preferred, because the students are not allowed to express their opinions and cultivate their critical mind. These techniques have as a consequence the motivation of the students to think and activate during the lesson. Thus, it may also lead them to understand the important role of literature in our life too, so as to start reading books and/or criticize them at their leisure time. It must not be forgotten that school has to activate students find out creative hobbies, too. Finally, one should note that the dialogue and exchange of points of view as far as it concerns the interpretation of the text help students form and cultivate their democratical conscience and tolerance to the different. So, racism and stereotypes can be faced [For more information, Woolfolk, 2004 & Woolfolk et al., 2008].

In the end of the lesson, the teacher has to make a conclusion and refer to the narrative techniques, which would be pointed out by the students. For example, the students can understand the dialogue, the description and the narration in the third face, but the teacher has to refer them again using the scientific and literary definitions in an appropriate way. Using a brief presentation in the power-point program is considered very helpful for the students and it also attracts their attention and interest in

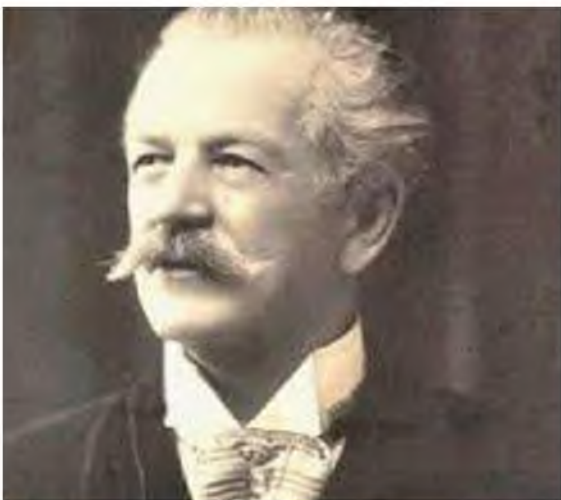
the last minutes of the teaching hour despite being tired or feeling boring.

#### 4. Activities proposed

As it has been referred above, this text offers a great deal of choices and activities to be done not only in the classroom during the lesson, but also at home as part of homework. Here, there are certain propositions, which can have many versions in order to be appropriate for each class/student.

In this text, there are many idiomatic words. These words may be translated into the languages, but if the text is studied in the Greek language, it would be a good idea to use dictionaries and sites on the Internet to find out these idiomatic words and their meaning. This activity teaches the students to discover the language and its evolution over the centuries, as the language is like a living organism and its main characteristic is the evolution and the adaption to the new conditions of the communication.

Another activity proposed is to find out information about the personalities presented in the first chapter of the book. Specifically, one personality mentioned is the architect Ernst Ziller (1837-1923), who had designed many buildings in Athens. Some of them are admired till today and they give a different style in the centre of Athens. Penelope Delta mentions that the heroes live in a house designed by Ziller, next to which there are two other houses designed by the same architect: the first was the home of the king George I, who ruled Greece during this period, and the other was the house of Queen Olga.



Picture 2: Ernst Ziller, the architect (<http://www.whoiswhogreece.com>, accessed 24.05.2015)

Discovering via encyclopedias and sites the biographies of Ziller and the photos of his buildings, the students will understand that architecture is considered an art fairly and how important is the combination the buildings must have with the whole physical environment, even the physical light. This exercise can also motivate the students to find out information about the King George I and the Queen Olga and in general, the Greek history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (the most important historical events, the significant personalities of the politics, the art and culture, the sciences, the financials of the times, the social classes and structures and their way of everyday life).



Pictures 3, 4: The King George I & the Queen Olga. ([http://www.ime.gr/chronos/13/gr/general/gallery/domestic\\_policy/004.html](http://www.ime.gr/chronos/13/gr/general/gallery/domestic_policy/004.html) & <http://el.wiki.org>, accessed 24.05.2015).

Thus, the text will be examined from an historical view, giving the opportunity to explore the Greek history of modern times. The information of historical books, encyclopedias and several sites (particularly, those of the National Archaeological Museum of Athens and the Museum of Acropolis) can be combined with photos of statues and monuments and videos in order to have a variety in understanding the conditions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Greece. In addition to all this, students of foreign schools and Universities can find out information about their country's history of that time and make comparisons and conclusions about the evolution and the development in both countries. Thus, history can also be combined with literature for those students who are keen on it. Furthermore, the students can cultivate their analytic and synthetic ability, their critical mind and the creative way of writing. Another important benefit from studying the history of many populations is a tolerant relation to other people. It is of high importance for young people to get rid of the stereotypes imposed and understand the necessity of respect of the different.

Combining the school subjects can be a very creative and interesting teaching technique. So, geography can also be combined with this text. The students can search the position of Greece on maps and specifically, the region of Kastela in Piraeus, where the heroes were supposed to live.



Picture 5: Kastela of Peiraeus today  
(<http://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/>,  
accessed 24.05.2015).

Exploring a new country and town via texts and photos, the students can have a virtual journey and be impressed by other places. In addition, if there are students who have been to Greece and they have visited Piraeus, it would be a good idea to express their personal experiences and tell their impressions and aspects about this place. Writing texts presenting the history of Piraeus, which is an historical port from the age of Pericles, finding photos and videos are considered contributive activities.

Psychology can also be useful for understanding the text. Students are supposed to explain the reasons why the heroes behave in an appropriate way and make conclusions regarding their character and how they can be influenced by their familiars. The characterization of the heroes is a typical activity which leads the students think about the human character in general. So, it can show the psychoanalytic role of literature.

Finally, another interesting activity could be the study of toys. Not only in the first chapter, but in the whole book, many toys are mentioned. The students can find out information about those toys and compare them to those of nowadays in order to understand the great differences. There are also exhibitions in museums where ancient toys are exposed and it would be creative and entertaining to visit one.

### 1. Discussion. Improvements Proposed

This project is a teaching plan about the ways a text can be taught. There are several suggestions, which can be adopted in any classroom in case the special needs and interests the students may have are taken into consideration.

On the other side, there are many improvements that can be provided. First of all, the teacher does not have to use the collaborative method. Another method which can be used for teaching literature is the interpretative. After reading the text, the teacher poses questions to the students in order to interpret the actions and behavior of the heroes. In this method, the students have to be familiar with literature as the use of literary definitions is highly demanded. So, this method is considered to be more de-

manding and difficult and as a result it is used in higher grades. The use of literary dictionaries for searching the literary definitions is also essential. So, the students must be taught how to use them.

Another teaching technique is to teach an untitled text and demand to title it in the end of the teaching hour. So, the students must understand the meaning of the text completely and create their own title based on the deeper messages the text transfers to them. In that case, they will need to use their creativity and their emotional intelligence, too.

However strange it may seem, teaching an unfinished text is also an unusual technique, which aids the development of creativity and forces the students' need for literary expression. In that case, the text taught is unfinished and the students have to complete it by writing their own end. So, they have to understand the text and the main characteristics of the heroes for using them in an appropriate way and style for proposing their own version. The misunderstanding of the text or inability to use all the elements given in an appropriate way for completing the story are common mistakes in this kind of activity. However, it is necessary for students to know the difficulties of writing literature and try to understand the way a writer or poet thinks. An important benefit of this method is that students will know that the education a writer has is more important than inspiration. The inspiration can be given by an idea, a moment, a personal experience in everyday routine, but knowing how to create a text is considered more difficult and it takes time. This is an additional reason why this activity is difficult, as it needs two teaching hours. It is not considered contributive to be done as homework, because it is necessary to be sure that the students are able to write and express their thoughts and feelings on their own, without any help and accept the feedback of their classmates.

The interdisciplinarity of the subject is also important. There are many other lessons, such as history, psychology and geography, which can be combined with the taught text and facilitate the study. The teaching of that lesson by two

teachers would be an excellent idea to attract the students' attention.

A significant theory in literature is that of intertextuality. Each text can lead to another text or corpus of texts. So, the teacher can demand from students to find out texts with similar stories or narrative techniques and present them in the classroom. After a brief discussion with their classmates, they would be able to use their feedback and propose their own interpretations of the teaching text by comparing it with the text(s) found. If this activity seems difficult, the teacher should give specific texts to the students and then, they would have to study them and compare with the text taught. Finding out similarities and differences both in the meanings and the narrative techniques of all texts, they would be able to understand the text deeper.

It is also important to keep in mind that literature is a type of art, the art of the language. So, it can "communicate", accept influences and have impacts on other arts or artistic activities. So, the teacher can demand from the students to find out other works of art (for instance, paintings, songs and melodies, statues and monuments), which may have similarities and/or differences from the text taught. In case of difficulty, there is a solution given by the teacher, because he/she would give particular works of art to them and demand the comparison. This activity is very creative, but its degree of difficulty requires to be done by students of higher grades.

## 2. Conclusion

Without any doubt, teaching literature offers a great deal and a huge variety of teaching methods and techniques, activities and tasks to be done. However, each teacher ought to have the appropriate education and knowledge in order to be creative in using the correct methods in an interesting way. The creativity of the students, the development of their critical mind, the cultivation of multiple intelligence and meanings of the text that they would keep in mind are the hopeful results of a well-organized teaching action.

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