

# The Impact of Teaching Critical Literacy on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension and Critical Awareness: A Freirean Addition to Vygotsky's ZPD

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## Abstract

*This study sought to investigate the impact of a critical literacy teaching program influenced by a combination of Freire's critical literacy pedagogy for social justice and the Vygotskyan ZPD on adult EFL learners' reading comprehension and critical awareness. A number of 60 intermediate EFL learners were chosen from 80 students. Once they were assigned to the control and experimental groups, the latter were given a series of textual analysis on texts with alternative endings followed by the opportunity to hold discussions and exchange views on how texts represent issues of gender, social class, race, ethnicity, etc. with the aim of enhancing their critical awareness and simultaneously improving their reading ability. The data analysis which was conducted prior to and following the treatment in both groups demonstrated that the critical literacy package was indeed successful in meeting its objectives, i.e. significant improvement of reading comprehension and critical awareness.*

**Keywords:** critical literacy, Freirian pedagogy, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), reading comprehension, critical awareness, critical reading

## Introduction

The meaning of reading is perhaps changing in the current world. While in previous times, reading – at least in scholastic settings – spiraled more around the notion of decoding a universally uniform meaning from a text, modern trends are advocating a plurality of such decoding acts from the same text. This is very much in line with the paradigm that any text, be it in

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spoken or written form is “always socially, politically, racially, and economically loaded” (Rogers, 2004, p. 5). Hence, different individuals may react differently to that “load” depending on their own background. This shift in emphasis away from seeking the unitary meaning of a text toward celebrating a diversity of meanings would naturally encourage a focus on the concept of multiple readings and an embracing of the concepts of text, textuality, and intertextuality, i.e. critical literacy.

## Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is an instructional approach that advocates the adoption of critical perspectives toward a text, thereby encouraging readers to actively analyze that text and uncovering underlying messages. The term critical is derived from the Greek words *krino* meaning “to judge”. A literary critic, or *kritikos*, is therefore a “judge of literature.”

Prior to any further discussion on critical literacy, it should be noted that the general meaning of text in modern times is beyond the traditional conceptualization of printed books. As Robinson and Robinson (2003) state, text is a “vehicle through which individuals communicate with one another using the codes and conventions of society” (p. 3). Accordingly, songs, conversations, pictures with words, caricatures, movies, etc. are all considered texts.

Shor (1997) describes critical literacy as language use that questions the social construction of the self. In this sense, being critically literate is synonymous with self-examining one's ongoing development and revealing the subjective positions through which each and every one of us makes sense of the world and acts in it. She holds that literacy is a social action through language use that develops people as agents inside a larger culture, and critical literacy is “learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations” (p. 91). Accordingly, “Critical literacy is the ability to read texts in an active, reflective manner in order to better understand power, inequality, and injustice in human relationship” (p. 92).

Freire and Macedo (1987) also argue that doing literacy practices (i.e. reading and writing) is a social and political activity and by knowing, they mean knowing for promoting a just, democratic society and being educated for critical citizenship.

As can be seen from the above positions, critical literacy is essentially concerned with dismantling social injustice and inequalities. Proponents of critical literacy contend that unequal power relationships are prevalent, and those in power are the ones who generally choose what truths are to be privileged. Through institutions like schooling and government, these ideologies are supported, thereby perpetuating the status quo. Critical literacy thus challenges the status quo in an effort to discover alternative paths for self and social development.

Critical literacy then is an attitude towards history, as Burke (1984) argued, or a dream of a new society against the power now in power (Shor and Freire, 1987), or "an insurrection of subjugated knowledges", in the words of Foucault (1980, p. 15). Anzaldua (1990) holds that critical literacy could be a multicultural resistance invented on the borders of crossing identities, as, or as Rich (1979) declared language used against fitting unexceptionably into the status quo. From this perspective, literacy is understood as social action through language use that develops us as agents inside a larger culture, while critical literacy is understood as learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations (Blackledge, 2000; Anderson & Irvine, 1993).

In a critical reading course, students do not read simply to find the facts and gain knowledge by memorizing the statements within a text, but they try to recognize what a text says, how it is saying, what it wants to do, and what it means as a whole. They try to relate the texts to their own life experiences, and find themselves in the text. In a critical reading classroom, students are aware that no text is ideologically neutral so they take a stance on the issue by trying to find out their own ideas and attitudes and having a position towards the issue (Paul, 1993; Unrau, 2004).

## Freirian Approach

In the early 1960s, the Brazilian educator and theorist Paulo Freire who adopted a neo-Marxist social justice pedagogy developed a native-language literacy program for slum dwellers in Brazil, during which he tried to engage learners in dialogue about problems in their lives. These dialogues not only became the basis for literacy development, but also for reflection and action to improve students' lives (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). This experience taught

him that learning is an act of knowing which requires a context of authentic dialogue between learners and educators.

In his/her model for critical learning, the teacher is often defined as a problem-poser who talks knowledge *with* rather than *at* students. By introducing specific questions, the teacher encourages the students to make their own conclusions about the values and pressures of society. This is referred to as an emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality (Freire, 1970).

Freirean critical literacy is conceived as a means of empowering the underpowered population against the apparatus of oppression and coercion, frequently seen as enacted by corporate and/or government entities. Freirean critical literacy starts with the desire to balance social inequities and address societal problems caused by abuse of power. It thus proceeds from this philosophical basis to examine, analyze, and deconstruct texts (Shor & Pari, 1999).

Freire believed that traditional classrooms arouse in many students a variety of negative emotions. He (1996) thus suggested that one of the tasks of the progressive educator who conducts a serious and accurate political analysis is to bring into light opportunities for hope regardless of the probable obstacles.

Accordingly, Freire (1970) proposed that "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world and with each other" (p. 72). As Cervetti, Pardales, and Damico (2001) propose, the development of critical literacy encourages students to question issues of power – explicitly disparities – within social contexts like socio-economic status, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc. For Freire, the very pedagogy of literacy had to be transformed to make central issues of justice and the struggle for emancipation. Hence, Freire's pedagogy "has as much to do with the teachable heart as the teachable mind" (McLaren, 1999, p. 50).

## **Vygotsky's ZPD**

The Russian founder of cultural-historical psychology, Lev Vygotsky introduced the Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD (Van der Veer, 2007) in which he proposed that such zones exist when a less developed individual or student interacts with a more advanced person or teacher, allowing the

student to achieve things not possible when acting on his/her own. The relationship with the more developed person pulls the less developed forward; this of course bears dynamic similarity with the way the American philosopher and educational reformist John Dewey understood curriculum that began from student experience and was structured forward into organized reflective knowledge of the kind teachers have (Dewey, 1900).

Critical literacy belongs to Dewey's constructivist education which has also been associated with activity theory. Russell (1995, p. 55) argues that activity theory "analyzes human behavior and consciousness in terms of activity systems" which are "goal-directed, historically situated cooperative human interactions, such as a child's attempt to reach an out-of-reach toy." This activity system, Russell further notes, "is the basic unit of analysis for both cultures' and individuals' psychological and social processes" (p. 55). And he brings the ZPD into all this by stating that, "Though Activity Theory is very much open and developing, most theorists in the tradition recognize five key constituents of activity systems. Activity systems are 1) historically developed, 2) mediated by tools, 3) dialectically structured, 4) analyzed as the relations of participants and tools, and 5) changed through zones of proximal development" (p. 56).

The main differences between critical literacy and Vygotsky's ZPD are that critical literacy is an activity that reconstructs and develops both teachers and students (whereas Vygotsky focused on student development), and that dissident politics is foregrounded in a critical literacy program, inviting democratic relations in class and democratic action outside class (whereas Vygotsky did not foreground power relations as the social context for learning).

Critical teaching is not a one-way development, not something done for or to students for their own good (Freire, 1988). It is not a paternal campaign of clever teachers against defenseless students. This ethic of mutual development can thus be thought of as a Freirean addition to the Vygotskian ZPD.

In line with what has been discussed so far and with the specific view of critical literacy noted, the researchers raised the following two null hypotheses in this study:

- H<sub>01</sub>: Teaching critical literacy does not have a significant effect on promoting EFL learners' critical awareness.
- H<sub>02</sub>: Teaching critical literacy does not have a significant effect on EFL learners' reading comprehension.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

To test the null hypotheses of the research, 60 adult male and female EFL learners of English attending intermediate conversation classes at Alameh Ghotbeh Ravandi Language School in Tehran were chosen as the participants. To be sure of the homogeneity of the participants in terms of the two variables of this study, i.e. reading comprehension and critical literacy, at the outset of the study, the reading section of a TOEFL paper test and a Cornell Critical Thinking Test were administered among 80 students and 60 of them were selected as the final participants with 30 in each of the two control and experimental groups.

### **Instrumentation**

The researchers used a series of tests and materials in this study which are described below in order of application.

#### ***Reading Pretest***

At the outset of the study, the reading section of a TOEFL test was used to select 60 subjects who were homogeneous in terms of their reading comprehension. This test comprised of 50 multiple-choice items based on five reading texts which the subjects had 45 minutes to answer. A total of 80 intermediate students took this test and 60 who scored one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected. They were thus divided into the two experimental and control groups prior to the treatment.

#### ***Critical Thinking Appraisal***

Following the division of the 60 subjects into the two groups, the Cornell Critical Thinking Test (developed by Ennis, Millman, & Tomko, 2004) was administered among the 60 subjects in both groups. The purpose of this test was to ensure that there was no significant difference between the two groups' degree of critical literacy at the outset of the study.

### **Reading Materials**

The main course book for both the experimental and control groups was Jack C. Richards' *New Interchange*. The supplementary materials used in the experimental group consisted of three stories with a genre more towards an argumentative content with surprise endings. The stories were: a) *The Practical Princess* by Jay Williams, b) *The Whole Town's Sleeping* by Ray Bradbury, and c) *A Jury of Her Peers* by Susan Glaspell (see Appendix). Certain pre-reading worksheets were also used which are described in detail alongside the aforementioned stories in the procedure section of this paper.

### **Posttests**

For the posttest, both the TOEFL reading test and the Cornell appraisal used at the pretest stage were used again, only this time not for homogenization but to see whether the two groups manifested any significant difference in terms of the two constructs under question, i.e. reading and critical literacy, following the treatment.

### **Interview about Reading**

At the end of the instruction and following the posttest administration, the Burke reading interview procedure was used with 30 students (15 in each group chosen randomly). The interview (see Appendix) comprised nine open-ended questions asking interviewees about their general sense towards reading and ultimately required them to assess themselves as readers on a scale of 1-5, ranging from a "very poor" to a "terrific" reader. This interview was conducted to see how the subjects in the two groups assessed themselves.

### **Procedure**

As noted earlier, the first step in this experimentation was conducting the reading pretest and dividing the 60 subjects into the two control and experimental groups, accordingly. A *t*-test was run on the mean scores of the two groups to make sure that the groups bore no significant difference in terms of their reading at the outset. Furthermore, the Cornell critical appraisal

was administered among the subjects with another *t*-test conducted to make sure that both groups were homogenous in terms of this feature as well.

Subsequently, the 11-session treatment began. Both groups studied Interchange and the control group received the usual teaching program of reading classes including warm-ups and pre-reading brainstorming, during and post-reading comprehension questions, expressing interpretations of the text, etc. In the experimental group, however, the above was done in a more compact fashion thereby allowing time to provide the three aforementioned stories and their pre-reading worksheets to the students. This was done to familiarize them with the concept of critical thinking through a number of questions requiring them to analyze relationships among texts, language, power, social groups, and social practice in order to challenge the attitudes, values, and beliefs that lie beneath the surface.

The first story was *The Practical Princess*. Before reading this short story, which is an "alternative" fairy tale, the students were asked to respond as part of a whole class discussion to nine questions. The aim of this simple prediction exercise was its attention to the story's contractedness and its relationship to other texts, i.e. intertextuality. It also set up the opportunity for a critical focus on issues of textual representation, especially that of gender. The students then read the story in which both genre and gender expectations were challenged. Once the reading was done, they were asked to decide what was conventional and what was unconventional in the story. They were further asked to consider explicitly the differences that the text might have so that they would be encouraged not just to read a text but to think about how they were reading it. This of course was also part of the focus that follows logically from a concern with process as well as product.

The next short story was *The Whole Town's Sleeping* which was paired with the third story *A Jury of Her Peers* which is a feminist account. Again, the program began with a pre-reading activity. The students then read a synopsis of the Bradbury story and wrote its ending. Interest in the story tended to focus on the techniques used by the writer to create an atmosphere of suspense and to evoke the heroine's fear. At this stage, the students went on to argue from a feminist perspective that there had been criticism of the story and also the assumptions on which the story was based such as most violent attacks on women being committed by men, and that women may be the victims of violence not because of what they do but due to what they are.

Throughout the course, a number of strategies were highlighted in the experimental group which included: immersion, prediction, deconstruction, reconstruction, and taking social actions – elaborated in Table 1 below:



**Table 1 – The skills and strategies instructed during the course**

Immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explaining critical thinking</li> <li>• Discussing ways of reading a text</li> <li>• Providing some questions to make the students think critically</li> </ul>
Prediction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working on the topic</li> <li>• Focusing on the story 'constructedness'</li> <li>• Concerning the text relationship to other texts (intertextuality)</li> <li>• Linking the ideas</li> </ul>
Deconstruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyzing how readings are constructed or produced</li> <li>• Reading other interpretations</li> <li>• Considering what is at stake in the disagreement between readings</li> <li>• Making invisible the gaps and silences of texts and readings</li> <li>• Analyzing what readings support in terms of the values they affirm</li> <li>• Challenging other especially 'dominant' or 'preferred' readings</li> </ul>
Reconstruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding that meaning is not simply in the text</li> <li>• Introducing their own new way of interpreting</li> </ul>
Taking social action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criticizing the ideological partisanship in a text</li> <li>• Criticizing any perspectives which the story expected readers to share</li> <li>• Asking where different interpretations of a text could come from</li> <li>• Thinking about society influences</li> </ul>

As described earlier, the posttests and the reading interview were conducted at the end of the treatment.

## Results

### Subject Selection

Prior to the treatment, the subject selection procedure was conducted. First, the reading test was administered and 60 subjects whose scores fell one standard deviation below and above the mean were selected. Table 2 below displays the descriptive statistics of the scores obtained by the two groups on this test.

**Table 2 – Descriptive statistics of the two groups' scores on the reading pretest**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness ratio
Exp	30	20.00	38.00	29.87	3.54	-.34
Cont	30	20.00	38.00	29.40	4.34	.44

The two control and experimental groups were intact and the researchers could not randomly assign the subjects to these two groups; hence, in order to make sure that the two groups manifested no significant difference in their reading ability at the outset of the study, a *t*-test was run between the two groups' means on the pretest. As Table 2 shows, the distribution of scores in both groups was normal as the skewness ratio fell between -1.96 and 1.96 in both groups. Thence, running a *t*-test was legitimized. Table 3 below shows the results of this test.

**Table 3 – *t*-test of the two groups' mean scores on the reading pretest**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Mean						
	F	Sig.	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variance assumed	.503	.481	.457	58	.650	.46667	1.02198	-1.579	2.1512
Equal variance not assumed			.457	55.769	.650	.46667	1.02198	-1.580	2.1514

As Table 3 indicates, with the *F* value of 0.503 at the significance level of 0.481 being greater than 0.05, the variances between the two groups were not significantly different. Therefore, the results of the *t*-test with the assumption of homogeneity of the variances are reported here. Since the *p* value was 0.650 which is greater than 0.05, the conclusion is that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups at the outset. Hence, the researchers could rest assured that the two experimental and control groups manifested no significant difference in their reading ability prior to the treatment. The same procedure was conducted regarding the critical thinking of the subjects. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of both groups' scores on this appraisal.

**Table 4 – Descriptive statistics of the two groups' scores on the critical thinking pretest**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness ratio
Exp	30	36.00	57.00	44.0667	4.97534	.95
Cont	30	36.00	57.00	43.7333	4.54808	1.66

With the skewness ratio falling in the acceptable range, a *t*-test was subsequently run and the results are displayed in Table 5 below.

**Table 5 – *t*-test of the two groups' mean scores on the critical thinking pretest**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Mean						
	F	Sig	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variance assumed	.258	.613	.271	58	.787	.33333	1.23071	-2.130	2.5124
Equal variance not assumed			-.271	57.54	.787	.33333	1.23071	-2.130	2.5141

Again, the *F* value of 0.258 at the significance level of 0.613 being greater than 0.05 showed that the variances between the two groups were not significantly different. Therefore, the results of the *t*-test with the assumption of homogeneity of variances are reported. Since the *p* value was 0.787 which is greater than 0.05, the conclusion is that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups at the outset. In other words, both groups indicated no significant difference in their critical thinking prior to the treatment.

## Testing the Hypotheses

After the instruction course, the same pretests were re-administered to both groups. Table 6 includes the descriptive statistics on the reading posttest.

**Table 6 – Descriptive statistics of the two groups' scores on the reading posttest**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness ratio
Exp	30	27.00	40.00	32.6000	3.33839	1.52
Cont	30	20.00	38.00	30.0000	4.33112	.34

To see whether the treatment had any significant difference on the two groups' reading, a *t*-test was run (with the normality of both distributions assured as is visible from the skewness ratios falling in the acceptable range of -1.96 and 1.96). Table 7 below shows the results of this *t*-test.

**Table 7 – *t*-test of the two groups' means on the reading posttest**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Mean						
	F	Sig.	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variance assumed	3.365	.072	2.60	58	.012	3.1	1.19033	.7173	5.482
Equal variance not assumed			2.60	53.05	.012	3.1	1.19033	.7125	5.487

As Table 7 indicates, with the *F* value of 3.365 at the significance level of 0.072 being greater than 0.05, the variances between the two groups were not significantly different. Therefore, the results of the *t*-test with the assumption of homogeneity of the variances are reported. With the *p* value of 0.012 being smaller than 0.05, there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups. And as the mean score of the experimental group on the reading test was higher, the researchers concluded that the instruction significantly improved the participants' reading ability. Again, the same procedure was fulfilled with the Cornell critical test with Table 8 displaying the descriptive statistics (and demonstrating the normality of score distribution) and Table 9 showing the results of the subsequent *t*-test.

**Table 8 – Descriptive statistics of the two groups' scores on the Cornell posttest**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness ratio
Exp	30	37.00	59.00	48.1000	5.26766	.20
Cont	30	36.00	51.00	45.0000	3.84170	-1.54

**Table 9 – t-test of the two groups' means on the Cornell posttest**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Mean						
	F	Sig	t	Df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variance assumed	.177	.676	2.604	58	.012	2.6	.99389	.6015	4.5985
Equal variance not assumed			2.604	54.47	.012	2.6	.99389	.5987	4.6013

With the F value of 0.177 at the significance level of 0.676 being greater than 0.05, the variances between the two groups were not significantly different. And as the  $p$  value of 0.012 is smaller than 0.05, there was also a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups on the critical thinking tests following the treatment. In other words, the teaching critical literacy program used in this study significantly improved the critical awareness of the group receiving that program.

### Self-Assessment

As described earlier, the Burke reading interview procedure was used with 30 students (15 in each group chosen randomly). The results proved that the students in the experimental group were generally more satisfied with themselves and thus assessed themselves better readers.

### Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of critical literacy teaching on reading comprehension and critical awareness among EFL learners. The findings demonstrated that this impact was significant in both cases; that is, the critical literacy teaching program focusing on the five strategies of immersion, prediction, deconstruction, reconstruction, and taking

social action enables EFL learners to progress noticeably and meaningfully in their reading ability and also critical awareness. Furthermore, there was a stronger sense of self-satisfaction among the participants who underwent the treatment in terms of their general assessment of themselves as readers and the majority of them reported that they used the learning processes they acquired during the course to complete their assignments.

This study may have general implications for teachers, curriculum designers, and the management and administration levels of language schools. Teachers can use the strategies described in this study and proven to be effective to encourage critical literacy in the classroom among the students. To this end, they can introduce changes – as small as they may be in some contexts – in their teaching methods so that they succeed in both providing a more interesting climate of discussion and learning to see issues from various perspectives and, at the same time, play a crucial role in the process of supporting learners to develop their intellectual faculty.

Curriculum planners can engage in designing more challenging courses and programs for the learners which vividly and readily engender possibilities for critical thinking among learners. Needless to say, if change is going to be introduced in the program of any given educational establishment, the multifaceted support of the management and administration level is a prerequisite. They must be fully informed of the importance and contribution of engaging in such programs in their establishment so that the job of the teachers inside the classroom, who stand at the forefront of inducing change, would be facilitated, thereby consolidating more promising outcomes.

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## Appendix

### **Burke Reading Interview by Carolyn Burke (1987)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. When you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do?
2. Do you ever do anything else?
3. Who do you know who is a good reader?
4. What makes him/her a good reader?
5. Do you think she/he ever comes to something she/he doesn't know when reading? If your answer is yes, what do you think he/she does about it?
6. What do you think is the best way to help someone who doesn't read well?
7. How did you learn to read? What do you remember? What helped you to learn?
8. What would you like to do better as a reader?
9. Describe yourself as a reader.
10. Using a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being a terrific reader, what overall rating would you give yourself as a reader?

### **The Practical Princess**

Princess Bedelia was as lovely as the moon shining upon a lake full of water lilies. When she was born, three fairies had come to give her gifts as was usual in that country. The first fairy had given her beauty. The second had given her grace. But the third, who was a wise old creature, had said, "I give her common sense."



When Bedelia was eighteen years old a dragon moved into the neighbourhood. He settled in a dark cave on top of a mountain, and the first thing he did was to send a message to the king. "I must have a princess to devour or I shall breathe out my fiery breath and destroy the kingdom." Bedelia said "right, I see I'll have to deal with this myself." She got the largest and gaudiest of her state robes and stuffed it with straw, and tied it together with string. Into the centre of the bundle she packed about fifty kilos of gunpowder. She got two young men to carry it up the mountain for her. She stood in front of the dragon's cave, and called, "Come out! Here's the princess!" The dragon came blinking and peering out of the darkness. Seeing the bright robe covered with gold and silver embroidery, and hearing Bedelia's voice, he opened his mouth wide. At Bedelia's signal, the two young men swung the robe and gave it a good heave, right down the dragon's throat. Bedelia threw herself flat on the ground, and the young men ran. As the gunpowder met the flames inside the dragon, there was a tremendous explosion. Bedelia got up, dusting herself off and she went back to the castle to have her geography lesson. At that very moment, Lord Garp was arriving at the castle to ask King Ludwig for Bedelia's hand. His face was like an old napkin, crumpled and wrinkled. He had only two teeth. Six long hairs grew from his chin, and none on his head. She felt like screaming. Bedelia in order to reject him asked him to bring a branch from the jewel tree of Paxis. Lord Garp bowed, and off he went. "I think," Bedelia said to her father, "that we have seen the last of him. For Paxis is fifteen hundred kilometres away, and the jewel Tree is guarded by lions, serpents, and wolves." But in two weeks, Lord Garp was back. With him he bore a chest, and from the chest he took a wonderful twig. It was covered with blossoms, and each blossoms had petals of mother-of-pearl. Bedelia's heart sank as she took the twig. But then she said to herself, "use your common sense, my girl! Lord Garp never travelled three thousand kilometres in two weeks, nor is he the man to fight his way through lions, serpents, and wolves." She looked carefully at the branch. Then she said, "My lord, you know that the jewel tree of Paxis is a living tree, although it is all made of jewels." Bedelia said "then why these blossoms have no scent?" Lord Garp turned red and said "set me another task. This time I swear I will perform it." Bedelia said "very well. Then bring me a cloak made from the skins of the salamanders who live in the volcano of scoria." Lord Garp bowed, and off he went. "The volcano of scoria," said Bedelia to her father "is covered with red-hot lava. It burns steadily with great flames, and pours out poisonous smoke so that no one can come within a kilometre of it." Nevertheless, in a week, Lord Garp was back. This time, he carried a cloak that shone and rippled like all the colours of fire. It was made of scaly skins. Bedelia hurled the cloak into the fireplace; it blazed up in a flash and fell to ashes. Bedelia said, "That cloak was a fake, my lord. The skin of salamanders who can live in the Volcano of Scoria wouldn't burn in a little fire like that one." Lord Garp said, "So be it. If I can't have you, no one shall!" He pointed a long skinny finger at her. On the finger was a magic ring. At once, a great wind arose. It blew through the throne room. It sent King Ludwig flying one way and his guards the other. It picked up Bedelia and whisked her off through the air. When she could catch her breath and look about her, she found herself in a room at the top of a tower. She said herself "if you sit waiting for a prince to rescue you, you may sit forever. Be practical! If there's any rescuing to be done, you're going to have to do it yourself." There were three doors. But there was no sign of staircase, or any way down from the top of the

tower. From beneath it came the sound of snores. And between snores, a voice said, "Sixteen million and twelve... snore... sixteen million and thirteen...snore...sixteen million and fourteen..."

Cautiously, she went closer. Then she saw that what she had taken for a haystack was in fact an immense pile of blonde hair. Parting it, she found a young man, sound asleep. Bedelia took him by shoulder and shook him hard. Bedelia asked him who are you? He replied "I am Prince Perian, the rightful ruler of Istven But Lord Grap has put me under a spell. I have to count sheep jumping over a fence, and this puts me to sleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee\_ " He began to snore lightly. She waked him up again and told him imagine the sheep jumping backwards, and when you get to one, you will be wide awake. Hastily, the prince began to count, "Six million and thirteen, six million and twelve..."Bedelia said, "count by hundreds, or you'll never get there." He began to gabble as fast as he could "Five, four, three, two, ONE!" and awoke completely. He said "Look how my hair and beard have grown. I've been here for years. Thank you, my dear. Who are you, and what are you doing here?" Bedelia quickly explained. She said "we should escape from here and what we need is a long rope because there are no stairs here." She clapped her hands and Said "we have your beard." Bedelia said "hang your beard out of the window and let me climb down. I will search the tower and perhaps I can find a ladder, or a hidden staircase. If all else fails, I can go for help." He threw the beard out of the window, and sure enough the end of it came to within a metre of the ground. Bedelia climbed out of the window and slid down the beard. She dropped to the ground and sat for a moment, breathless. Lord Grap saw what was happening. He leaped from the horse and grabbed the beard. He gave it a tremendous yank. Headfirst came Perian, out of the window. Down the fell, and with a thump, he landed right on top of old Lord Grap. This saved Perian, who was not hurt at all. But it was the end of Lord Grap. Perian and Bedelia rode back to Istven on Lord Grap's horse. In the great city, the prince was greeted with cheers of joy. And of course, since Bedelia had rescued him from captivity, she married him. First, however, she made him get a haircut and a shave so that she could see what he really looked like. For she was always practical.

### ***The first part of "A Jury of her Peers"***

Five characters participate in the investigating of this tragedy. Their job is to find a clue to the motive that will links Mrs. Wright, the primary suspect, to the murder. Ironically, the ladies, whose duties did not include solving the mystery, were the one who found the clue to the motive. Even more ironic, Mrs. Hale, presence is solely in favour of keeping the sheriffs wife company, could be contributed the most to her secret discovery. In this short story, Mrs. Hales character play a significant role to Mrs. Wrights nemesis that she has slight feeling of accountability and also her discovery of the clue to the motive.

A team of individuals consisting of the sheriff, country attorney, Mrs. Hale, and Mrs. Peters were on a mission to find the purpose of the murderer. At this point, Mrs. Wright is the primary suspect. Mrs. Hale was asked to join the party in order to give Mrs. Peters, the sheriff's wife, some companionship. In the story, Mrs. Hale leaves

cues of guilty feeling. The reason being given that she had been too busy to come by but now she could come and Hale's empathy toward Mrs. Wright is apparent. The two women (Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters) were left in the kitchen while the men were investigating in the crime scene. The ladies continue to look through her items. They noticed that she was piecing together a quilt and empty birdcage. These items left them with a confused thought. First, the quilt had nice stitching all the way through except on the end. The stitching was pulled apart at the end. Through all these feelings, Mrs. Hale wishes that she would have come around. She knows that John Wright (the murder) had a good reputation of a good man, but he was also known as a hard man. The fact of the matter is that Mrs. Wright was alone all day, and it would almost make sense that she would want the bird for some companionship. She tries to convince herself numerous of times that she stayed away because it weren't cheerful. Yet, the more she thought about it that the more she realized that may be that's why she should be come around. Moreover, Mrs. Hale discovered a pretty box.

#### ***The second part of "A Jury of her Peers"***

Inside the box was a bird, whose neck had been wrung. After this discovery, everything starts to come together to Mrs. Hale. First, she notes that she was going to bury the bird in a pretty box, therefore he killed the bird. In addition, she makes the connection between Wright's dislike for the bird and killing a thing that sings with the fact that Mrs. Wright used to sing and killed that a long time ago. The discovery of the motive caused Mrs. Hale to feel even more responsible for Mrs. Wright's action. In the process, Mrs. Hale even found herself commiserating the murder. Even though, she knew that murdering an individual is a crime. She also felt that killing a person sense of self is as much offense.

#### ***Synopsis of 'The Whole Town's Sleeping'***

The story asks to be read as an exciting entertainment. It tells of woman who goes out at night to see a film with friends, ignoring warnings that a murderer is at large. After the pictures, she farewells her friends and begins to walk back through a deserted ravine to her house. She hears footsteps behind her that speed up when she begins to hurry. Terribly afraid and bitterly regretting that she has ventured out, she runs home, lets herself in and locks the door, only to hear someone cough in the room behind her. At this point the story ends.