Degree Project

Fiction and the Syllabus
A Qualitative Study of the Teaching of Fiction as Related to the Syllabus for English in Swedish Junior High Schools

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate how fiction in English is taught in Swedish Junior High Schools with the present syllabus as a focus. I compare the present syllabus with the previous one in order to observe what changes English language teaching has undergone in regards to the teaching of fiction. Seven English teachers from different parts of Sweden discuss what role fiction has in their classroom, why they teach fiction and how the teaching of fiction is realized in practice. The reading literacy and frequency of reading are also analyzed in contrast with the increased consumption of technology. The results were consistent with research and statistics as presented in this study. The notion of students as individuals with individual needs and interests was consistent among the informants as was the awareness of the necessity of introducing reading as an everyday activity in the compulsory school.

**Keywords:** English fiction, qualitative interviews, syllabus, teaching methods, reading literacy, reading comprehension.
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1. Introduction

Regardless if [sic!] we are to assimilate advanced theoretical models, or the date information on a milk carton, we must be well acquainted with the form and function of the written word; an acceptable and meaningful existence is dependent largely upon our literacy. Entry into the community of the written language can be the beginning of a lifetime of learning where time and space may cease to be determining factors (With a focus on Reading Comprehension 6).

Junior High School education is based on the idea that students can process the written word and comprehend its underlying meaning in any subject. Students are as a result exposed to all kinds of literature, from fragments to full bodies of texts, throughout their education in order to develop as readers. One literary form commonly used in Junior High School to develop reading strategies is narrative fiction. By reading fiction students have the opportunity to develop receptive and productive language skills as well as “knowledge about and an understanding of different living conditions, as well as social and cultural phenomena in the areas and contexts where English is used” (Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre 2011 32). Depending on the interaction between the teacher and the student and how fiction is used in class, reading can be a challenging process at best.

Although reading is considered to be a central part of Junior High School education, an extensive report published by PIRLS in “Trends in Children’s Reading Literacy Achievement 1991–2001” has indicated that the reading literacy of Swedish students has declined since the beginning of the 1990s. It was observed in the report that the Swedish students were the only participants who experienced a downward trend in performance while the remaining participants experienced opposite trends (4). Similar figures to what is presented in PIRLS’s report can also be observed in a motion put forth by Anita Brodén and Karin Granblom Ellison to the Swedish government in 2010. The motion, Nationell strategi...
förläsning och en litteraturkanon, states that one in every five students has never read a full-length novel by the time they reach grade 9.

Since the 1990s, reading literacy has become a major issue in the compulsory school and can be observed in every subject. Although the decline presented in the previously cited report by PRILS is not extensive in itself, it is still noteworthy considering how highly valued reading is in the compulsory school and by extension in society as well. Monika Vinterek, author of the paper “Reading Habits in School: Do students read full bodies of text?” has observed “a connection between how students read classroom texts in schools today and a decline in reading competency” (9). She suggests that the poor performance of Swedish students is connected with how often they read full bodies of texts on a normal school day. Vinterek found that 60% of the students in grade 8 read two or fewer full bodies of texts on a normal school day and that over 30% of the students did not read any full bodies of texts during the same time frame (6). The downward trend in reading coherent texts has influenced the overall reading practice students receive, which by extension has affected the reading speed and comprehension of the students as well:

[T]he results for Sweden had declined in both comprehension and reading speed.

Interestingly, these changes in reading results differ somewhat depending on the kind of text employed. Swedish students displayed poorer comprehension when reading fictional texts, but an unchanged or somewhat improved comprehension of informational literature compared to a decade previously. The largest decline concerned the comprehension of non-fiction literature (4).

The compulsory school Vinterek had in mind when publishing her paper in 2007 was essentially “characterised by independent, self directed [sic!] study whereby students [had] wider opportunities to choose what and how they read as opposed to more teacher-directed lessons” (4). The previous curriculum Lpo-94 was still in use when the paper was published and the school system at the time employed an ideology which was “based on a rhetoric in
which the students [were] depicted as ‘knowledge seekers’ and ‘knowledge producers’” (4). The school system preceding Lpo-94 had as a contrast a stricter attitude towards the students’ learning process and viewed knowledge as something absolute and definite. Maria Isaksson, author of the paper “Betygshistorik – en litteraturstudie i hur det svenska betygsystemet förändrats sedan tidigt 1900-tal”, suggests that the school system possessed an authoritarian atmosphere and that the students were as a result not given much control over their own education (8–14).

The transition from a state-owned to a municipal compulsory school in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the start of an increased individualism for the students. The focus of the compulsory school shifted from the necessity to teach to the necessity to learn. This transition meant that, in other words, students were no longer regarded as a collective group but as individuals with individual needs and interests. Nevertheless, the transition demanded a stricter discipline of the students as they were required to be observant of what texts they chose and from where the texts were chosen. It also demanded a stricter discipline of the teachers as they had to be aware of what impact each text might have on the students and how it should be dealt with. A similar discipline for students and teachers can be observed in the present curriculum Lgr-11. Although students are not seen as 'knowledge seekers' to the same extent as before, they are still as independent as with the previous curriculum and have today become accustomed to independent study (Vinterek 9).

A question which becomes relevant in this situation is whether the introduction of Lgr-11 has affected how fiction is taught in English language teaching. As opposed to previous syllabi for English in Junior High School, the present syllabus concentrates on different forms of media such as narrative fiction, informative fiction, film adaptations and news reports (Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre 2011 34). A variation of this nature suggests that fiction should not only cover several
themes but degrees of difficulty as well, in order to meet the needs and interests of the individual student. The idea behind it was that students should be given the chance to “develop their skills in relating content to their own experiences, living conditions and interests” (32). If the gap between the text and its reader is too wide, it becomes too difficult to understand and relate to its content. The present curriculum and syllabi should therefore, suggests Bo Sundblad in *Grundskolan 50 år: Från folkskola till folkets skola*, focus on an increased understanding of what learning actually is to further develop Junior High School education (160-161).

1.1 Aim of the study

In this study I will take a closer look at how fiction is taught with the present syllabus for English in Junior High School as a focus. I will also compare the present syllabus with the previous one in order to observe what changes English language teaching has undergone when it comes to the teaching of fiction. Primarily, I will look at how and why certain fiction is chosen and how the fiction in question is taught according to the aims and knowledge requirements of the present syllabus. As a contrast, if the fiction has been taught previous to Lgr-11, how is the teaching affected by the curriculum? I am interested in whether it has affected how fiction is taught in Junior High School or whether the teaching methods are the same as with Lpo-94. In regards to the research on reading literacy mentioned in the introduction I am also interested in how frequent the use of fiction is and how teachers work with fiction in their classroom. Have the teachers observed a decline in reading literacy and reading comprehension? If that is the case, to what extent have they observed the decline and how do they deal with it in their classroom?

This study will focus on qualitative interviews with seven English teachers in Junior High School from all over Sweden. I will discuss the interview answers in regards to
secondary material on reading comprehension, literacy and the teaching of literature. I have chosen to focus on the teachers’ perspectives rather than the students’ for a number of reasons. As I want to observe how and why the syllabus is used in practice it is more convenient to assume the teachers' perspective. Although the perspective of students is important, and fundamental for a complete picture of English language teaching, it would mean that the focus in this study would be the effects of the syllabus instead.

1.2 Definition of terms

In this paper I frequently use the terms curriculum and syllabus to discuss the compulsory school and English language teaching in particular. As the two terms can easily be confused I will explain their meaning in this section. The curriculum, at present entitled Lgr-11, can essentially be defined as a set of guidelines for the compulsory school to determine the fundamental values and tasks employed by the school. It is for example stated in the curriculum that students should develop an understanding and compassion for others as well as basic democratic values. Furthermore, the curriculum consists of the goals and knowledge requirements of each individual subject, which is known as the syllabi. The syllabus, as opposed to the extensive curriculum, is individual to each subject and consists of the specific goals and knowledge requirements that the schools, teachers and students ought to fulfill. The syllabus for English language teaching consists for example of listening, reading, writing and speaking activities with a general focus on developing all-round communicative skills.

Reading literacy and reading comprehension are two other terms I frequently use in this paper. Reading literacy is the ability to understand and use a text either for obtaining knowledge or for leisure. Reading comprehension, on the other hand, is defined as the understanding of a text and the connections the reader can draw to past experience and knowledge outside of the actual text. In the syllabus of English language teaching this is
referred to as the ability to use strategies to understand spoken or written communication

(Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre 2012 35).

2. Background and previous research

In the first part of this chapter I will present research on reading literacy and reading comprehension in Junior High School. The focus is primarily on the present syllabus for English language teaching and statistics published by PIRLS. The second part of this chapter consists of research on how fiction is used in the classroom and how fiction is characterized in the present syllabus.

2.1 Reading literacy and reading comprehension

The performance and efficiency of the compulsory school has been the subject of countless of studies in recent years. At this point in time, the curriculum Lgr-11 has only been in use for little over a year and research on its effects are still few. Compared with research relating to the previous curriculum Lpo-94, what can be concluded in existing research should therefore be treated as highly speculative at this point. The content of English language teaching has not changed drastically with the present curriculum – it is essentially the same as before but described more plainly and in greater detail. Reading is for example seen as equally important in the present syllabus as it had been in the previous one. Alternative text forms were scarce in Lpo-94 compared with Lgr-11 and literature in the form of poetry and song lyrics were not dealt with or even hinted at. Neither film adaptations nor theater performances were brought up as alternatives to fiction and non-fiction. The previous syllabus was significantly more restricted in its definition of literature and fiction in particular. It is a subject which has been allowed greater freedom in Lgr-11 with alternative text forms and degrees of difficulty.
International studies regarding students’ reading literacy have in the past shown that Swedish students perform well above average compared to students from other participating countries. However, as the previously cited report by PIRLS has indicated, there has been a decline in both reading literacy and in reading comprehension since the 1990s. The students participating in the study had for example lower average performance with textbooks and narrative texts. Only 14% of the Swedish students read textbooks on a daily basis compared with 57-66% of the participating students from New Zealand, Singapore, Slovenia and the United States (Martin et al. 5). Monika Vinterek's previously cited paper points to a similar decline in reading literacy and comprehension. Her paper deals with students’ abilities to focus on coherent reading in the classroom as, traditionally, the texts students encounter are fragments rather than full bodies of text. The purpose of her paper was to examine to what degree students read longer texts in class and how well they understood what they read. The results showed that students received little training in how to process coherent texts and that, as a result, “more than 50 % of the students read less than two pages such text a day” (Vinterek 1).

Not only did Vinterek observe that the students need more practice in reading coherent texts but she also observed an increased consumption of technology. On the other hand, the students did not use their leisure time online to read longer texts but rather to play computer games and to chat with friends. It is difficult to argue for a connection between a decline in reading literacy and an increased consumption of technology as a cause for the poor results of Swedish students. The increased usage of technology appears to be a global phenomenon after all and cannot be considered as the cause for a decline alone (8).
Lärarnas Riksförbund (LR)\(^1\) published in 2005 a report on reading literacy and reading comprehension in the compulsory school. The report is no longer available online and has since its publication been removed from their official website. Still, the report can be found in the works by other researchers as a secondary source. Two of these researchers are Henric Axéll and Eric Wister who together published the paper “Ungdomars läsvanor: En studie av läsandet hos gymnasieelever, med fokus på genus, klass och etnicitet”. Their paper showed that as many as 18% of the participating students had never read a fictional book in school and 16% of the participants had never read a fictional book outside school (Axéll and Wister 6). Although a number of the participants read fiction, it was reported that 50% of the students only read between one and three books per year. Similar it Axéll’s and Wister’s paper, Medierådet\(^2\) has observed in the report “Ungar och Medier 2010: Fakta om barns och ungas användning och upplevelser av medier” that students between the ages of 13 to 16 read less than any other age group in Sweden. At the same time, the same group of students also spends the most time online out of everyone (11; 20 – 21).

Why Swedish students have a lower average performance than previously and why they read less has been much debated. It has for instance been argued that students read less in their leisure time nowadays which “appears to have the greatest significance for the students' ability to assimilate fiction, while school activity seems to be more significant for the development of the students' reading ability vis-à-vis non-fiction” (Vinterek 9). Another suggestion, which Axéll and Wister addressed in their study from 2007, is that fiction available for young adults in school does not relate to their own experiences and reality. Axéll and Wister further suggested that young men in particular have almost no fiction meeting their interests compared with the amount of literature for young women. The gap between the male

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\(^1\) Lärarnas Riksförbund (LR) is one of two major labor unions for teachers in Sweden. LR focuses primarily on qualified High School teachers but is also open to qualified Junior High School teachers and study counselors.  
\(^2\) Medierådet is a Swedish government agency established to promote an understanding of the effects of different media. The agency is also established to guide students in finding age appropriate media.
reader and the text is by extension too wide and the reader is thus unable to relate to its content (Axéll and Wister 6). It is yet to be established why Swedish students have a lower average performance and these statements are merely speculations at this point. It is however unlikely that the decline in reading literacy can be traced back to one single argument but rather the sum of several different arguments.

2.2 Literature in the classroom

It is necessary to connect the teaching of fiction with the aims and knowledge requirements of the syllabus in order for the students to receive as thorough education as possible. Although reading for the sake of reading should be encouraged in the schools, it is also important to include other areas in need of improvement. It is for instance stated in the syllabus for English in Junior High School that all students should be given the opportunity to develop all-round communicative skills that include receptive as well as productive skills. At the same time, students require confidence in their own ability as communicators to learn English in the first place. The Swedish National Agency for Education suggests that confidence is fundamental for participating in life outside of school. By extension, confidence in their own ability will allow the students to explore other cultures in a manner that would otherwise have been too challenging. According to the knowledge requirements at the end of year 9, students should be able to understand the simple content and details of basic texts in various genres and for a higher grade grasp simple as well as advanced texts from various genres (Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre 2011 41). Although specific genres are not explicitly mentioned, students should throughout their education come in contact with different types of genres – fictional and non-fictional.

Reading fiction is a central part of English language teaching and, and as Gunilla Molloy suggests in Att läsa skönlitteratur med tonåringar from 2003, it is therefore necessary
to explain to students why fiction is taught in school. Molloy argues that all teachers have a different opinion of why fiction should be taught in school. It is in a sense inevitable as every teacher has different values concerning subjects such as fostering and culture. Explaining why certain fiction is taught will allow the students to place the work of fiction in a wider context and discuss its themes. The author uses her own observations as an example when fiction is not taught in a way that will aid the students' language progression. Molloy noted that in every class that she observed some form of harassment and bullying took place. The same classes would read fiction such as William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* without connecting its content to their own classroom environment. The novel was treated separately from what was going on in the classroom. What Molloy suggests is that students through “literature one can experience and learn about democratic values and also conflicts around them” (42). Molloy proposes that, instead of avoiding the topic, teachers should discuss what is happening in their society and what conflicts the students may encounter. She states that it is important to discuss the different opinions of social class, gender, ethnicity and age generations that exist in society. By discussing these opinions, with the help of fictional literature, the students will not only acknowledge the situation but at the same time learn how society is formed (295).

In *Läsinlärmning och självförtroende: Psykologiska teorier, empiriska undersökningar och pedagogiska konsekvenser*, Karin Taube suggests that reading comprehension can only be achieved with active reading. Although Taube focuses on Swedish language teaching, the same conclusions could be applied on other forms of language teaching, such as English as it is taught as a second language in Sweden. Taube argues that the most fundamental factor in the reading process is the students’ own participation and attitude. It is after all the individual who must experience the story and draw conclusions from it themselves (62). In *Teaching Literature: Nine to Fourteen*, Michael Benton and Geoff Fox suggest that “[e]very reading of every reader is unique. The variables are so many that they make the whole area of reader
response both fascinating and elusive” (16). Their research focuses primarily on native English speakers and argues that experience, purpose and psychological make-up are essential when defining the individual's reading experience. The same could be argued for non-native speakers as understanding the meaning behind the words and relating it to personal experience is just as important as understanding the words themselves. It is also important to establish whether a work of fiction should be read for its informational value or for leisure.

Psychological make-up refers to the reader's personal style. Some are interrogative readers questioning the text and speculating about its content. Others are acquiescent readers accepting the text for what it appears to be without questions. Benton and Fox suggest that all readers operate with both these point of views depending on the situation and emotional state (16-17).

One of the main goals in the curriculum Lgr-11 school is to promote “learning by stimulating the individual to acquire and develop knowledge and values” (Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre 2011 11). In the syllabus for English in Junior High School it is stated that language teaching should help students “to develop knowledge about and an understanding of different living conditions, as well as social and cultural phenomena in the areas and contexts where English is used” (32). In order to gain knowledge about the surrounding world it is nevertheless vital that the students are “given the opportunity to develop their skills in relating content to their own experiences, living conditions and interests” (32). It is in other words necessary to explain why a work of fiction is read in class, as suggested by Molloy, and what significance it has to the subject. Her comparison with the troublesome classroom situation and the novel Lord of the Flies is an example of why it is important to explain why fiction is taught. The class experienced bullying on a daily basis but no one connected their behavior to what they read in class.
Although reading for leisure should be actively promoted within the school, the themes and moral of the novel were lost on the class as a result.

3. Method and material

The following chapter will explain how this study is conducted and how the empirical material has been processed. The empirical material consists of qualitative interviews with seven English teachers in Junior High School from different geographical areas in Sweden. Qualitative interviews were the preferred method for this study as I wanted to ask short questions with substantial answers in return. I also wanted to examine the reasoning and opinions of the informants. The first section discusses the format of the interviews while the second part discusses the selection of informants. The last part of this chapter consists of the delimitations of this study.

3.1 Interviews

The informants work in different geographical areas of Sweden and it was therefore not possible to perform face-to-face interviews. All interviews but one were conducted over the internet by e-mail as a result. An alternative to this interview method would have been to interview by video or telephone which would require transcription after. It would however be a time-consuming task and not to say excessive considering that I am not analyzing how the informants answer the questions but what they answer. The interview that was not conducted over the internet was scheduled before I had a set plan for how the empirical material should be gathered. I chose to not record the interview but to keep continuous notes by hand as an alternative. As Jan Trots advises in the handbook *Kvalitativa Intervjuer* from 2005, it is necessary to keep the reaction of the informant in mind when taking notes during a face-to-face interview as the method can be seen as annoying or even offensive. Others might feel
self-conscious when the interviewer is writing and will therefore focus on how they answer a question rather than what they answer (55).

One disadvantage with interviews by e-mail is the lack of direct communication and spontaneous answers from the informants. On the one hand, the responses will be well thought as they have an infinite amount of time at their disposal. On the other hand, the answers risks being forced or fictitious due to high demands from the informants for the same reason. Another disadvantage with interviews by e-mail is that all social aspects of an interview changes when the interview is conducted over the internet. All non-verbal communication, such as body language and how a person is dressed for instance, is lost in this situation as there is no face-to-face contact between the interviewer and the informant. It is however of less importance in this study as I am interested in is what the informants answer rather than how they answer.

The interview consists of 18 questions and therefore I want to give the informants time to focus on each question individually so that they can give as in-depth answers as possible. Teaching is a demanding profession and teachers seldom have time to perform tasks outside of their schedule. With an interview that the informants can answer anywhere at any time they are in a sense given complete freedom. I have chosen a method that will be time-consuming when it comes to gathering material but as statistics are not my primary goal it does not matter when I receive the answers as long as I receive them. The first five questions of the interview aims to establish what the participants teach, in what grades and for how long they have taught. The remaining questions deal with how the teachers use fiction in their classroom and how they plan the lessons accordingly. Questions such as what fiction means to the informants as teachers, what role fiction has in their classroom and what sort of fiction they use are of interest to the study. Other questions which are of interest to the study are how often the informants use fiction as a part of their lessons, what sort of fiction they are most
likely to use and how varied the fiction is in regards to genre and degree of difficulty. I have also included a question of how English language teaching, and reading in particular, is taught according to Lgr-11 compared with Lpo-94. Lastly, the informants were interviewed about the statistical findings mentioned in the introduction and background of this study. I have, as suggested by Trost, avoided questions relating to the informants' feelings in certain situations and instead asked questions about general observations (35).

A qualitative approach in this manner is appropriate as I want to establish a deeper understanding of how fiction is used with regards to the present curriculum Lgr-11. Although quantitative research has its merits, it often just touches the surface of a situation and is not as in-depth as I would have liked. Quantitative research is better adapted on large scale studies while qualitative research is preferred for a small scale study such as this. The interviews were conducted in Swedish as it would allow the informants to answer as freely as possible. One of my informants speaks English as a first language and was therefore given the option of answering in English. I have chosen to present the interviews in the form of a running text in the results of this study. A translated and summarized version of the interviews can be found in the appendix.

3.2 Informants

In any study it is crucial to question what the choice of informants actually represents. What part of the population do the informants represent and is it a statistically reasonable representation? On the one hand, it is important to keep the group of informants as heterogeneous as possible in order to formulate reasonable observations and to draw conclusions based on these observations (Trost 117). On the other hand, homogeneous groups can be just as acceptable – it rather depends on the interviewer and what subject the study is dealing with (45). Although the informants in this study are all female, they differ in age,
working experience as well as geographical area. I do not believe that the gender of the informants will be of significance to the results. What I do believe will be of significance is the geographical factor as teachers are more restricted by where they teach rather than whether they are male or female. Not only is the school budget different depending on where you teach but the availability of material, classrooms and students is different as well. Furthermore, I am not dealing with a subject where gender is a significant factor. Teachers should use fiction in their teaching whatever gender they have.

I have selected the informants according to what Trost refers to as a convenience sampling. It is a method which is based on who the interviewer has access to at the time (120). As stated previously, the informants are seven English teachers in Junior High School from different geographical areas of Sweden. I only received no or negative response from the Junior High Schools I first approached. A few of the individual teachers I approached either did not have time or did not teach English at present. Through classmates I was however able to come in contact with a number of English teachers who all agreed to participate in this study. The first contact with the informants is essential to the progress of the study and whether an interview will take place in the first place (62). The informants were initially approached by e-mail with the aim of the study and a question of whether they wanted to participate. A week after the initial contact, I sent out a second e-mail with further information about the study and how the interview would be conducted. The informants have all been informed that participation in this study is voluntary and anonymous previous to the interview, as suggested by Trost (40-44). I received a total of seven informants as a result and with the aim of the study in mind I was able to gather enough data to conduct a sufficient analysis but, at the same time, not so much data that I would not have time to process it.
The following list consists of a presentation of all informants, the code which they have been given in this study to remain anonymous as well as a short background of who they are as teachers:

- **Teacher A** is the only participant I met in person. She has been a Junior High School teacher for 11 years in central Sweden. Teacher A is teaching English, French and Swedish in grade 7 and grade 8 at present. During our initial contact she stated that she did not work with literature at the moment but that she is attempting to reform her teaching methods to adapt to the present curriculum.

- **Teacher B** is working as an English and History teacher in the same region as Teacher A. She was recently employed at a local High School but has experience with working at Junior High School as well. When I initially contacted Teacher B there was a misunderstanding as to where she actually worked. She thought that I was looking for High School teachers and I thought that she was working at a Junior High School. Because of this, some of her interview answers are not suitable for this study and have thus been omitted. Teacher B will complete her university degree in January 2013.

- **Teacher C** is not working as a teacher at present as she is focusing on completing her university degree. She has, however, been teaching English for four and a half years in grade 6 to grade 9. Teacher C will be a certified Junior High School teacher in English and Psychology in January 2013. She is currently living abroad but has previously studied and worked in Sweden.

- **Teacher D** has previously been a tutor for Teacher C and is at present teaching in the south of Sweden. At the moment she is teaching English in grade 9 but is also an adjunct in English and German. She has been working for 28 years and, as she is at the end of her career, is currently cutting down on her teaching hours. Teacher D has previous experience of working both in High School and University.
Teacher E is working as an English and Art teacher at a Junior High School in the south of Sweden. She has been working as a certified teacher for one semester and is only teaching English at present. Teacher E is the informant with the least working experience in this study.

Teacher F is teaching English in grade 7 to grade 9 at a Junior High School in the north of Sweden. She has been teaching for 15 years and has experience with teaching Swedish and English as third language teaching as well.

Teacher G is not working as a teacher at present as she is on maternity leave. She has been working as an English, Swedish and Spanish teacher in grade 6 to grade 9 in the north of Sweden. She has been working as a certified teacher for 7 years.

3.3 Delimitations

This study will focus solely on the teachers’ experience with reading fiction in class as a part of English language teaching. I will primarily investigate how and why certain fiction is chosen and how the fiction in question is taught with the aims and knowledge requirements of the present syllabus in mind. I have chosen to compare the teachers’ experience with what is stated in the syllabus as I am interested in whether the new syllabus has affected how fiction is taught in Junior High School or whether the teaching methods are the same as with the previous one. This study will not investigate the students’ experience with reading fiction as I am interested in how the teachers reason when using fiction in their teaching rather than the effects reading in English has on students. It would have been interesting to include the students’ perspective in order to receive as thorough results as possible. The time frame of this study would not allow for a study in that capacity though.
4. Results

In this chapter I will present the results of the seven interviews which have been divided into four chapters based on the content of the question. The first chapter focuses on the informants’ view on fiction and its role in English language teaching. The second chapter focuses on how fiction is used in practice by the informants. What teaching methods the informants employ, whether they work thematically or not, what genres and degrees of difficulty they focus on and how often they use full bodies of texts in contrast with text fragments are all brought up in this chapter. The third chapter centers on a possible decline in reading literacy and an absence of fiction for young men. The fourth chapter focuses on how the informants adapt the syllabus to English language teaching, what they aim to accomplish by teaching fiction and whether they have observed any changed with the present syllabus compared with the previous one. A summarized version of all interviews can be found in the appendix at the end of this study.

4.1 The view on fiction and its role in English language teaching

All informants stated that fiction is important to them as teachers and that it is frequently present in their language teaching – whether it is a first, second or even third language. Fiction is indeed considered to be an asset by the informants when working with different themes and subjects in class. The informants argued that fiction should be a central part of teaching but that it should also inspire students to read outside school. What exact role fiction has in the classroom varies between the informants. I have observed three recurring patterns in their answers. The first pattern I observed was that fiction is frequently used to develop other areas than reading skills and reading strategies. Teacher B for instance uses fiction for advanced vocabulary training and grammar while Teacher C uses fiction to develop the students’ receptive and productive skills. The second pattern I observed was that fiction is
used for discussing social issues in society. Teacher A, Teacher D and Teacher G all use fiction in order to discuss deeper and difficult questions with their students in a context which standard textbooks cannot provide. The third and final pattern I observed was that fiction is used to inspire students to read more and particularly to read outside school. Teacher C argued that reading fiction is an asset to the individual and that it should be used as a platform for learning in a creative and imaginative way. Teacher F stated that she often uses fiction in her teaching and frequently recommends young adult fiction in English to her students. She keeps a variety of easier as well as more advanced fiction in her classroom that the students can read whenever they have completed an assignment.

The informants agreed that fiction is not only important to them as teachers but that it is also a crucial part of English language teaching in general. Reading fiction can provide students with an advanced vocabulary, strengthen their confidence in the language and develop their reading literacy and thus comprehension. In order to realize these goals, however, it is necessary to introduce students to fiction of different degrees of difficulty and from different cultures where English is spoken. Teacher B argued for instance that it is important for students to come in contact with all kinds of fiction in their learning process that standard textbooks cannot provide. She claimed that textbooks written exclusively for English language teaching are strained and do not present an accurate use of the language. Teacher C, similar to Teacher B, suggested that narrative fiction can provide a good basis for studying different forms of English and thus acquire an understanding of different English-speaking countries.

The problem when working with fiction appears to be a general lack of time and involvement from the students. Teacher A indicated for example that there is not enough time to conduct a thorough literary discussion as her lessons are far too short. Teacher F tries to encourage her students to read fiction in English as often as possible she do not believe in
forcing students to read if they are unwilling or otherwise unable. She claims that there are alternatives to reading fiction such as audio recordings which the students can use as substitute. Her reasoning for this alternative to reading is that easy-to-read fiction is often substandard and will most likely evoke a negative attitude towards reading. Reading fiction is still a necessary part of English language teaching, argued Teacher G, in order for the students to develop sufficient reading competence. Teacher D misunderstood the question and will therefore not feature in this section.

The informants had, as stated previously, all agreed that fiction is important to them as teachers and to English language teaching in general. However, the view on fiction in regards to personal experience and the workplace differed between the informants. Four of the informants have experience in collaborating with other English teachers in one form or the other while two of the informants work independently with fiction. One informant misunderstood the question and will therefore not feature in this section. Teacher C was the only informant who completely collaborated with her colleagues. The English School, where she previously worked, was divided into subject departments in order for the teachers to develop material common to all English teachers. Although the teachers taught individually they shared their material and experiences. At the school where Teacher A is employed, the English teachers have just begun collaborating through subject conferences, but she states that it is difficult to find time for longer collaborations. Teacher D as well as Teacher F experience some form of collaboration between English teachers at their workplace but stated that their teaching is independent from that of the other English teachers. Teacher F considers every class to be different and that each class requires material that suits their individual needs. As opposed to the other informants, Teacher E and Teacher G do not collaborate with other English teachers. Teacher G rather suggests that her view on teaching fiction is a result of
previous collaborations. All teachers where Teacher E is employed work independently with fiction.

4.2 How fiction is used in practice by the informants

How fiction is taught in English language teaching varied drastically between the informants. Overall, reading comprehension and reading for the sake of reading appears to be the two most common goals for the informants. The informants stated that they use an ascending scale of difficulty and independence in their teaching. By extension it means that older students frequently read independently with more challenging fiction and assignments than younger students who often read together with the whole class. Teacher C suggested for instance that she spends more time reading with the younger students while the older ones read by themselves out of class more frequently and therefore do not need to read in class as much. Teacher G, similar to Teacher C, also uses an ascending scale in her teaching in regards to degrees of difficulty and independence. She arranges reading groups with the younger students where they read and discuss the content of the fiction in a larger group. The students both read and perform assignments individually as they grow older, according to Teacher G. As Teacher A is guided by the textbook *Wings* in her teaching the content therefore differs in degree of difficulty as the students get older. Teacher E and Teacher G were the only informants who used more traditional methods in their teaching. After Teacher E has read with her class she has a follow-up lecture on the text in question and assigns a written review of what the students have read. How Teacher F teaches fiction depends on the class rather than the work of fiction itself. When a class reads the same work of fiction Teacher F often has class discussions as well as vocabulary training. When the students read individually they
have to give some form of presentation of the fiction to the other students. Teacher F also uses writing assignments in a logbook form on occasion as well as smaller reading groups with assigned study questions.

In contrast to how independently the informants’ teach fiction, it appears that they are in agreement when working with themes and individual fiction in their teaching. All informants, with the exception of Teacher B and Teacher E, stated that they are guided by the choice of fiction rather than themes. Why the informants have chosen their particular approach to teach fiction varied however. A few of the informants suggested that they are guided by the quality of the fiction while other informants focused on the degree of difficulty or what the students can learn from a specific work of fiction. Three of the seven interview answers stood out from the rest. Teacher A stood out as the only informant who chose what to read based on the time available in class. She suggested that she often uses the textbook *Wings* in her teaching and is therefore guided by the textbook in question rather than by a theme. Teacher C was the only informant who stated that she is guided by certain fiction as well as by themes in her teaching. She stated that she continuously attempts to include a variety of female and male protagonists in each grade and a range of different English-speaking cultures in her teaching. Teacher D did not indicate whether she is guided by a specific work of fiction or by themes but claimed that her students choose what they read themselves.

The responses varied as to what genres and specific works of fiction the informants use in the classrooms. Overall, young adult and classical fiction were two common genres among the informants' answers. A few of the informants were not as detailed in their answers and spoke fleetingly of genres while other informants were more specific as to what they read and for which grade. Teacher C gave a detailed answer of what fiction she teaches and for what grade. She uses an ascending difficulty scale with fiction such as *Boy: Tales of Childhood* by Roald Dahl for grade 7, *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck for grade 8 and
Animal Farm by George Orwell for grade 9. Teacher B was the only other informant who gave a detailed answer as to what fiction she teaches and for what grades. She is employed at a high school and, unlike the other informants, is thus given the freedom to work with more difficult fiction and therefore uses a variety of novels, plays and short stories in her teaching. She uses fiction written by Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain and James Joyce for example.

Teacher D was not as detailed in her answer but stated that her aim is to use at least one classical novel from an English speaking country per semester. Teacher G was not detailed in what works of fiction she uses but suggests that genres such as young adult and classical fiction are present in her teaching. Teacher F uses a variety of fiction but has as of late opted for easy-to-read fiction rather than abridged versions of originals. The goal is to meet the individual needs of each student and enabling this by putting together reading groups that relate to students interests. Teacher A observed that English lessons are too short for a frequent use of full bodies of text and states that she often uses the textbook Wings as an alternative. Teacher E was perhaps the least detailed in her answers as she claimed that she allows her students to choose what fiction they are interested in instead of selecting fiction for them.

As with what genres and specific works of fiction the informants use, they also focused on different aspects of variation in fiction but all agreed that it is nevertheless important in English language teaching. A few of the informants focused on factors such as geographical and dialectal variation while other informants focused on variation in degrees of difficulty. Almost all informants suggested that reading should stimulate the students and promote a long-lasting interest in reading. It is therefore essential, according to the informants, to find fiction that is suited for the students' needs. The recurring notion is that reading fiction should stimulate the students' reading process and make them choose more challenging fiction in the future. Teacher D claimed for instance that variation is necessary as the students have
individual interests and knowledge of English. At the same time, it is important that students with reading disabilities should be allowed easy-to-read fiction and opportunities to read and listen at the same time, argues Teacher A. To match a student to a particular work of fiction is certainly necessary for students with poorer reading skills, suggests Teacher C and Teacher F, in order to keep their interest in reading. The students may otherwise develop negative attitudes towards reading fiction. Teacher B is more specific than the other informants and suggests that fiction should deal with different types of English as well as geographical areas where English is spoken. She suggests that the selection of fiction should include former colonial countries, such as India and African countries, in order for the students to experience different forms of English as well as the specific cultures. Teacher E agreed with the other informants that variation is important but does not suggest why or how fiction should be varied.

The lack of time appeared to be a recurring theme among the informants as they claimed that their lessons are too short and that there is not enough time to use fiction as much as the informants would like to. As a result, text fragments are more frequent in their teaching than full bodies of texts. Teacher A, Teacher D and Teacher G all stated that text fragments are more frequent in their teaching than full bodies of texts. Teacher D and Teacher G gave no explanation as to why they use more text fragments than full bodies of text while Teacher A referred to the lack of time as the reason why. Three of the informants attempts to read at least two or three novels per school year depending on what class they teach at present. The number of students with reading disabilities determines how frequent fiction is in the informants’ teaching. Teacher F attempts to include at least two full novels during the students' education but points out that if she has a class where several students have poor reading competence she limits the reading to one novel. Only two informants stated that they include alternative text forms to full bodies of texts or fragments in their teaching. Teacher B
prefers longer short stories, with a minimum of 20 pages, in her teaching as well as full bodies of texts accompanied by logbooks for the students. Teacher C on the other hand uses Penguin Readers, teaching material specifically written for English language teaching in order to develop language skills, in her teaching as well as poetry and non-fictional material. She also reads two to three whole novels per year with the whole class as well as text fragments to introduce authors such as Charles Dickens for example. Teacher E was the only other informant who stated that full bodies of text are frequent in her teaching. She estimated that half of her lessons contain fiction of some form. Although she too pointed to the lack of time as an issue in teaching she stated that her classes read whenever there is time to spare.

4.3 The decline in reading literacy and the absence of fiction

Almost all informants have noted some form of decline in reading literacy in their teaching. Teacher A has connected the decline with the increased consumption of technology. She suggested that when the students do not receive immediate response from fiction, as they would with technology, they lose interest in reading. She argued that reading then becomes challenging as the students have to discuss and analyze the content by themselves rather than to have it served. Another informant who has noted similar trends is Teacher D who stated that a student who willingly chooses to read is rare nowadays. She suggested that the lack of interest originates in all the activities students have outside of school and that they therefore do not have the time or energy to read. Teacher B has on the other hand noted the amount of students who claim that they never read. The same students also claimed that whenever they had a reading assignment they would rather read about the novel or watch the film adaptation instead of reading the actual novel. A diverse selection of fiction is necessary to promote reading, according to Teacher B, as well as the parents’ attitude towards reading fiction. She
pointed to how crucial it is that parents read with their children in order to promote reading and to show that reading is not as difficult as students believe.

Teacher F and Teacher G were the only two informants who suggested that reading should be an everyday activity in school. The school where Teacher F works has previously tried to promote reading and dedicated around 10 – 15 minutes every day for reading. She noted a drastic improvement in the student reading comprehension and interest in reading. The school had to cut back on the activity and Teacher F could immediately notice a decline in interest as well as ability. She believes that regular contact with reading is essential in order to prevent a further decline in literacy and comprehension but that it will be challenging for the schools to find the needed time. Teacher G, similar to Teacher F, also suggested reading as an everyday activity in order to change the negative attitudes of the students with group readings as an example. She suggested that digital media could be used as a part of reading fiction. She believes that it could appeal to the younger students better than a paperback novel could. Teacher C was the only informant who had a different experience relating to the reading literacy of Swedish students. She has previously worked at The English School where students generally had a more accepting attitude towards reading. She stated that there were only a minority of her students that did not read outside school. Teacher C suggested that it is important to bring reading into the classroom in a structured and fun way.

In contrast to the unanimous view on reading literacy, the question of an absence of fiction for young men was met with mixed opinions. Four of the seven informants have not noted an absence of fiction for young men while three of the informants have. Teacher A, Teacher D and Teacher G all suggested that there is more fiction written for young women that also contains a diverse selection of topics and themes rather than fiction for young men. Teacher G claimed that it is difficult to find fiction for young men that deals with other topics than sports and Teacher A suggested a need for easy-to-read fiction that is not as immature in
language and content. Teacher D partly agreed with the notion of an absence as she observes that there is more fiction that might interest young women rather than young men. On the other hand, she did not specify that there is more fiction published for young women than for young men. Teacher B claimed that whether or not there is more fiction published for young women it should be possible to find enough fiction for young men as well. She suggested that the problem is not the absence of fiction but rather the attitudes of the male students. Young men are less inclined to read fiction that deals with traditional female topics than young women reading about traditional male topics. According to her, young men are more likely to complain about reading Virginia Woolf than young women complaining about reading Edgar Allan Poe. Teacher C did not agree with the notion of an absence of fiction for young men but rather suggested the opposite. She claimed that it is more challenging to find fiction with female protagonists than male protagonists. Teacher E has not either observed an absence of fiction for young men but observes that there is in fact a great variety of fiction for both sexes. Teacher F does not state her opinion in the matter but remarks that the school where she is employed has as a policy to be aware of what fiction is purchased. When fiction is purchased for an entire class the aim is to have an equal amount of female and male characters as possible.

4.4 Adapting the syllabus to English language teaching

All of the informants have specific aims in mind when working with fiction other than the initial aim of reading for the sake of reading. Several of the informants aim to teach the students of different varieties of English and to promote knowledge about different living conditions in order to take part of its language, vocabulary and expressions. Teacher C stated that her goal is to teach different variations of English around the world and to improve her students' receptive as well as productive skills. Teacher E on the other hand focuses on an
advanced vocabulary as well as development of the senses. Teacher G focuses on communicative skills in connection to presentations and discussions for example. Another goal which Teacher G points to is the development of reading strategies. Teacher D on the other hand aimed to promote the students' knowledge about different living conditions in order to take part of its language, vocabulary and expressions.

The informants also stated that their aim is to increase the students' communicative skills with various activities. Teacher A stated for instance that one of her main goals with fiction is to promote confidence in the students' ability to not only voice their opinions but to actively take part of discussions relating to different topics. She also pointed out that reading comprehension is an important goal when working with fiction. Teacher B on the other hand returned to the issue of finding authentic texts instead of the constructed textbooks provided by the school. She emphasizes the necessity of a diverse language and suggests that textbooks written for the school cannot provide that. Teacher B further suggested that it is easier to connect the aims and knowledge requirements of the syllabus with authentic fiction. For instance, textbooks rarely acknowledge different dialects and sociolects in the same manner as fiction does. If a textbook happens to acknowledge a dialect it is often stereotypical. Teacher F was the only informant who stated that she focused on promoting reading for the sake of reading and to show that it is not difficult or boring to read fiction in English.

The informants have thus far not observed any major changes in how English, or fiction for that matter, is taught with the introduction of the present curriculum. The informants argued that the scope of English language teaching is the same as before but with a slight change in focus. English teachers are for instance more aware of the choices they make and particularly why they make these choices. Teacher D believes that the students are less restricted today than before and that they as a result can choose what to read by themselves. Teacher G does not believe that teaching has changed that much with the present curriculum.
but rather that teachers are expected to fit too much into the subject where fiction previously was enough. The main focus is still on communicative skills, according to Teacher G. Teacher F agreed with Teacher G when she argues that English teachers have started to include different forms of media in their presentations. Furthermore, she stated that her classes have begun to make more comparisons between fiction and film adaptations than before. Teacher C also pointed to the increased amount of media in English language teaching and argues that fiction can be used for reaching its goals as long as other types of written materials are also used. Teacher A has not observed a change in how English is taught with the new syllabus either and suggests that the scope is almost the same as previously. She pointed to the school’s economy and suggested that the school cannot afford to purchase new fiction as often as they would like. As Teacher B discussed the syllabus for English at High School her answer is not included in this section. Teacher E will not feature in this section either as she did not answer the question.

How, why and from where fiction is chosen differs between the informants. The informants have not changed their material drastically since Lgr-11 was introduced a year ago but tries to renew their material in other ways. A recurring topic among the answers from the informants is the economy which often determines what is to be taught. Teacher A and Teacher F both pointed to the economic situation as the main issue at the moment. Teacher A focuses on contemporary themes and would ideally work with fiction such as *The Hunger Games* or the *Harry Potter* series for example if the school’s budget would allow it. What is important though, according to her, is to select fiction that the students find interesting and want to read. The main goal for Teacher F is that the selected fiction is readable and set at an appropriate level of difficulty for the students. She suggested that because of the poor economy at present, the administrators at the school have chosen to only purchase new fiction for the younger students.
Teacher B did not appear to be affected by the economy in the same manner as Teacher A and Teacher F. On the contrary, Teacher B was perhaps the most detailed in her explanation of how she acquires her material. She pointed out that she cannot relate to the previous syllabus for English as she has not taught for long but lists a few factors which she goes by when selecting fiction. The fiction should have an appropriate level of difficulty in order for the students to come in contact with a well-written and fluent language on a level which is not too difficult from them. The fiction should also be diverse in regards to time periods and geographical areas. She suggested that the fiction should come from North America, countries in Africa as well as countries in Asia for variation. The fiction taught in school should be written by male and female authors. Teacher B also stated that it is important that the chosen texts deals with different types of society, such as what is portrayed in texts written by Maya Angelou or Toni Morrison, in order for the students to come in contact with a different image of society than what white men can provide. Teacher B further suggested that a work of fiction should connect with a specific social time in order to accomplish as many goals and knowledge requirements as possible. Teacher B pointed out the convenience of using alternative formats such as PDF-files, audio files and film adaptations as complements to the written fiction. It is important to note that Teacher B is a High School teacher and thus entitled to another budget than the other informants.

Teacher E agreed with Teacher A and stated that she is guided by contemporary fiction as well as the individual interest of the students. Teacher C is not teaching at present but believes that she would teach the same material with the present curriculum as the previous. She stated that fiction has an important part in her classroom but that a balance needs to be struck so that other forms of the language are in use. She did not provide examples of what forms she is referring to despite this claim. Teacher G was the only informant who stated that she would most likely use not only technology but also the help of
her students more frequently nowadays. Previous to the present syllabus, Teacher G used to have a diverse selection of genres and levels of difficulty in paperback for the students. Nowadays she would rather use the internet and download e-books together with the students as she believes the format to be more appealing to the students than paperbacks. It is challenging though, according to Teacher G, as the technology has not been as extensive where she has worked thus far. Teacher D was the only informant who stated that she has not noticed a difference in how or from where fiction is chosen. She uses fiction provided by publishing companies that offers various book deals for different target groups.

5. Analysis

In this chapter I will analyze the results presented in the previous chapter. The first part focuses on the informants’ interviews and how they regard fiction as a part of English language teaching. The second part focuses on what role the students have in the classroom and how they are treated by the informants. The third part of this study centers on how alternative text forms and teaching methods are regarded by the informants. The fourth part focuses on what aspects the informants value when teaching English. The fifth part centers on how reading literacy and reading comprehension is dealt with.

5.1 Fiction in the classrooms

The informants in this study gave rather unanimous answers as to why they teach fiction and what they aim to accomplish as a consequence. What the informants answered during the interviews was consistent with the syllabus for English language teaching as well as research previously discussed in this study. Fiction is considered to be an asset not only in order to help the students develop all-round communicative skills but also in order to promote an interest in reading and English fiction in particular. What varied the most among the informants were
how they use fiction in their teaching as well as general observations concerning reading literacy and the amount students read. The informants have all observed a decline in both frequency of reading and comprehension similar to what Lärarnas Riksförbund, Medierådet and Monika Vinterek have previously established. Not only do students read less fiction than before but they also read less coherent texts on an average day. As a parallel to what Vinterek discussed at length in her research, text fragments are more frequent in the informants’ teaching than full bodies of text are. The informants indicated that their students have a negative attitude towards fiction and seldom read outside of school. Furthermore, the informants reasoned similar to Karin Taube’s discussion on active reading and claimed that the only way to change this negative attitude is to introduce reading as an everyday activity. One informant in particular had seen the effects of everyday reading and would like to see similar activities in every school.

Gunilla Molloy's example of classroom bullying and the novel *Lord of the Flies* comes to mind as an appropriate example of the importance of explaining why fiction ought to be taught. Students should be made aware of the importance of fiction as a part of English language teaching and what role they have in the same situation. Although the students in Molloy’s example did not have the ability to connect the content of *Lord of the Flies* with their own classroom environment it did not mean that the problem did not exist. It is therefore important for not only the teachers that participated in this study but for all teachers to be open for a discussion on the connection between a democratic society and the content of fiction. By focusing on a diverse selection of genres and degree of difficulty in English the informants have the possibility to discuss different issues in society with their students.
5.2 Students as individuals

A recurring theme among the informants was what role the students have in the learning process. Although not explicitly mentioned, the involvement and interest of the students were crucial to how the informants taught fiction and what attitude they had in regards to the subject. The informants had an optimistic attitude to reading if they taught students who were interested in reading but, at the same time, the informants had a slightly more pessimistic attitude to reading if they taught students who either were ambivalent or opposed to reading. The overall impression I received from the interviews was that students are treated as individuals with individual needs rather than as a homogeneous group with a single need. It was for example evident in how the informants reasoned when selecting suitable materials for the students. The informants would rather choose material which could be adapted to the students’ needs and interests than material which would challenge the students’ language skills.

On the one hand I would argue that students have been given too much freedom and, by extension, power over what is taught and what is not. The students are involved in every part of the teaching from how often fiction is taught in class, how the fiction is taught to what sort of fiction is chosen and what is not. On the other hand I would argue that the students’ independence is the remains of the previous curriculum Lpo-94 and a positive development. It is positive as the students should be involved in their own education and voice their opinions and questions. It is also positive that students are treated as individuals and, by extension, that the school system is recognizing the students’ needs. It was after all not long ago when teachers did not acknowledge learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, as a serious issue and instead claimed that the students were feeble-minded.
5.3 Alternative teaching methods and text forms

In connection with the previous section, analyzing the independence of students in English language teaching, I have observed that alternative teaching methods or alternative text forms were seldom used by the informants. It is interesting considering that not only did the informants claim to have short lessons but also a small budget to work with. One would assume that the informants were using alternative means of obtaining and teaching fiction as a result. Instead of introducing alternative teaching methods or text forms, as recommended in the syllabus, the informants chose to limit the number of full length fiction to manage the students’ ability to read coherent texts in class. It is stated in the syllabus that students ought to come in contact with texts from various media as well as “[l]iterature and other fiction in spoken, dramatised and filmed forms” (Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre 2011 34). The students should also be familiarized with “written information, as well as discussions and argumentation for different purposes, such as news, reports and newspaper articles.” (34). Although the syllabus does not point to full-length novels as the only credible form of fiction, I was surprised that so few informants claimed to use alternative text forms either as recurring elements of their teaching or when they teach students who do not want to read or are otherwise unable to.

There were in fact only three informants who spoke of alternative text forms or teaching methods in their classrooms. The texts these informants use appeared to consist of non-fiction, short stories and poetry as well as audio recordings of fiction. Furthermore, only one out of these three informants spoke of the internet as an alternative source for acquiring fiction. The informant stated that students nowadays are less inclined to read a paperback novel and that downloaded fiction is a reasonable alternative. Considering that alternative teaching methods and text forms are discussed at length in the present syllabus, it is evident that English language teaching is in need of change when it comes to fiction. It is not a
problem that only exist among the informants of this study but a nation-wide problem. To lessen the amount of fiction used in class in favor of poor reading skills is not a sustainable solution to the problem however. The answers from the informants showed that although they have an admirable attitude towards fiction and reading in the classroom they are severely limited by the schools' budget, lesson time and activities outside of class.

5.4 What aspects the informants value when teaching fiction

I have narrowed down a few aspects which the informants seemed to value when teaching fiction in English. The aspects were not unusual in any way but consistent with what is stated in the syllabus. A possible explanation for this is that the syllabus is extensive in its content and therefore covering all kinds of matters in English language teaching. Another possible explanation is that the core content of English language teaching has not changed drastically over the years and what is taught has remained the same as with previous syllabi. I observed that narrative fiction is preferred to standard textbooks. The informants argued that narrative fiction could be used for discussing social issues in a setting which is more natural than what a textbook exclusively written for the compulsory school can provide. Although textbooks serves a great pedagogical purpose, and can certainly function as an introduction to the English language for younger students, it does not provide an accurate view on how English is spoken. The textbooks do not describe, or even indicate, that the language consists of a great number of dialects and sociolects. The textbooks often focus on Great Britain, the United States and Australia as the only countries where English is spoken and overlooks other smaller countries and former colonies where English is also spoken.

Diversity in genres and degrees of difficulty were also highly valued by the informants when teaching fiction. Although the informants focused on different aspects of diversity they all agreed that it is required in order to promote an interest in reading. The
notion of students as individuals with individual needs and interests can yet again be seen in what the informants’ responded. Diversity is essential when teaching fiction as students have different interests and knowledge of the English language. Although the informants identified what genres they use when teaching fiction, they did not specify what works of fiction they use. I have observed that young adult and classical fiction were the most common genres without an explanation why these particular genres were favored above others. Presumably, young adult fiction is used in English language teaching as its target audience is young adults and the novels are often written in a language adapted for their language and knowledge level. Classical fiction is most likely taught because of its cultural position in Swedish society. What would be interesting in this situation is to learn why these two genres are favored above other genres and how the informants have reasoned when selecting what fiction the students will read. Do the informants have certain aims in mind or do they use these genres because they are told that students should read them? As Molloy argued in her research, teachers have different opinions of why fiction should be taught in school and it is therefore necessary to open up to a discussion about fiction and its role in English language teaching. To learn why fiction is taught will allow the students to place the work of fiction in a wider context and perhaps improve their attitude towards reading fiction. I agree with Molloy’s statement that instead of avoiding the discussion, language teachers should recognize and discuss present conflicts in society and the different opinions of social class, gender and ethnicity. The informants in this study appear to be aware of challenges such as these and continuously attempts to include fiction from different English-speaking cultures in their teaching. The informants aim to introduce their students to fiction that describe a different reality than what they are used to.
5.5 The decline in reading literacy and comprehension

The informants had all observed a decline in reading literacy as well as encountered students who had never read a full novel. Teacher A connected the increased consumption of technology with how often students read nowadays, similar to what Vinterek discussed in her research, and argued that students are driven by the immediate response found in technology. She claimed that students do not have the patience for reading fiction that requires analytical abilities and reflection. I agree with Teacher A to a certain extent and argue that technology and the performance by students are closely connected. The use of technology does not have to be negative or harmful to the students’ learning process however. The challenge is rather to use available technology in a way that will appeal to the students and spark an interest in learning and by extension in reading. Fiction does not have to be published in paperback or hardcover to be used in school, it could just as easily be used as an electronic resource, which is a development that has become increasingly apparent in the present syllabus. The informants in this study, as well as English teachers in general I would assume, do use technology in their teaching but certainly not to its full potential. Yet again, it is evident that the informants are limited by their schools’ budget as technologies such as computers often are substandard or completely absent. It is a conflicting situation where teachers on the one hand are expected to use technology in their teaching to accommodate the needs of each student but on the other hand not have the means to accomplish it.

The question of whether there is an absence of fiction for young men was met with mixed opinions. While a small number of the informants agreed with what Axéll and Wister addressed as an issue in their study, the majority did not agree with the statement. The informants argued that there is fiction published for both males and females. It is only a matter of what attitude we associate with fiction written by female and male authors. Nor I agree with the statement as a large amount of fiction is written for young men today. Axéll’s
and Wister’s research was published a few years ago which would explain their reasoning at the time. Furthermore, as Teacher B indicated in her interview, what holds us back is our preconceived ideas of gender and society. Male students are less inclined to read fiction written by women than female students are about reading fiction written by men. It is also less accepted for male students to enjoy reading in general. Although it is a positive development that gender has been recognized in the compulsory school I would argue that balance between male and female protagonists as well as male and female authors is even more important. As I have previously argued in this study, without knowledge of why fiction is taught, the teaching will become redundant and pointless.

6. Conclusion

The informants participating in this study are aware of the issues and possibilities associating with the syllabus. They all realize, and have actively discussed, the necessity of “knowledge of the English language and of the areas and contexts where English is used” (Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre 2011 32). The informants appear to be resourceful when it comes to teaching fiction and using the syllabus in their own teaching. The problem is rather that, as suggested by Teacher G, too much content is expected to fit into the subject with a too small budget and too few lesson hours. On the one hand I would argue that the syllabus is indeed failing to reflect teaching in practice as the various aspects of the syllabus cannot be accomplished within the given time frame or budget. On the other hand I would argue that the syllabus is reflecting English language teaching in practice. Not only did the informants bring up the same criteria as the syllabus but they also showed a great awareness of students as individuals and the importance of developing all-round communicative skills based on the knowledge and experience of the individual student.

I have observed that English language teaching is standing on the threshold of
development with one foot in the old curriculum and one foot in the new. It is evident that Lgr-11 is still a new installment in the school system and has not been completely introduced yet. To an extent I do consider the initial aim of this study to be at least partially answered. I did not receive as thorough replies as I would have liked from all of the informants but enough to form an understanding of the present situation in English language teaching. The aim of the study was to take a closer look at how fiction is taught with the present syllabus for English language teaching in Junior High School as a focus. The syllabus has only been in use for a year and therefore I wanted to compare it with how fiction is taught in the classroom to observe how it is realized in practice. I was specifically interested in whether the introduction of Lgr-11 has affected how fiction is taught in Junior High school or whether the teaching methods are the same as with Lpo-94. The short answer is that English language teaching has not changed significantly since the introduction of Lgr-11. The subject is more accurately standing on the threshold of development without movement. From what I can gather by the informants’ replies, the main concerns with the teaching of fiction in English at present are:

- The lack of balance in students’ independence and the teachers’ authority.
- The lack of alternative teaching methods and text forms to full-length fiction.
- The decline in reading literacy and comprehension.
- Too little time and too small budgets.

Firstly, that students are independent is not necessarily a negative development in Junior High School. What is important however is establishing balance between the independent students and recognizing the teachers’ roles. Secondly, teachers ought to implement alternative forms of fiction and teaching methods in the classroom. Instead of excluding fiction from the subject when students cannot or do not want to read, the informants should use alternative text forms and teaching methods appropriate for the situation. Thirdly, almost all informants stated that they can observe a decline in reading literacy in their own classrooms but are unable to
prevent the decline with the resources they have available to them. Fourthly, the informants appeared to be restricted by a narrow budget and lack of time in their teaching. The informants are not able to read as much fiction as they would have liked with their students and neither are they able to purchase new fiction for their students.

In conclusion, the informants have knowledge about the content of the syllabus as well as what changes the subject has undergone since Lpo-94. Although a number of issues could be seen in the informants’ replies, it is at the same time evident that they are interested in solving these issues and developing the subject in order to assist the students’ learning process. Reading as an everyday activity, and by extension showing that it does not have to be challenging to read in the first place, is perhaps the best method to employ in Junior High School. What the informants, and presumably teachers in general, require however is time and the financial means to realize these goals. It is unlikely that these requirements will be fulfilled in the near future. It is nevertheless important to acknowledge the issues and by extension improve and develop English language teaching in the future. What can be said for certain though is that the full effects of Lgr-11 have not yet been seen. It is crucial to be open for a future discussion on the teaching of fiction in the classroom and what can be done to improve reading literacy in the Swedish compulsory school as it is evident that the subject still has room for improvement.
List of works cited


<http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=2231>


<http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=2575>


Appendix: Questions and answers

The first five questions will be excluded as information about the informants can be found in the chapter method and material. The interview answers has been translated and summarized in order to reduce its considerable length.

1. **What does fiction mean to you as a teacher and what role does it have in your classroom?**

   **Teacher A:** Argues that fiction is an excellent basis for discussing the difficult and important questions. It is a matter of great interest in contemporary language teaching. Teacher A argues for the importance of fiction in English language teaching.

   **Teacher B:** Attempts to use fiction as much as possible and often uses fiction to teach vocabulary and grammar rather than using a standard textbook.

   **Teacher C:** Argues that fiction is important as it provides an excellent platform for learning the language in a way that can be very creative imaginative and fun for children. Reading is a tremendous asset for any individual. Teacher C has tried with all age groups she has taught to make reading central and most importantly fun. The students at The English School, where she previously worked, had generally quite high levels of English and so using literature was quite a big part of their teaching.

   **Teacher D:** States that fiction is a good basis for discussing social issues in different areas as well as becoming familiar with different authors and their particular writing style.

   **Teacher E:** States that fiction is important and has a rather significant role in her teaching.

   **Teacher F:** Reads a great deal and often attempts to introduce young adult novels written in English to her students. She uses a combination of easy-to-read fiction and more difficult fiction that she gives to the students when they are done with an assignment.

   **Teacher G:** Claims that fiction is important, especially in Swedish and English. It is more difficult to find appropriate fiction for students learning Spanish. Fiction is a natural part of English language teaching, both for working with themes and as a basis for discussions of what can be found in the text itself.
2. Do you consider fiction to be an important part of the subject? Why/why not?

**Teacher A:** Considers fiction to be important to her. However, she often uses text fragments from the textbook *Wings* as the lessons are too short for a literary discussion. She also feels like she does not have enough knowledge and material to stand on.

**Teacher B:** Considers fiction to be important as it presents a more natural side of the language than textbooks especially written for the compulsory school. Textbooks are nevertheless necessary in Junior High School, but when students are showing sufficient vocabulary and grammar skills narrative fiction is always better, even if it is only short stories and not whole novels, as the students will have the possibility to come in contact with all kinds of English. She refers to the possibility of meeting different dialects and sociolects, “bad language”, verse, prose and everything in between.

**Teacher C:** Argues that fiction is important. It can provide an excellent basis for studying different forms of English around the world and understanding different English-speaking cultures. Fiction is important for expanding vocabulary and increasing confidence in understanding a language even when you don't understand every word.

**Teacher D:** Allows her students to read at least one work of fiction per semester. The students have to analyze its language and content and in groups compare impressions and experiences while speaking in English.

**Teacher E:** Argues that fiction is important as it advances the students' vocabulary and helps them develop an imagination.

**Teacher F:** Fiction is important to Teacher F, but it is not the part of English language teaching she focuses the most on. She often attempts to inspire and encourage the more advanced students to read fiction in English. She does not force the students who are less advanced to read though. She has chosen this standpoint as she believes easy-to-read fiction to be of low quality and will subsequently develop a negative attitude towards reading.

**Teacher G:** Fiction is absolutely important to Teacher G. It is central to develop reading competence and to come in contact with longer texts which at first may appear as difficult but which will eventually give the students a chance to develop their reading strategies.
3. Is it important to have a variety of fiction in class? That is, is important to cover all manner of genres as well as level of difficulty? Why/why not?

**Teacher A:** Believes that it is important that students are allowed to try different kinds of fiction. Students who have poor reading skills should be allowed easy-to-read fiction as well as the opportunity to read and listen at the same time.

**Teacher B:** Argues that fiction should cover different kinds of English and different geographical areas (preferably from former colonies as well so that students can come in contact with the English spoken in African countries and in India). This variety will allow factional as well as analytical assignments. She has also used recorded short stories from Librivox in her language teaching, but found that it was difficult to assign simple but rewarding assignments based on the material.

**Teacher C:** Imagines that variation is necessary, and would probably try to match a student to a book of an appropriate level, especially with weaker students. She has most often taught fiction in a whole-class group.

**Teacher D:** Argues that variation absolutely is necessary. The students have different interests and knowledge of English after all.

**Teacher E:** Believes that it is important with variety in fiction in order to match the students’ needs.

**Teacher F:** Argues that variation is necessary without a doubt. Students who are given too challenging fiction will never finish reading and as an important part of the reading experience is the fulfillment of reading. It is also important for students who often read to develop and advance in their reading process.

**Teacher G:** Argues that fiction should be varied when it comes to genres and degrees of difficulty. It is important to preserve the interest of the students and to show that there is a cultural value in fiction that cannot be found elsewhere.

4. Does your school have a common view of how literature should be taught or is it something that relates to your own experience?

**Teacher A:** Suggests that certain subjects, such as Swedish for example, have collaborated for some time but English have just begun collaborating. Still, it is difficult to find time to properly work together.
Teacher B: Misunderstood the question and stated that she has been inspired by her first teaching practice where the main book was a novel. In grade 7 they used The Outsiders, in grade 8 they used Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief and in grade 9 they used a graphic novel version of Macbeth.

Teacher C: States that her school collaborates. The school where Teacher C previously taught was organized in subject departments so all the English teachers developed the materials and ideas for teaching fiction together.

Teacher D: Suggests that her school has conferences together but the teachers will work independently in the classrooms.

Teacher E: States that her school does not collaborate. The teachers work independently.

Teacher F: States that her school partly collaborates but rather attempts to match the teaching methods or material to how the class is.

Teacher G: States that it is more likely the result of collaboration between teachers throughout her career. There is not particular collaboration at the moment.

5. What genres of fiction and/or what specific works of fiction do you use in your teaching?

Teacher A: Most often uses the textbook Wings.

Teacher B: Has used “The Tell-tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe, “A Ghost Story” by Mark Twain and “The Dead” by James Joyce. Her students have also chosen a novel of their own to read. The aim for Teacher B is to use more fiction, especially short stories, in her teaching and hopefully even use plays later in the semester. She suggests using Oscar Wilde's play Salome for example. When it comes to specific genres of fiction she often uses ghost stories or Gothic tales. Teacher B has observed that the students favor these kinds of stories.

Teacher D: Attempts to make her students read classical fiction from English-speaking countries.

Teacher E: It varies what genres and specific works of fiction is used as the students choose what they want to read by themselves.

Teacher F: It varies greatly. When it comes to easy-to-read fiction her school has chosen to purchase fiction written in an easier language, that is, not shortened versions of the originals. The school has also selected fiction from various genres within the easy-to-read category in order to create reading groups based on the students’ different interests.

Teacher G: Uses young adult and classical fiction.

6. When you work with literature, are you guided by the theme or the work of fiction?

Teacher A: Guided by a specific work of fiction as she most often uses the textbook *Wings.*

Teacher B: Guided by themes.

Teacher C: Guided by themes as well as specific works of fiction. She attempts to have a variety of female and male protagonists in each year and also a range of different English-speaking cultures. Teacher C also states that certain books are used if they felt it would appeal to the students and would be fun to work with.

Teacher D: Guided by a specific work of fiction as the students choose what they want to read themselves.

Teacher E: Guided by themes.

Teacher F: Guided by a specific work of fiction. It is more important that the quality of the fiction is good.

Teacher G: Guided by fiction and sees what the students can learn from it.

7. How often do involve fiction in your teaching? How often do the students read fragments of texts compared to full bodies of texts?

Teacher A: Suggests that it is more common with text fragments than full bodies of texts. Fiction is not often used because of the lack of time short lessons bring.

Teacher B: States that short stories of 20 – 30 pages are used the most. Her students have also listened to audio recordings. Teacher B uses fiction for about half of her lessons. Her students work continuously with a longer text with an accompanied reading diary during the semester.
**Teacher C:** Teaches at least two whole novels in a year, sometimes three depending on the group, as a whole class. Uses extracts during other times to introduce other authors such as Dickens. Her class would read a whole novel most of the time however. She also states that she uses Penguin Readers in her teaching. She also uses a lot of poetry and non-fiction in her teaching.

**Teacher D:** Text fragments are more frequent than full bodies of texts in her teaching.

**Teacher E:** Fiction is often used in her teaching. She estimates that it is used for half of her classes. Fiction is also used when there is time to read a novel which sadly isn't often enough in school today.

**Teacher F:** The frequency of fiction is different from class to class. She attempts to teach two works of fiction during the students' education. If she has several students with reading disabilities she limits the fiction to one.

**Teacher G:** It is more common with text fragments than full bodies of texts. Full bodies of texts are read up to three times per year.

8. **How do you work with said fiction in the classroom? Does it differ between the grades? In what respects?**

**Teacher A:** She works with text fragments in the classroom often as a whole class.

**Teacher B:** She only teaches English B at the moment but focuses on subjects such as reading comprehension, history of literature, listening exercises and realia.

**Teacher C:** She reads together with the younger students while the older students in grade 8 and grade 9 read independently. It does not differ in activity but in degree of difficulty. She uses fiction as inspiration for drama, speaking activities, writing activities and grammar practice.

**Teacher D:** She uses an ascending scale of difficulty in her teaching.

**Teacher E:** Traditional reading and then lecture and/or written reviews. There is not difference in activity, only degree of difficulty.

**Teacher F:** It varies from class to class. Sometimes her class reads fiction together. The students will read and discuss the content and then practice vocabulary. Sometimes the students read independently and then present the text to the rest of the class. She also works with a logbook which the students use for writing assignments after reading in class. When the students read shorter text they have discussions.
Teacher G: With the younger students she conducts reading groups where the students reads, give their opinions and help each other with their reading or assignments. The amount of fiction increases with the older students and the reading will also become more independent.

9. When you work with literature, is it with certain aims and knowledge requirements in mind? What do you hope to achieve by using fiction in the classroom?

Teacher A: The goal is for the students to discuss and become confident enough to express their opinions. Another goal is to see that the students understand what they read.

Teacher B: The goal is for the students to come in contact with a more diverse language than what the textbooks can offer. Another goal is to read better stories than the dreadfully dull stories in the textbooks. She states that a two-page story about someone's pet does not have a depth or meaning behind it. She further states that it is easier to connect fiction with the syllabus when it comes to differences between cultures for example. A standard textbook do not cover dialects and sociolects for instance. The languages presented in textbooks are often stereotyped, which is not good at all. One can also connect fiction to news articles. Teacher B has used an article on wages for women in the US in connection to reading Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own.

Teacher C: Uses fiction to improve all skills in English, essentially, but also to teach about different varieties of English around the world.

Teacher D: Uses fiction to acquire knowledge of different living conditions, to come in contact with the language, to practice vocabulary and expressions.

Teacher E: Uses fiction to practice vocabulary and to develop the senses.

Teacher F: Uses fiction to make her students realize that reading does not have to be difficult in English. Another important part is the reading experience itself.

Teacher G: Has specific goals in mind when teaching fiction. She focuses on oral skills with presentations and discussions. Reading strategies is a goal in itself. Fiction always makes up the content for discussions or written assignments.
10. Statistics indicates that the reading literacy in Sweden has declined since the beginning of the 1990s and that one in every fifth student has never read a book in school. Are these trends something which you can see as a teacher? How do you deal with issues such as these in your own classroom?

**Teacher A:** Has seen similar trends. The increased consumption of technology has also increased the needs to immediate response. This is especially true for young men who are not interested in reading when they don't get the fiction served. It becomes challenging when they have to think and concentrate on their own.

**Teacher B:** Has seen similar trends even though she cannot make a historical comparison. Students say that never read. The students have also stated that they rather read articles about the fiction online or watch the film adaptation which they then base their assignments on. To use several texts with great diversity might inspire the students. When her students had to choose a novel they could chose anything they wanted as long as it wasn't a novel for children. She considers young adult fiction such as Harry Potter to be complex enough to read in English in High School. The most important motivation for the students' reading habits is their parents' relationship to reading. She therefore argues that it is important for parents to read together with their child at an early age and that Elementary Schools should read more often too. It may be too late during Junior High School or High School. She hopes that when students realize that there are experiences to find in fiction, and that reading isn't as challenging as they first thought, they will read more. In a Junior High School where she had her teaching practice the teachers used a graphic novel of *Macbeth* which might be a good way to introduce fiction to the students.

**Teacher C:** Has noted a minority of her students who did not read anything outside of school and therefore believes that it is important to bring fiction into the classroom in a structured and fun way. Hopefully it will encourage confidence in fiction reading later in life.

**Teacher D:** Has absolutely seen similar trends. The students use more technology than before and reading fiction by choice is considered unusual, sadly. The students also have a ton of activities outside of school, which reflects in what they have time for when they come home.

**Teacher E:** The most important thing is to give the students a good opportunity.

**Teacher F:** Has seen similar trends and it has affected her teaching. The school where she works used to focus in reading and the students read in other subjects than Swedish as well. The teachers noticed an improvement in the students' reading skills when they were allowed
to read 10 – 15 every day. There were several students who read more than one novel this way. The activity was regarded as time-consuming and the school therefore had to stop. A decline in the students reading skills could immediately be seen when the school stopped reading every day. It is impossible to understand the content of a novel if the students only read two times per week and neither will reading be considered fun that way. In order to combat this decline in reading literacy it is necessary to read regularly in school. Still, it is unlikely that the schools will set aside time for this activity in the long run.

**Teacher G:** Has seen similar trends. It is noticeable that the students read less and that they also find reading boring, though they have never actually spared reading much time. The attitude towards reading has become increasingly negative. Reading should be introduced as an everyday activity in school. She gives examples such as reading aloud at the beginning of each lesson or incorporating fiction into different situations in the teaching as there is always something in fiction that could be used for assignments. Digital media should also be used more frequently in language teaching as it is something that the students can relate to more than the traditional paperbacks.

**11. Research also shows that young students, especially young men, read less as there is no fiction which they can relate to. Is this something which you have seen as a teacher?**

**Teacher A:** Agrees. It is easier to find fiction for young women than young men. Young girls are more inclined to reading than young men too.

**Teacher B:** Does not agree and stated that there is plenty of fiction for young men too. Although there are more fiction published for young women there should be plenty published for young men. Teacher B has found that the problem is rather that young men are less inclined to read fiction about “female subjects” while young women often have to read fiction about “male problems” as it is valued more highly. Young men complain about reading Virginia Woolf while young women do not complain about reading Edgar Allan Poe.

**Teacher C:** Does not agree with the research and has in fact the opposite problem. She cannot find enough good fiction with female protagonists but states that there is plenty of modern fiction for young men to relate to.

**Teacher D:** Agrees and states that it is easier to find fiction that interests young women.
Teacher E: Does not agree and states that there is a great variety of fiction for young men and young women.

Teacher F: States that the school where she works actively attempts to purchase fiction with an equal number of female and male characters.

Teacher G: Agrees. It is easier to find fiction for young women than young men. Fiction for young women covers themes such as horses, love, relationships and aesthetics while it is difficult to find fiction for young men that cover other themes than sports.

12. If we compare Lgr-11 with the previous curriculum Lpo-94, can you see any differences in how English is taught today? In regards to teaching fiction, what changes can be seen there?

Teacher A: The teaching has not changed much. The scope is almost the same as before. It is the economy that sets the limits and the school cannot always renew the material. One change is that teachers are more aware of why they teach in certain ways and what effects it might have, hopefully or the better.

Teacher B: Only has experience with teaching English B and the only requirement stated in the syllabus is that the students ought to be able to read a longer fictional text. Whatever that requirement implies is not explained but Teacher B believes that a 30-page text is long enough to realize the requirement. Nevertheless, she attempts to use more fiction than is required by the syllabus, such as audio recordings of full-length fiction or short stories. The idea behind using audio recording is that the students will practice listening while they come in contact with classical authors often available in this format. The same authors and novels are often available as PDF-files. Students can for instance practice grammar or writing activities where the students continue a text from another perspective. The syllabus for English B is however not this detailed and there are several other methods teachers can use if they do not want to read with a class.

Teacher C: Does not teach at present but believes that the scope is the same as with the previous syllabus. She states that fiction can be used to reach goals as long as other types of written material are also used.

Teacher D: Reading was less independent than with the previous syllabus. Focus was on scrutinizing the language of the fiction and the students often found that boring. Now reading is more independent which the students seems to enjoy more.
Teacher E: Does not know.

Teacher F: The teaching has not changed. However, when the students present a novel they have begun to include more technology. Sometimes they will read fiction and watch the film adaptation as comparison too.

Teacher G: The teaching has not changed much. More content have been added to the syllabus however and teachers are expected to fit more into their schedule when there is not enough time to do so. Focus is still on all-round communicative skills which fiction should focus on as well.

13. The status of English as a world language is stated throughout Lgr-11. It is for example seen as important to use different forms of media in the classroom. How do you select what fiction is to be read in the classroom? From where do you make this selection and on what basis? Has this changed compared to the previous curriculum?

Teacher A: Students often selects what to read themselves but when Teacher A selects fiction she focus on contemporary fiction. Ideally she would work with the Harry Potter-series or The Hunger Games but the budget will not allow it. She is tired of the textbook and wants to use narrative fiction more.

Teacher B: Points out that she cannot relate to the previous syllabus but lists a few factors which she goes by when selecting fiction. An appropriate degree of difficulty, in order for the students to come in contact with a well-written and fluent language, is important. Fiction should also be diverse in regards to time periods and geographical areas. Fiction from America, African countries and Asian countries are just as important. Both male and female authors are important. Fiction should deal with different groups in society, such as fiction written by Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison, in order to provide an image of society that white men cannot. Fiction should connect with a specific social time in order to accomplish as many goals and knowledge requirements as possible. Alternative formats such as PDF-files, audio files and film adaptations should be complements to the written fiction.

Teacher C: Difficult to say as she does not teach at present but believes that she would aim to do almost the same things in the future with the new teaching plan. Fiction has an important place in her classroom but states that a balance needs to be struck so that other forms of the language are also in use. A good piece of fiction is possible to adapt in many ways to help
students produce different types of language as well as linking into looking at other types of language.

Teacher D: Has not observed a change in how English is taught. The fiction is provided by publishing companies that offers various book deals for different target groups.

Teacher E: Selects fiction by what the students are interested in and what is contemporary.

Teacher F: The fiction that is used in class has not changed much. Argues that it is easier to do more with the older students but with her students it is more important that the fiction is readable and easy enough. The declining economy does not make it possible to renew fiction for all students. At the moment the focus has been on the younger students while the students who possess more advanced reading skills have other options.

Teacher G: When she previously taught fiction she had a selection of various genres and degrees of difficulty in paperback which the students could choose freely from. Nowadays she would use the internet to find fiction together with the students as they are more inclined to read that form of fiction rather than the traditional paperbacks. It is however not that easy as the technology isn't as modern in the schools where she has previously worked.