

# Methodology of Quantification of Teenage Literary Self-Educational Courses

(autoethnographic research)

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## Introduction

In according to my personal opinion, literary self-educational course passed in teenage years may be one of the greatest boosters affecting all subsequent adult life of each particular person for the period of several tens years, and as a result of this, affecting global social life too. That's why such courses passed by different people independently in different parts of the world require maximum attention of professional researchers.

When I was teenager, I have passed such self-educational course unconsciously (although definitely, not unconsciously for my parents, grandparents, teachers, and librarians). It included about 200 authors and titles. Summary of this course has been written down just when I was 40+ years old. And after doing this, I came to the idea that all read materials can be easily classified into multiple categories intersecting with each other; so, it is possible to quantify multiple effects of the course just by quantifying amount of materials in each category. In this document, I would like to propose such classification that may be reused by other researchers for exploring literary self-educational courses passed by teenagers and measuring effect of these courses on different aspects of personal and social life of readers after reaching adult age.

Some dimensions of proposed classification are based on ideas for social researches published in collection at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3364008> in 2019-2020<sup>th</sup> years.

## Methods

All published results have been collected just by recalling them in memory after analysis of compiled list of literary materials. Literary review of this topic has not been performed; I'm not a professional researcher, and I have limited access to academic materials. Maybe, in the future editions of this document, more theoretical background will be added.

## Results

Literary materials read in the course since getting 11 years old until getting 18 years old and used for building the proposed classification are listed in Appendix A and Appendix B at the end of this document. Only limited classification is applied in appendixes to demonstrate how raw data obtained from respondents may look.

Full classification of literary materials passed in the course may be done on the following basis.

- General library classification by genre, style, topic, epoch, and targeted modern age group.
- Whether read literary material was influential and impressive for reader at the moment of reading or not.
- Whether particular literary material or author affected subsequent adult life directly (in according to opinion of reader after reaching adult age).
- Sources where literary material has been obtained. In my case, sources were purchases made by father, by mother, and by myself (for money given by parents), magazine subscriptions made by both parents together, literary materials taken by me from 4 libraries (school library, district library, central city library, and university library), and literary materials found in Internet (widespread Internet access became available just when my teenage years have ended). As you can guess, tastes and interests of parents may differ, and by purchasing different materials for child, they train different parts of her/his mind, which may have long-lasting effect. It is supposed, that such sources as other relatives, friends, classmates, and teachers may be considered too, although in my case they were absent.
- Whether literary material has been read completely, or just started to be read. Several items listed in appendixes fit in this category (about 5).
- Whether fact of reading literary material is under question even for reader, because it is hard to recall it in memory. Several items listed in appendixes fit in this category (less than 5).
- Whether large amount of works of particular author (more than 5 works, for example) has been read. About 10-15 authors listed in appendixes fit in this category. Probably, few of them whose works were read in extremely large amount (several tens volumes) may be extracted into separate category (about 5 authors in the list fit in this category).

- Whether some particular literary works or authors were actively searched in the process of passing sub-courses (which you can easily see in the lists in appendixes), or were found just by chance.
- Distribution of read literature by sub-courses. I suppose, materials listed in appendixes may be classified into 10-20 sub-courses.
- Emotional impression taken from literary material or author. The most part of listed materials has given only positive or neutral emotions, but several (less than 5) have left very negative and/or depressive emotional impression.
- Whether illustrations/photos were significant motivational factor for reading particular author and/or literary material.
- Reading of several of the listed authors (about 5-10) were started much earlier than 11 years old (one was started at 7 years old), and few works (about 5) were read (however, mainly, without being completed) in the period since getting 18 years old till 30 years old. But I suppose, these authors and works must be considered as parts of teenage course too, because authors that were started earlier than 11 years old were read until getting about 15 years old, and works read after getting 18 years old were read “by inertia”. So, we may add the following temporal classification of read materials specifying when each particular author/work was read: pre-teenage years (before 11), early teenage years (11-13), mid-teenage years (14-16), late teenage years (17-18), post-teenage years (after 18 and up to 30, in case if reader feels that materials were read “by inertia” and they are not numerous).
- Whether literary works were read multiple times. In my case, significant part of materials listed in appendixes were re-read 2-5 times.
- Whether particular literary material or author were read in official school curriculum. It is obvious, that in spite of including some material or author in official school curriculum, real process of reading may happen outside of school. That’s why these materials and authors may be considered as part of self-educational course too.
- Whether read materials were discussed actively with relatives, friends, and teachers.
- My father told me that when he was a kid, he read aloud large books (one Jules Verne’s novel was mentioned by him) for his mother and aunt at evenings. (They lived in a tiny provincial conservative town, there were not many opportunities to spend free time.) I don’t know who came to idea of doing this – he, his mother and aunt (both were working class women), or it was recommendation of school teachers. But I guess, if this cultural practice has been used in family, then authors/works read in such way may be classified in a separate group. In my case, such practice was completely absent.
- Due to economical, geographical, and family circumstances, my teenage and youth researches of social and natural worlds biased towards obtaining information from fiction literature and art works; round-the-world travels have been started in adult age only, when I

had already extensive background in studies of all kinds of literature and arts (it should be noted that I was semi-professional creative writer by this time). As a result of this situation, my travels, and generally, my life were directed to exploring the world outside of content of literary and art works. After summarizing all this experience, I can say that in my personal opinion no more than 10%-20% of the world can be known from fiction literature and art works, no more than 30%-40% can be known from popular science books, travel blogs and mass news articles in magazines or Internet, and no more than 30%-40% can be known from scientific monographs and publications. Every of these sources either skips or distorts significant portions of reality. Or just goes several years (or more) behind the reality. Obviously, this observation is very subjective. But it gives us one more dimension for classifying literary materials passed in self-educational courses: what is personal opinion of teenage reader on how objective are the read literary materials in relation to the modern world surrounding her/him?

- The most part (“the most” considering repeated reading) of “serious” fiction literary materials listed in appendixes that I have read outside of school program either has been written more than 100 years ago (even by the time of reading) or contains information about societies from more ancient periods of history. Why I avoided reading more modern authors and reading materials about more recent periods of history? Just because the history of the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century looked for me like crazy jumps performed by human civilization from one side to another. That’s why I did not feel strong connection between characters and ideas expressed in the literature of 20<sup>th</sup> century and modern reality. In contrast to this, all literature written prior to 20<sup>th</sup> century looked as sequential development of ideas for several thousands years. In other words, I did not feel practical necessity to read the most part of literature written in 20<sup>th</sup> century. I’m not sure whether it is my personal particularity (caused by growing up in 1990’s in the middle of Russia) or common trend. However, it gives us two more dimensions for classifying literary materials: does reader skip some historical periods or topics with a purpose? does reader skip some historical periods or topics due to difficulties in understanding?
- About 99% of materials listed in appendixes have been read by me in Russian language, remaining part was read in Tatar language. It includes all ancient novels, dramas, and epic literature from multiple countries that may sound very archaic for native speakers of languages used by authors of these works. For me, all this looked like historical works written by modern Russian-speaking authors. Definitely, it changed my attitude to these literary materials significantly, simplified reading, and allowed deeper immersion in text. So, classification on the basis of archaism level of used language may be also applicable.
- It may be reasonable to introduce into research such concept as *discovery path*. In my case, it was almost absent, the search of literature has been performed just physically in home library, other libraries, and paper catalogs of other libraries. But in the modern world, presence of multiple Internet resources may allow teenage readers to construct in their heads very long and complex discovery paths in the process of searching literature. So, the

materials found by very long and complex discovery paths may be classified into separate group.

- And finally, you may see in appendixes that some read materials like “Encyclopedia of World Arts History”, “Ethnographic Encyclopedia”, and works of Apuleius, Boccaccio, Casanova, de Sade, Welsh contain a lot of sexual, erotic, or pornographic stuff. That’s why classification on the basis of presence of sexual content may be also needed. Besides materials with pure sexual content, there may be literary works that highlight emotional parts of sexual life deeply, and in some conservative families living far from large cities, such literary works may be the only or main source of information on this topic for kids, and that’s why they may be classified separately. The idea is based on occasional communication with my mother about Gustave Flaubert’s works; however, I did not read this author by myself and did not communicate with my mother much about this.

## **Discussion**

It is supposed that provided approach to classification may help pedagogues, child/teenage psychologists, and parents to implement better strategies for educating children and pushing social progress.

At the same time, it is obvious that deep understanding of neurophysiological and social effects of teenage self-educational courses (discovered after researching several hundreds of such courses, like mine) may allow totalitarian, criminalized, and manipulative governments and particular representatives of authorities to press down societies and individuals to keep existing hostile social order. It is supposed that simple psychological interventions performed through formal educational system may decrease effect of self-educational literary courses easily. That’s why in deeper research of this topic, it is recommended to find solutions to counteract such interventions on family level and on personal level.

(Please, check appendixes with literary materials used for research on the following 2 pages.)

The term *medieval* used further includes the period since 5<sup>th</sup> up to 18<sup>th</sup> century AD. The term *ancient* includes the period before 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. Square brackets mean forgotten title and/or author.

## Appendix A – The most influential authors read in the course

<b>Classic Literature</b>	<b>Science and Popular Science</b>	<b>Science Fiction</b>
Alexandre Dumas	Bernhard Grzimek	Andre Norton
Anton Chekhov	Dinah Moché	Clifford D. Simak
Arthur Conan Doyle	Gerald Durrell	Harry Harrison
Charles Dickens	Jane Goodall	Ivan Efremov
Edgar Allan Poe	Joy Adamson	J.-H. Rosny aîné
Emily Dickinson	Thor Heyerdahl	Paul Anderson
Ernest Hemingway		Vladimir Obruchev
Henryk Sienkiewicz	<b>Ancient and Medieval</b>	
Herman Melville	<b>World Literature</b>	
Honoré de Balzac	Arabic fairy tales	
Irving Stone	Chinese medieval stories	
Jack London	Ferdowsi (Shahnameh)	
Jules Verne	French medieval playwrights	
Mario Puzo	Indian epic stories	
Mark Twain	Japanese medieval poetry	
Pablo Neruda	Korean medieval stories	
Rafael Sabatini	Scandinavian epic stories	
Stendhal	Spanish medieval playwrights	
Thomas Mayne Reid	William Shakespeare	
Walt Whitman		
Washington Irving		

## Appendix B – Other authors, books, and literary materials read in the course

<b>Classic Literature</b>	<b>Ancient and Medieval World Literature</b>	<b>Science and Popular Science</b>
Agatha Christie	African fairy tales	[About 5 monthly magazines about popular science and world news]
Alphonse Daudet	Ancient Greek dramas	[Advertisement in Western economics]
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry	Ancient Greek mythology	[Analysis of Quran]
Arkady Gaidar	Apuleius	[Autobiography of one French speleologist]
Émile Zola	Arabic medieval poetry	[Biography of Alexander the Great (of Macedon)]
Erle Stanley Gardner	Beowulf	[Biography of Benvenuto Cellini]
Ethel Lilian Voynich	Blaise Pascal	[Biography of Marie Antoinette]
Friedrich Schiller	Central Asian parables	[Biography of Nicholas Miklouho-Maclay]
George Bernard Shaw	Chinese medieval poetry	Carlos Castaneda
George Gordon Byron	Daniel Defoe	Christopher Columbus' diaries
George Sand	Dante Alighieri	David Livingstone's diaries
Gottfried Keller	Denis Diderot	[Ecology and Wildlife Protection]
Guy de Maupassant	European medieval poetry	“Encyclopedia of World Arts
Heinrich Heine	European medieval stories	
Henrik Ibsen	François de La Rochefoucauld	
Irvine Welsh	François Rabelais	
James Fenimore Cooper	Geoffrey Chaucer	
Jaroslav Hašek		

Jean-Paul Sartre	Giacomo Casanova	History”
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	Giovanni Boccaccio	[Entertaining Linguistics]
Karel Čapek	Irish epic stories	[Entertaining Mathematical Problems]
Milan Kundera	Irish fairy tales	“Ethnographic Encyclopedia”
O. Henry	John Milton	[Ethnomedical notes from Yemen by Russian military doctor, 20 <sup>th</sup> century]
Orson Welles	Jonathan Swift	“General Encyclopedia”
Prosper Mérimée	Henry Fielding	[Geology and History of Famous Gems]
Raffaello Giovagnoli	Legends of Crimean Tatars	[History of Anthropology: two different books]
Reginald Rose	Marquis de Sade	[History of Arts of Roman Empire]
Robert Louis Stevenson	Miguel de Cervantes	[History of German Nazism]
Stefan Zweig	Persian medieval poetry	[History of Impressionism]
Theodore Dreiser	Pierre Choderlos de Laclos	[History of Islam]
Thomas Hardy	Robert Burns	[History of Wild West]
[Wildlife fiction stories about Canadian North]	Stories about Hodja Nasreddin	[Latin/Roman Aphorisms]
Wilkie Collins	The Song of the Nibelungs	[Political System of the USA]
William Somerset Maugham	Vietnamese medieval stories	[Short guides in wushu, karate, bodybuilding, and taijiquan]
	Voltaire	[Travel notes from from Tierra del Fuego, 20 <sup>th</sup> century]
		[Travel notes from Inuit villages in Greenland, 20 <sup>th</sup> century]
		[Yoga guides and history]
		“Zoological Encyclopedia”

### **Russian/Soviet Literature (passed in school studies)**

Alexander Fadeyev	Konstantin Simonov
Alexander Griboyedov	Leo Tolstoy
Alexander Ostrovsky	Maxim Gorky
Alexander Pushkin	Mikhail Bulgakov
Aleksandr Blok	Mikhail Lermontov
Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn	Mikhail Prishvin
Aleksey Tolstoy	Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin
Ancient Russian epos	Nikolai Gogol
Anna Akhmatova	Nikolai Leskov
Boris Pasternak	Nikolai Ostrovsky
Boris Polevoy	Nikolay Chernyshevsky
Fyodor Dostoyevsky	Nikolay Nekrasov
Fyodor Tyutchev	Poets of the Silver Age (those who are not listed here)
Gabdulla Tuqay	Sergei Yesenin
Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov	Tatar classic prose and poetry
Ivan Bunin	Venedikt Yerofeyev
Ivan Goncharov	Vladimir Korolenko
Ivan Turgenev	Vladimir Mayakovsky
Konstantin Paustovsky	

### **Science Fiction**

Aldous Huxley
Alexander Belyaev
Arthur C. Clarke
[Collection of stories from US science fiction writers]
Daniel Keyes
Herbert George Wells
Isaac Asimov
John Wyndham
Kir Bulychev
[One book of some French science fiction writer]
Ray Bradbury
Robert A. Heinlein
Roger Zelazny
Stanisław Lem