



How can we teach Robert Walser and his work at school?

The proposal: In some staging lessons with his prose text "The Walk"

What are staging lessons?

Staging lessons are medium length teaching units that are self-contained, multi-dimensional or interdisciplinary and equally open to experience, discoveries and action. Appropriate learning objects for staging lessons are found primarily over the school subjects, in natural sciences, especially in mathematics, in the first language – mainly in literature, but also in arts, music, sports, philosophy, history, geography, ethics and religion. Staging lessons are composed according to Martin Wagenschein's methodological triad of "Exemplary - Genetic - Dramaturgical".

What is the methodological triad in Lehrkunst didactics?

EXEMPLARY	GENETIC	DRAMATURGICAL
<p>"Getting to know a decisive moment of the human learning history"</p> <p>The learners climb a peak of knowledge under careful guidance, learning about the mountains <i>and</i> the climbing, contents and methods.</p> <p><i>In a carefully chosen topic, the lessons immerse the learners so deeply and broadly that the whole of a concept, a model or a notion becomes visible and learnable.</i></p>	<p>"Discovering a product in its originating process"</p> <p>The learners perceive the object in their own learning as a learning process of the human and of the individual knowledge: from the first astonishment to one's own understanding.</p> <p><i>Just as important as the results of science are the correspondent methods that have led to these results. These are the ways the pupils themselves learn to discover and to describe.</i></p>	<p>"Experience the drama of a learning process"</p> <p>The learners are struggling to make the learning object accessible to themselves, and the object struggles with the learners about its present comprehensibility.</p> <p><i>The learning situations and learning tasks form correlating actions which lead to the new concepts, models or notions, and examine them – with a cautious side glance on the theatre.</i></p>

How do the staging lessons „The Walk with Robert Walser“ implement these methods?

EXEMPLARY	GENETIC	DRAMATURGICAL
<p>"The Walk" is an exemplary piece from the work of an exemplary author of modernity.</p> <p>Walser is by now a classic of modernity and a world-famous "artists' artist". Walser was a great walker and even died on a walk. In the "walk" text from his most creative period, he has set out his promenadologic poetics. In the genesis of his "walk" piece, his literary method can be reenacted.</p>	<p>"The Walk" tells its own origins.</p> <p>The narrative begins with the description of a writing situation and apparently explains its own genesis in the double movement of a factual walk and the subsequent walk on the paper. In fact, however, the text is highly mysterious and the unraveling of its actual genesis leads us into the literary relativity of modern literature.</p>	<p>By going on the "walk" ourselves, we experience Walser's literary production by reenacting it.</p> <p>In our attempt to learn about Walser's literary production on our own walk, we open ourselves up for our environment and observe what has changed there, but also in the writing technology since Walser's time. We optimize our texts at the same pace as we discover Walser's writing methods and reveal the mystery of an enigmatic artist personality.</p>



Passages from Robert Walser's „The Walk“

One Morning

One morning, as the desire to take a walk came over me, I put my hat on my head, left my writing room, or room of phantoms, and ran down the stairs to hurry out into the street. On the stairs I encountered a woman who looked like a Spaniard, a Peruvian, or a Creole, and presented to the eye a certain pallid, faded majesty.

As far as I remember, I found myself, as I walked into the open, bright, and cheerful street, in a romantically adventurous state of mind, which pleased me. The morning world spread out before my eyes appeared as beautiful to me as if I saw it for the first time. Everything I saw made upon me a delightful impression of friendliness, of goodness, and of youth. I quickly forgot that up in my room I had only just a moment before been brooding gloomily over a blank sheet of paper. Sorrow, pain, and grave thoughts were as vanished, although I vividly sensed a certain seriousness still before me and behind me.

I was tense with eager expectation of whatever might encounter me or cross my way on my walk. My steps were measured and calm. As I went on my way, I presented, as far as I know, a fairly dignified appearance. My feelings I like to conceal from the eyes of my fellow men, of course without any fearful strain to do so – such strain I would consider a great error.

I had not yet gone twenty or thirty steps over a broad and crowded square, when Professor Meili, a foremost authority, brushed by me.

(....)

Robert Walser: The Walk, translated by Christopher Middleton and Susan Bernofsky, New York: New Directions Books 2012, p. 13-14

Incontrovertible power in person, serious, ceremonial, and majestic, Professor Meili trod his way; in his hand he held an unbendable scientific walking stick, which infused me with dread, reverence, and esteem. Meili's nose was a sharp, imperative, stern hawk- or eagle-nose. His mouth was juridically damped tight and squeezed shut. The famous scholar's gait was like an iron law. From Professor Meili's adamant eyes, world history and the afterglow of long-gone heroic deeds flashed out. His hat was like an irremovable ruler. Secret rulers are the most proud and most implacable. Yet, on the whole, Professor Meili carried himself with a tenderness, as if he needed in no way whatsoever to make apparent what quantities of power and gravity he personified. Since I permitted myself the thought that men who do not smile in a sweet and beautiful way can nonetheless be honorable and trustworthy, he appeared sympathetic to me in spite of his severity. As is well known, there are people who excel at concealing the crimes which they commit behind disarming, obliging behavior.

I catch a glimpse of a bookseller along with a book shop; likewise soon, as I guess and observe, a bakery with gold lettering comes in for a mention. But first I have a parson to record. With a kind face, a bicycling town chemist cycles close by the walker; similarly, a regimental or staff doctor. An unassuming pedestrian should not remain unrecorded, namely a bric-a-brac vendor and rag collector who has become rich. It should be noted that young boys and girls, free and unrestrained, race around in the sunlight.

"Let them be unrestrained as they are, for age, alas, will one day, soon enough, terrify and bridle them," I mused. In the water of a fountain a dog refreshes itself, in the blue air swallows twitter. One or two ladies in astonishingly short skirts and astoundingly high, snug, fine, elegant, dainty colored bootees make themselves as conspicuous as anything else. Moreover two summer or straw hats catch my eye. The story about the straw hats is this: it is that in the bright, gentle air I suddenly see two enchanting hats; under the hats stand two fairly prosperous-looking gentlemen, who by means of a bold, elegant, courteous waving of hats seem to be bidding each other good morning, which is an occasion upon which the hats are evidently more important than their wearers and owners. The writer is nonetheless very humbly asked to be a bit careful to avoid jokes as well as other superfluities. It is hoped that he understands this, once and for all.

Robert Walser: The Walk, translated by Christopher Middleton and Susan Bernofsky, New York: New Directions Books 2012, p. 15-16