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UTILIZING MYTHOLOGICAL NARRATIVES IN CORE VALUES EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In this study, it was tried to show that it would be appropriate to convey the root values that are aimed to be taught to secondary school students through mythological texts to be taught in Turkish lessons. Myths, which are gripping, intriguing and tell the adventures of characters whose traces can be seen in daily life, appealing to the interests of secondary school students, have been examined as important sources in terms of both being suitable for gaining reading pleasure and contributing to root value education. The research is a qualitative research and it was investigated how mythological texts can contribute to root value education by applying observation, interview, document analysis and survey methods. With the field survey model, the sample was secondary school students and feedback was received from the activities carried out and the data obtained was evaluated. Feedback was received through activities consisting of semi-structured and open-ended questions, and the evaluation of the conversations held in a conversational manner was also included in the study. In the application section, there are six activities to be implemented for six weeks. Each event; It is planned to include a root value activity, writing practice and sample grammar activities, with stories selected from Turkish, Greek, Scandinavian and Egyptian mythologies at the centre, and designed based on this. It was observed whether the selected texts appealed to the students' reading pleasure, feedback was received, and it was tried to determine whether the values were noticed by the students in these texts, which contain many root values. At the end of the study, it was observed that the students were familiar with mythological characters, but they were mostly unaware that they were elements of myth, and after learning this, they approached myths with great interest. Students found the activity texts engaging and interesting. The hidden root values in myths could be identified by students through activities. Writing studies based on myths both contributed to the development of writing skills and provided them with the opportunity to reconcile root values with their daily lives.

Keywords: Mythology, myth, root value, value education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Mythological stories consist of fantastic adventures from the earliest periods, such as the beginning of the universe and the beginning of humanity. These stories, written about the virtues, weaknesses, successes, failures, good deeds, and evil acts of gods and humans, give today's readers an idea about what humankind thought regarding fundamental values hundreds or thousands of years ago. Based on the idea that the intriguing adventures of gods could capture the interest of middle school students,

This study sought answers to the question 'What can compelling mythological stories contribute to the transmission of core values?' and conducted a literature review. Mythological stories from different cultures were examined, common values were identified emphasizing the universality of core values, and the commonalities of differences were emphasized. This study, which set out to explore how to contribute to the existing practice of values education arranged to answer the question 'How should a good person be?' worldwide, selected and suggested sample texts and designed activities. Recommendations were made with the aim of this fantastic mythological journey contributing to values education.

Joseph Campbell, in his book 'The Hero with a Thousand Faces,' referring to the opening line of Anna Karenina, 'Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way,' states that 'Like happy families, myths and saved worlds are also alike.' When looking at mythological stories that came to life in completely different geographies, one concludes that the basic values intended to be instilled in students are actually common messages hidden in the most ancient stories. Myths emerge as valuable resources in core values education, which aims to guide the way to becoming happy and good human beings.

Alongside supporting academic success, another equally important duty of the education system is to guide students in their search for what kind of citizen and person they will become during adolescence, when their characters are being formed. Undoubtedly, schools have a significant impact on students. Productive results can be achieved depending on how this opportunity is utilized.

The core values identified as 'justice, friendship, honesty, self-control, patience, respect, love, responsibility, patriotism, and benevolence' are attempted to be instilled in students through selected texts and designed activities. To achieve this, it is crucial that the selected texts are of high quality, written in language and structure that students will enjoy reading, and are fluent and intriguing. This is because one of the main objectives of Turkish language courses is to help students develop a love for reading. Otherwise, it would be unlikely for students to notice and internalize the target core values from texts they don't enjoy reading. In this study, mythological texts are recommended as a solution. Texts that capture students' imagination while engaging them through visually effective supporting activities can be successful in conveying the values they contain. The quality of selected texts and their incorporation of core values becomes important at this point.

Looking at the 2019 national education system program, values were not included as a specific topic in Turkish language courses but rather integrated throughout the entire process, aiming for internalization through the process. Thus, it has been embedded in the spirit and general objectives of the system (MEB, 2019). Kuçuradi (2015) emphasized that along with developing connected thinking and moving away from rote learning, attention should also be paid to evaluation and values education. In other words, values are among the most important elements that the education system is expected to instill. The importance of including the cultivation of individuals with values among primary objectives is discussed in an education system that aims to train 'good' engineers, 'good' teachers,

'good' technicians, and 'good' doctors. Here, values are indicated in people's processes of 'humanizing themselves' (Kuçuradi, 2014).

It has been determined that students don't possess extensive knowledge about either their own country's mythology or that of other countries, but they show interest when encountering these texts. Especially for today's children who are accustomed to the allure of the digital world, it is crucial that the texts they read are engaging and supported by rich visuals. In this study, examples from myths of different cultures were selected, supported with visuals thought to be interesting, activities were designed based on these texts, and presented to students. While activities measuring different skills were designed, the main purpose is to determine whether students understand the hidden core values in the texts.

Problem Statement

This research investigated and evaluated whether utilizing mythological stories in texts covered in Turkish language courses would benefit the transmission of core values. The research problem statement was determined as 'Is there a benefit to core values education when texts covered in Turkish language courses are selected from mythological stories of different cultures?'

Sub-Problems

The following questions forming the sub-problems of the study were investigated:

1. Do Turkish, Greek, Roman, and Norse mythologies contain the core values of 'justice, friendship, honesty, self-control, patience, respect, love, responsibility, patriotism, and benevolence' as determined by the Ministry of National Education?
2. Can students identify the presence of core values of 'justice, friendship, honesty, self-control, patience, respect, love, responsibility, patriotism, and benevolence' as determined by the Ministry of National Education in Turkish, Greek, Roman, and Norse mythologies?
3. Due to increased cross-cultural interaction globally, can mythologies from different nations be utilized in transmitting core values to students?
4. Due to increased cross-cultural interaction globally, is it more beneficial to utilize mythologies from different nations in transmitting core values to students?

1.1 Mythology

Mythology, also known as the study of legends, is a field of science that researches the origin stories of myths and examines their subtexts and meanings. Akbaş (2020) states that myths are important guides when trying to make sense of societies' lifestyles, beliefs, pleasures, fears, and happiness.

Campbell states, 'The power to touch and awaken those deep creative centers found even in the tiniest fairy tale is a miracle, just like how the ocean's secret is hidden in a drop of water or all the mysteries of life in a flea's egg. Because the symbols of mythology cannot be produced; they cannot be demanded, fabricated, or permanently suppressed. They are spontaneous products of the soul, and each carries the seed of its source's power intact within itself.' (Campbell, 2015, p. 16). With this statement, he shows readers the strong and ancient connections between mythological representations and fundamental values. The emotions and values symbolized in mythology are phenomena naturally embraced by all humans. They are timeless, and we encounter characters and events that represent the

foundational cornerstones that define the boundaries we draw while directing our lives. For this reason, there are many lessons everyone can learn from myths.

1.2. Values Education

1.2.1. The Importance of Values Education

Education is the process of taking a person from one point to another desired state. Many variables determine the course of the process, such as proper planning of the process, suitability of the educational environment, competency of the educator, willingness of the receiver, and the receiver's ability to comprehend. The preliminary preparation process regarding what is intended to be conveyed to the target audience, its age-appropriateness, and the most effective and lasting methods are crucial matters.

For countries to maintain their existence in accordance with the requirements of the new age, renewal and progress in many important areas such as politics, economy, culture, and morality have become a necessity.

Even just to avoid regression, constant effort is required. The emphasis on education emerges as a crucial issue for establishing this perspective and creating an academic foundation. If a country needs renewal and development, the first step would be to incorporate this into the educational system. One of the main purposes of education is to create happy societies by raising happy individuals. Being a happy person requires establishing correct connections with society and thus adhering to general moral rules. To achieve this, there are studies under the names of 'character education' and 'values education' which have found more place in school curricula in recent years. The fundamental aim of educational systems is to raise individuals who exhibit desired behaviors (Sara! Çolak, 2020). To the extent that the system achieves these goals, it aims to maintain social order and reach a community of happy people while simultaneously serving to raise happy individuals. After filtering years of experience, there has been an increased focus on values education in recent times to raise students who can be successful and happy in all aspects of life, not just through academic education. The quality of acquisitions that individuals can implement is important as it is one of the foundational elements that shape society. The first step in building and maintaining a good society is raising citizens who are good, well-equipped, conscientious, hardworking, responsible, goal-oriented, capable of planning and implementing, strong in human relations, fair, respectful, loving towards all living beings, protective of material/spiritual values while caring about their development, and who feel responsibility and desire to be individuals beneficial to their country and the world.

Again, in the continuation of Sara!'s (2020) study, reference is made to Kuçuradi's (2014) statement, 'The primary purpose of education is to help people become humanized—to humanize themselves,' emphasizing the importance and necessity of values education. Being human is a phenomenon that goes far beyond physical existence and is completed by having a developed emotional side and character. For this reason, there has emerged a need to follow a roadmap that serves this purpose throughout the basic education process.

1.2.2. The Role of Family in Values Education

Values are phenomena that shape thoughts and behaviors. While there are universally accepted values, there are also values that differ between societies. It is possible to see how the celebration and mourning practices for two fundamental phenomena like birth and death can vary greatly across different societies. This diversity has been passed down from generation to generation over the years. The values, judgments, habits, beliefs, and attitudes witnessed and taught in one's birth family become

important determinants of what kind of person they will become. Demirutku mentions that values are shaped by many factors including society, family, groups one belongs to, institutions, friends, international interactions, and historical reflections on the present. In this context, what we learn forms the foundations that make us who we are. Values guide us in how to evaluate what and in what way. The learning that shapes a person from the moment of birth guides these evaluations. However, values can only truly serve as a guide when they are internalized. In other words, values need to become part of one's character. This can only be possible through time and practice (Demirutku, 2017). Otherwise, it would not be possible to speak of an established value.

When comparing the past with the present, especially in large cities - even compared to just 20-30 years ago - it's possible to say that today's family members have much more life burden and everyone's pace has increased. It can be said that within this state of hustle brought by the modern age, sufficient importance cannot be given to values education for children. With increased familiarity with the colorful lives brought by social media and technology, parents are unable to spend sufficient and quality time with their children. As a result, it can be said that children experience deprivation in terms of values education. (Demirel, 2022).

1.2.3. The Role of School in Values Education

School is a significant turning point in our lives. It is where the educational process that begins in the family continues systematically and branches out professionally. Schools undoubtedly have, and should have, a social development-supporting aspect alongside their academic education role. We must not ignore schools' contributions to human relations, as trained individuals pursuing their targeted professions need to establish professional partnerships, correctly analyze society's needs, and effectively reach their target audience when entering working life. One of the important topics regulating professional and social relationships is values. Different value groups such as universal values, societal values, and personal values are essentially lists aimed at establishing rules for becoming a better person and instilling these unwritten rules that are accepted according to general norms in individuals. The Ministry of National Education has determined ten core values to instill in students: justice, friendship, honesty, self-control, patience, respect, love, responsibility, patriotism, and benevolence, and began more clearly incorporating these into the curriculum with the 2018 Turkish Language Course Curriculum. While all courses have been assigned a role in values education and books have been prepared accordingly, the Turkish language course has taken the largest share in this regard.

While the first step in values education is taken in the family, its more formal and regular form continues in schools (Yazıcı, 2006). In a context where the place of values education in the school curriculum is discussed, questions about from which point to which point this education will take the student, what the core values are, what universal values are, and how this subject will be handled in schools remain unanswered (Cihan, 2014). The answers to questions such as what character education will provide students through school and what kind of individuals are aimed to be raised will be shaped by the roadmap drawn based on the initial philosophy and will ensure continuity (Evin, Kafadar, 2004). Schools are the institutions that bring education together with values and transmit the planned system to students (Cihan, 2014).

As with families, how well teachers can serve as role models for children is also an important matter. All types of relationships that children observe in schools, their second home, will have positive and negative effects on their character formation. Their relationship with the teacher also plays a

significant role. At this point, it is as important for the teacher to have internalized and implemented national and universal values as it is to have academic competence.

1.2.4. The Role of the National Education System in Values Education

The Turkish Language Course Curriculum aims for students to achieve competency in language and mental skills they can use throughout their lives while developing themselves individually and socially through effective communication by using these skills. To achieve this versatility, academic education has been programmed to be supported by core values education. These values are: Justice, friendship, honesty, self-control, patience, respect, love, responsibility, patriotism, and benevolence (MEB, 2018). These values are addressed in the learning-teaching process both independently and in connection with their sub-values as well as with other core values (Eken, Öksüz, 2019). It is assumed that individuals who have internalized these target core values will be happier and more successful in daily life, academic life, work life, social areas, and many other specific areas. It is hoped that if everyone internalizes these values, the overall welfare of society will increase. Dilmaç and Ekşi (2007) noted in their studies on values education that if the affective dimension is left in the background, individuals will not be able to fully discover their potential and consequently cannot become complete individuals.

The Turkish language course serves as an important bridge for sustaining values that have been transmitted and kept alive from past to present in future generations. In this course, where there are opportunities to have students read many texts, texts that support value acquisition are selected. (Yazıcıoğlu, 2022) Therefore, in texts covered within the Turkish language course, implying core values and presenting them hidden within interesting stories rather than in a didactic style will be a more effective approach toward achieving the goal. One of the behavioral models frequently encountered in younger age groups is their being reactive. Rather than giving advice about what they should do and how they should do it, conveying values implicitly through texts that capture their interest is a more productive method.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Method

This study follows a qualitative research design using a case study model; observation, interview, document analysis, and survey methods were applied to investigate how mythological texts can contribute to core values education. Using a field survey model with middle school students as the sample, feedback from conducted activities was interpreted and recommendations were made.

As Topkaya (2006) states, qualitative studies are important in social sciences because conclusions are drawn from the entirety of all phenomena and events, in other words, because a phenomenon gains meaning and value within the web of all other phenomena and events.

2.2. Data Collection Tools and Material

2.2.1. Observation

Over 6 weeks, participants' approaches to the subject were observed before, during, and after the activities implemented with 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th-grade students. Initially, to measure their readiness regarding mythology, a conversational environment was created in the classroom, sections from myths thought to interest students were narrated, and feedback was received from participants. As activities were implemented, it was observed whether their interest in mythology increased.

In this study, which aimed to transmit core values through mythological texts, students' feedback regarding whether this transmission was successful was observed, examined, and analyzed both in written and verbal forms.

2.2.2. Interview

Interviewing is an effective technique for understanding people's feelings, thoughts, attitudes, experiences, and complaints (Sevecan & Çilingiroğlu, 2007). As a method preferred in many fields, interviewing provides an opportunity to establish natural and healthy communication with students.

Dömbekçi and Erişen (2022) emphasize the importance of the interviewer being well-equipped about the subject. Along with the importance of scientific competency, having the ability to deepen the interview and good guidance skills such as being able to move participants away from brief or superficial responses will be factors that increase the technique's success.

In the interview technique applied in this study, unstructured open-ended interviews were conducted, and attempts were made to determine students' relationship with mythology.

While preparing the interview questions, validity and reliability tests were conducted together with the advisor. A pilot study was conducted with a sample group to demonstrate the comprehensibility of the questions.

While preparing the questions, questions that could answer the study's basic research questions were designed and used within the text.

Before conducting the interviews, ethical committee approval was obtained from Yıldız Technical University in meeting number 2024.05. The document is attached.

The questions from the activities implemented over 6 weeks, without the activity text and visuals, are as follows:

Activity 1 'Simurgh'

Question 1: Did you like the text 'Simurgh' that you read? Why?

Question 2: Was the story interesting? Why?

Question 3: Could you share a section from the text that stayed in your mind and that you think will guide you in your daily life?

Activity 2 'Troy'

Question 1: Did you know that the ancient city of Troy is located in Çanakkale, a city in western Turkey? Archaeologists are tracing layers underground to access the ruins of this city and illuminate history.

There are rumors about researchers finding letters from that period. Based on the myth you read, could you speculate about the content of these letters?

Question 2: Which scene in the text affected you the most, and could you write about the character you found most impressive in this scene with reasons?

Activity 3 'Shahmaran'

Question 1: Could you mark the core values you think the characters Shahmaran and Cemshab possess? Could you explain the behaviors that made you think this?

Question 2: If you were to rewrite a part of this myth, which part would you change? Come on, write your own myth!

Activity 4 'Odin'

Question 1: Match the given poems and quotes with the core values marked with red circles. Color in the value circle that shares common values with Odin's story.

Question 2: Myths are extraordinary texts that appeal to the reader's imagination. Odin sacrificed one eye with patience, sacrifice, and feeling responsible to achieve endless wisdom and be more beneficial to everyone. If you were to step into such a magical world, what would you sacrifice and for what purpose?

Activity 5 'Horus'

Question 1: The sphinxes seen at the entrance of pyramids in Ancient Egypt resemble magnificent guardians. Which values does this sphinx, the guardian of values, protect in the text you read?

Question 2: Looking at the characteristics of the characters in the text, which one would you want to be? What are the points where you identify with the character?

Activity 6 'Beowulf'

Question 1: Each knight is a defender of a different value. So which knights took part in the Beowulf legend?

Question 2: Can you exemplify the values you identified in the text with an event from your daily life?

The above questions are taken from the thesis titled 'The Use of Mythological Stories in Core Values Education,' where the comprehensive version of the activities can be found.

2.2.3. Document Analysis

After selecting and grouping studies conducted in the field of core values and mythology, document analysis was performed. Document analysis involves analyzing written materials containing information about the phenomenon or phenomena intended to be researched (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018, p. 189). In addition to examining existing studies on the subject, after implementing 6 activities prepared for the student-conducted portion of this study, participants were asked open-ended questions and writing exercises were conducted. The resulting feedback was compiled, and these documents were examined, analyzed, and their results were included in the 'Conclusion' section.

In addition to writing exercises in activities applied to participants, some activities aimed to create space for participants to illustrate their writings and express themselves enjoyably. These activities were also photographed and added to the study. In qualitative research, when direct observation or interview is not possible, or to increase the validity of the research, the researcher can include written and visual materials in addition to observation and interview methods (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018, p. 189).

2.3. Data Analysis

Related literature was reviewed and analyzed, and activities were prepared in light of these. Six different activities were designed based on myths selected from Turkish, Greek, Norse, and Egyptian mythology. In each activity, core values were requested to be found through various games. Additionally, grammar activities that would vary between classes were included, but these were only conducted to demonstrate that activities designed through myths and enriched with visuals were interesting, and were not considered in evaluations.

Following the texts titled Simurgh, Troy, Odin, Horus, Shahmaran, and Beowulf, there are activities to reveal whether students noticed the core values. Students' answers in these activities were examined and individually included in the findings section. In myths referencing many basic values, it was observed that there were no students who failed to identify any of them. There are also activities that don't directly ask for finding core values but allow understanding whether myths are interesting through writing exercises while determining which values students emphasize in constructing their writings. These applications, conducted in different frameworks after each text, were examined, analyzed, and interpreted. Additionally, students' verbal comments during activities were listened to, and their views on mythology and values were evaluated in a conversational atmosphere in the classroom.

When conveying student feedback, students were shown as 'S1, S2, S3...'

2.4. Study Group

The study group consists of 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th-grade students regularly attending Şişli Municipality Halide Edip Adivar Science House. Participation included 14 students (9 girls, 5 boys) from 5th grade; 18 students (11 girls, 7 boys) from 6th grade; 11 students (6 girls, 5 boys) from 7th grade; and 9 students (8 girls, 1 boy) from 8th grade. The same activities were applied to students aged 9-14. The common purpose of the activities was to reveal whether students could notice hidden core values in the text and determine whether they enjoyed what they read while doing so.

3. FINDINGS

In this study, which aimed to demonstrate that mythological texts are suitable for use in core values education, six different activities were conducted over six weeks. Activity designs and participants' responses are provided below.

First, students were asked to answer the question 'What is mythology?' to gain insight into their readiness. Before this, they were asked what they knew about mythology in a conversational manner, brief information was provided on topics raised, the subject was expanded, and previous knowledge was combined among students through brainstorming. Discussions were held about mythological anecdotes that students remembered fragments of, and brief conversations were conducted to raise awareness about which characters made what references through movies they watched and popular children's books.

In the first activity, both reading comprehension and grammar exercises were designed through the story of the Simurgh bird, a well-known motif that draws attention with similar characteristics in many different mythologies.

In the second activity, Troy, one of the most famous myths of Greek mythology, was featured. It was chosen thinking it would be interesting because the ancient city of Troy is located in Çanakkale, the great warrior Achilles is the namesake of today's 'Achilles tendon,' and it's a myth that features names that appear in many areas today.

In the third activity, Shahmaran, one of the important stories of Turkish mythology, was covered. This half-snake, half-woman mythological figure, believed to have lived in Tarsus in southern Turkey, appears as a motif of interest in many branches of art such as painting, cinema, and literature.

The fourth activity is about Odin, the father of Thor and god of gods from Norse mythology, whose characters have received much attention especially in cinema in recent years. The activity focuses on Odin's determination and sacrifice on the path to wisdom.

The fifth activity, similar to other texts, has permeated many branches of art, but it can be said that it has become even more prominent in popular culture recently. We can say that the Horus myth from Egyptian mythology is also an interesting fantastic story.

Finally, in the sixth activity, the myth called Beowulf from Norse mythology was featured. The myth was chosen based on the assumption that it contains the core values intended to be instilled in students and that these values would be intuitively understood by students, with elements of excitement and engagement being prominent.

When evaluating the activities, based on both the willingness to participate in the classroom environment and the feedback received after the activities, it can be said that myths captivate middle school students' interest. The Simurg story was chosen as a text because it would guide children in discovering their own powers, contribute to developing imagination, provide cultural knowledge about the Simurg bird, and appeal to their reading pleasure as an engaging story. As a result of the activities, it was observed that the Simurg text largely served the stated purposes, the messages of the text were mostly detected by participants, and the majority of participants enjoyed implementing it.

In the first activity based on the Troy text, students were asked to find the core values present in the text. When evaluating the responses from all classes, it was observed that at least one of the core values implied in the text was identified by the students.

In the second activity, participants were asked to describe the scene that affected them most and explain which character they found most impressive in this scene, with reasons. It was observed that the vast majority of participants enjoyed the writing exercise, generally showed interest in extraordinary events, and were mostly impressed by characters they found different and powerful.

Students were observed to be quite eager to participate in the Shahmaran activity. They were largely able to identify the values implied in the text. In the writing activity section, they were asked which part of the myth they would change and how, and it was observed that they tried to create new paths leading to happy endings. To achieve this, they guided the characters to behave in what they considered more 'correct' ways. Considering the level of personal and social welfare that internalizing core values would provide, students believe that when these values are implemented - as seen in the activity - happy endings become more possible.

In the matching exercises within the activity, it was determined that almost all were completed correctly. It was observed that core value identifications were accurate, and notably, there were no students who failed to identify any core values. In the activity themed 'What would you sacrifice for what?' which was enriched with visuals, an imagination-stimulating activity was conducted, and students enthusiastically participated in this awareness exercise.

In the first part of the activity, students were asked to identify the core values present in the text, and all students were able to identify at least one core value. In the second part, they were asked to identify the character that affected them most in the myth and establish self-identification with them, expressing this in writing. When examining the results, it was observed that students participated in the activity with enjoyment and were able to establish connections with the characters. This expression was supported through both writing exercises and illustration requests, with the activity being reinforced through different methods.

Looking at the characters students identified with, they mostly preferred the characters of Isis and Horus, who stand out for their helpfulness.

In the first of the final theme questions, students were asked to name a character that interested them in the text and explain why they found this character interesting. Here, characters who stood out with characteristics such as helpfulness, friendship, justice, courage, self-confidence, intelligence, and loyalty were prominent. Core values emerged here as well. The second question aimed to determine whether students found this text interesting. Again, the vast majority of participants found the text engaging.

When looking at students' answers to the activity questions, no significant differences were observed between classes.

5. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A person's educational journey toward becoming their best self, which begins in the family, continues in their social environment and school. Schools, which provide a systematic education process, have a significant responsibility in this matter. Because despite the reality that children born into different sociocultural levels don't have equal conditions from birth to find themselves, the responsibility that schools undertake will make at least some difference. Social sciences offer important service areas for developing one's social life skills. The Turkish language course assumes a role in opening new horizons, becoming even more productive after learning to read and write, and supports children entering adolescence during middle school in their quest for self-discovery. Undoubtedly, the texts included in Turkish textbooks are of great importance in achieving this.

Children who have developed a taste for reading will not struggle to acquire knowledge about both their own culture and completely different cultures; in fact, they will enjoy it, and the path to becoming a world citizen will be opened. Developing a taste for reading is directly proportional to encountering quality texts that appeal to one's interests. Therefore, speaking specifically about middle school students, who are the target audience of this study, it's possible to say that during this period, which coincides with the beginning of adolescence, children have high energy, scattered interests, and show more interest in visually rich materials. Based on these reasons, it can be said that selecting texts that are supported by visually rich elements, interesting, engaging, intriguing, appealing to imagination, and - another factor I consider important - containing elements encountered in daily life will be effective in developing a taste for reading. In this study, it is believed that the mythological texts proposed for conveying targeted values and achievements meet these characteristics. Returning to the points mentioned above, using rich visuals, as in the prepared activities, will attract the reader's attention. The existence stories that form the essence of myths have always been texts constructed through extraordinary and surprising connections. Myths, being unpredictable, engaging, and fantastic stories, always keep the element of curiosity alive. When it comes to finding correspondence in daily life, it's seen that mythological characters are extensively utilized, especially in fantastic literature and fantastic cinema. Feedback from students regarding this will be included in the section where activities are evaluated.

Another topic considered as important as developing a taste for reading is acquiring critical reading skills. It is not desirable for readers to accept and read every text they encounter without questioning. Questioning the accuracy of information, recognizing differences in perspectives, and being able to

evaluate through one's own filter are among the skills aimed to be acquired. These skills are crucial for readers of all ages to select quality texts and make appropriate evaluations for themselves.

In the learning process that continues from birth to death, different factors such as family, social environment, and school have their shares. Schools, which undertake the academic education part of the education-teaching process, also have a significant sphere of influence in children's character development, just like family and social environment. Recognizing this, more attention has been paid to core values education in recent years, and studies are being conducted in this field within the scope of Turkish language courses. Core values have been determined as 'justice, friendship, honesty, self-control, patience, respect, love, responsibility, patriotism, and helpfulness,' which are fundamental values expected to be acquired for ensuring personal and consequently social peace. As a noteworthy element, it would be appropriate to say that these values are universal, and although there may be differences in implementation, they are essentially valued everywhere in the world. Therefore, it is possible to encounter these values in texts from different cultures. At this point, texts selected for core values education can be texts with universal qualities.

When speaking of universal texts, mythological texts are one of the genres that come to mind. Traces of mythological stories and characters can be seen in many areas of art, from books to films, from advertisements to computer games, from clothing designs to accessories, from music to painting. Therefore, there is intense interest in a genre that finds so much place in current life. From another perspective, it can be said that it's no coincidence that a genre receiving so much attention appears in many areas of daily life.

Myths, being among the finest examples of the fantastic genre, are engaging and intriguing stories of existence. With their unpredictable plots and structures that appeal to the imagination, they can appeal to readers of all ages.

When examining myths from different cultures, it's evident that there are many common points. Besides the similarities in character traits, the commonality of fundamental messages intended to be conveyed is also noteworthy. Based on this, it can be said that myths show similarities in terms of core values.

The process of value acquisition, which begins in the family and continues in the social environment and school, being managed consciously and effectively is crucial for individual and subsequent social welfare and peace. A person cannot choose their family or birth environment, and this may cause unfair starts in character education. However, schools are institutions that can provide an appropriate environment to balance this. As mentioned above, how the content is filled and how the process is conducted is a determining factor.

In this study, based on the significant role of Turkish language courses in acquiring core values, it is suggested that using mythological texts is appropriate in core values education, as they contain these values.

After reviewing the literature related to core values and mythology, it was determined that using myths in core values education is appropriate. Additionally, due to the universality of core values, it was thought that using myths from different mythologies would be suitable and would also attract children's interest. Subsequently, the myths of 'Shahmaran', 'Troy', 'Odin', 'Beowulf', 'Horus', and 'Simurgh' were selected, and activities designed to capture students' interest with rich visuals were created based on these myths. The activities implemented with 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th-grade students over six weeks and their results are presented in the 'Findings' section.

Before starting the activities, to gain insight into students' readiness, the question 'What is mythology?' was explored. Looking at students' responses, it was observed that they encountered mythological characters in different areas such as computer games, cinema films, and fantastic literature, making them familiar with these characters, but they were mostly unaware of their mythological origins. Before starting the activity, a classroom discussion environment was created to raise this awareness, and after brainstorming, writing exercises began. When reading students' responses, it was observed that they largely remembered what was discussed during class conversations and transferred this to their writing.

In the first activity, the Simurgh myth, which appears in many mythologies with similar characteristics but different names, was covered. Within the scope of the Simurgh activity, the primary goal was to understand whether students were interested in mythological texts. Efforts were made to determine whether the text was interesting and whether the inferences they made from what they read here could guide them in their daily lives. For this reason, the following three questions were asked:

1. Did you like the text titled 'Simurgh'? Why?
2. Was the story interesting? Why?
3. Would you share a section from the text that stayed in your mind and that you think will guide you in your daily life?

When examining the responses from students, it's seen that the majority of participants loved the text and found it interesting. It was revealed that this text, which appeals to their reading pleasure, also contains lessons that will benefit them in their daily lives, serves as a guide, broadens students' horizons, contains messages that will benefit their development, and these were recognizable by students.

Troy, one of the most well-known examples of Greek mythology, was used in the second activity. In addition to the core values identification activity for the Troy text, a writing exercise was designed to develop descriptive skills, where students were asked to choose a character they found impressive from the text and explain why. The results of both activities are included in the 'Findings' section. When evaluating the results, while there were no students who couldn't find any of the implied core values in the text, many of the ten designated core values were noticed by students. In the writing exercise section, students were observed to be quite willing and successful in visualizing the text they read in their imagination and transferring this to writing. Additionally, each student was impressed by at least one character, and their efforts to express this effectively, along with some students supporting the activity by illustrating what they visualized, were signs that students enjoyed doing the work.

Shahmaran is one of the most interesting and well-known examples of Turkish mythology. In this activity, the character traits of Shahmaran and Cemshab, the main protagonists of the story, were examined, and students tried to identify the values they possessed based on this story. In the continuation of the activity, students were also asked to explain how they made these determinations. In the second activity, they were asked if there was any part they would like to change in the text and were asked to write their alternative myths. At this point, it was observed that they mostly intervened in unhappy endings and changed the direction of the story at crossroads they found wrong or unethical. While it's seen that they largely identified the values present in the text, it's also observed that they made comments aimed at changing behaviors that would contradict values or lead to unhappy endings.

The text titled Odin was selected from Norse mythology. Odin, the father of Thor, who has been featured in recent fantasy cinema and is a much-loved character, has become a well-known figure among students. In addition to identifying core values in the activity, students were asked what they would sacrifice in return for gaining a trait they considered valuable, as depicted in the text, and were asked to express their answers both in writing and through illustrations. The activity visuals and responses are included in the 'Findings' section. The aim here was to create awareness that obtaining valuable things is not easy and will require various sacrifices. Looking at the results, it's evident that this was achieved.

Horus, while being one of the main characters of Egyptian mythology, has become a familiar symbol almost everywhere in the world. One of the reasons for choosing this story, besides containing many core values, was to enable children to learn the true version of this famous story. It was observed that this intriguing fantastic story captured students' interest. Within the activities, students were first asked to identify the implied core values in the text, and then, as a writing exercise, to write about the points where they identified with their favorite character from the text. While identifying with mythological characters turned into an entertaining activity that appealed to imagination, it also created awareness regarding the core values contained in the text. It can be said that myths left a positive impression on students who enriched their writings with their own designed visuals.

The myth called Beowulf, selected from Norse mythology, was similarly designed as a core value activity and a writing exercise. The purpose of the writing activity was to enable students to exemplify the core values they identified in the text with an event from their daily lives and create awareness accordingly. It was observed that students were successful in identifying values and also had no difficulty in providing examples. From this, it can be said that awareness was created regarding behaviors containing basic values in students' daily lives and situations they encounter.

When evaluating the feedback received from students at the end of the activities, it is thought that including myths among the texts to be selected for core value education is appropriate. It was seen that students showed intense interest in visually supported activities, and selecting myths that would serve to develop reading pleasure with their exciting plots could be beneficial as reading pieces.

As Joseph Campbell said in the Ariadne story in his book *The Hero's Journey*, '...we need not even risk the adventure alone; for the heroes of all time have gone before us; the labyrinth is thoroughly known; we have only to follow the thread of the hero's path. And where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world.' Myths appear as striking and timeless texts containing universal core values. Yesterday's heroes guiding today's readers can create awareness about values by meeting with middle school students. Regardless of which geography they come from, myths can serve a process where readers who have gained critical reading skills can read with pleasure and establish their own value judgments, pushing them toward fundamental questioning such as 'How should a virtuous person be?', 'What is ethical?', 'What is good?', 'What is bad?'. In the six activities designed through the six myths selected within this study, attention was drawn to the commonalities of differences, their interest was demonstrated through participant feedback, it was thought they would contribute to students' general knowledge, and most importantly, it was determined that the core values they contained could be recognized by students.

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