**Literature as a way of thinking and the envisionment-building classroom**

Literature is a way of thinking rather than a type of text (Langer, 2). As such, it requires a particular form of reasoning and very specific problem-solving strategies; these form the basis of what Judith Langer calls ‘literate thinking’. Literate thinking has the potential to be useful in all of life’s contexts and across the life span. It is our task as teachers at school and in teacher training colleges to help students seek vision through literature, thereby enabling them to ‘think and rethink their understandings of texts, themselves, and the world’ (Langer, 3). As Wayne Booth (1988) and Jerome Bruner (1990, 1992) suggest, stories allow us not only to see but also to re-create ourselves. Using Judith Langer’s concept of ‘envisionment’, i.e. the world of understanding we have at a particular point in time, I discuss how teaching Lois Lowry’s young adult novel *The Giver* (1993) can enable teacher training students to broaden both their own and their pupils’ understanding of how literature helps us to interpret our world. To do this, I shall briefly describe a research project in which I created what Judith Langer calls the ‘envisionment-building classroom’, where it is assumed that students can and will make sense of the material they read, where questions are asked, collaborative support is offered, and where multiple perspectives are expected. In the envisionment-building classroom, students pursue their ideas with their own sense of purpose.

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Jane Ekstam is Professor of English at Østold University College, Halden, Norway. She specialises in British and Canadian literature, detective fiction, children’s literature and academic writing in English. She is literary editor of *Acta Didactica Norge* and is currently editing a special thematic volume on reading and metacognition. She is a member of several editorial boards and a regular contributor of book reviews to Scandinavian and international journals, including *English Studies* and *American Studies in Scandinavia.*

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