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## Climate crisis as a local and global problem in Polish and Slovak literature based on the novels „Posledné storočie“ by Jakub Filo and „Jasność“ by Maja Wolny

**Teaching lessons:** 4 (2 seminars of 90 minutes each are foreseen: part I+II, then part III+IV)

**Correlation with the subjects:** comparative literature, contemporary Polish literature, contemporary Slovak literature, geopolitics of Europe

**Target group:** students of Polish Studies, students of Slovak Studies, students of Central European Studies

### Learning objectives:

Students:

- get to know the novels *Posledné storočie* a *Jasność*
- meet the term *climate fiction*
- are able to identify the main impacts of climate crisis
- are able to name typical features of the genre *climate fiction* in general
- are able to identify typical features of the genre *climate fiction* in the novels analysed
- can compare the commonalities and differences in the plot and structure of the novels analysed
- can formulate their own views on the role of *climate fiction* in climate change awareness
- are sensitised to the climate crisis
- are aware of the impact of the climate crisis on life on Earth
- see the climate crisis in a local and global context
- strengthen their critical thinking

### Methods:

- individual reading of literature
- group work
- lecture

- discussion based on the text analysis
- brainstorming

### Didactic materials and teaching aids:

- novels *Posledné storočie* by Jakub Filo and *Jasność* by Maja Wolny
- article *A Short Prehistory of Climate Fiction* by A. Milner and J.R. Burgmann
- video *What is cli-fi*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9XuxHtfOxQ>
- video *Can These Books Save The Planet? The Rise of Climate Fiction*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUnTcNzLIVg&t=8s>
- board, projector, computer for the teacher
- students are provided with a computer or other device with internet access

### Primary literature:

Filo J., 2020, *Posledné storočie*. Bratislava.

Milner A., Burgmann J. R., 2018, *A Short Prehistory of Climate Fiction*. „Extrapolation“, vol. 59, no 1.

Wolny M., 2020, *Jasność*. Kraków.

### Secondary literature:

Milner A., Burgmann J. R., 2018, *A Short Prehistory of Climate Fiction*. „Extrapolation“, vol. 59, no 1.

Milner A., Burgmann J. R., 2020, *Science Fiction and Climate Change*, Liverpool.

Figuera D., 2013, *The Future of Comparative Literature in a World of World Literature: The US Experience*, „Journal of the Comparative Literature Association of India“, no 2, 3.

Thornber K., 2016, *Climate change and changing world literature*. In: Siperstein S., Hall S., LeMenager S. (eds.), *Teaching Climate Change in the Humanities*, London.

Juraszek D., 2018, *Przyszłość przez zielone okulary: rola literatury w dobie wyzwań klimatycznych*. „Fragile. Pismo kulturalne“, 3-4 (37-38), 94-97.

### Preparation:

Before the lessons, students should read the primary literature.

### Learning procedure:

#### Part I – working with the article by Milner and Burgmann (40 min)

Students are divided into 2 groups. The task of each group is to answer two questions, one directly related to the article and one to be answered independently or by searching the internet.

Group 1 answers the questions: *How do the genres of science fiction and climate fiction differ? What are the arguments for and against distinguishing cli-fi as a separate literary genre?*

Group 2 answers the questions: *What are the most common climatic motifs that appear in literature since the earliest times? Give examples from Polish and Slovak literature.*

Students write down their answers. When the group work is finished, the representative of each group presents the results of the work. The teacher writes the answers on the board. At the end of this part, the teacher can ask for students' own opinion, e.g. *Do you agree that cli-fi is a sub-genre of science fiction? Do you think the themes and books that Milner and Burgmann write about are really cli-fi? Which of these motifs do you consider to be current?*

Time plan:

Group work: 20 min

Presentation of the results of group work: 10 min

Summary and discussion: 10 min

#### Part II – working with the term *climate fiction* (50 min)

The teacher informs the students that the purpose of this part is to work together in order to create a definition of climate fiction. At the beginning, he/she plays a YouTube video called *What is cli-fi* and asks the students to write down sentences or expressions that they think characterise the genre. They watch the video twice. This is followed by a brainstorming session during which students present their notes, list their own characteristics and reflect on the most significant features of the genre, also based on the

work in the previous part. They try to create their own definition. The teacher facilitates the discussion and writes the drafts on the board or in a presentation on the PC.

Then the students are divided into two groups. The first group works with the novel by Maja Wolny and the second group works with the novel by Jakub Filo. Both groups have the same task:

*"Indicate how well the novel fits the definition we have created. Which features of the novel can be considered typical characteristics of cli-fi and which cannot?"*

After group work, students present their analysis to the whole group. Since everyone has been asked to read both novels in advance, everyone can also comment on the novel that they did not analyse during this assignment.

#### **Time plan:**

Watching the video *What is cli-fi?* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9XuxHtfOxQ>): 6 min

Creating a common definition: 14 min

Group work: 20 min

Presentation to the whole group: 10 min

### **Part III – Comparative analysis of the novels *Posledné storočie* and *Jasnosť* (50 min)**

In this part, the teacher asks the students questions and facilitates the discussion. The students' task is to look for the answers to the questions directly in the text and present them to their classmates. Students may also be given the questions in advance to prepare excerpts from the novels that they think appropriately illustrate the answer. The teacher should prepare fragments in advance to stimulate students' responds if they are struggling with formulating their argument independently.

These are 5 basic questions that might be modified or refined at teacher's discretion:

1. *What scientific research is mentioned in the novels and how do the authors use it to build up the story?*
2. *In what geographic area are the novels set and who/what is threatened by the described impacts of climate change?*

3. *What political system is described in the novels, and what political strategies for addressing the climate crisis do the authors describe?*
4. *What factors influence the actions and destinies of the main characters?*
5. *What are the impacts of climate change on individuals and society in the novels? Which do you consider more or less realistic and why?*

The time allocated for each question is around 10 minutes.

### Relevant fragments from the novels:

Jakub Filo, 2020, *Posledné storočie*. Bratislava:

- p. 16 – 17;
- p. 38 – 39;
- p. 118 – 120;
- p. 210 – 212;
- p. 224.

Wolny Maja, 2020, *Jasność*. Kraków:

- p. 50 – 51;
- p. 52 – 55;
- p. 119 – 120;
- p. 215 – 216.

### Part IV – the role of the *climate fiction* in raising awareness of the climate crisis (40 min)

The last question in the part III of this learning cycle is directed to the students' personal opinion. This is followed by the last part IV in which students are asked to consider climate fiction as a genre of global literature. The task is to seek an answer to the question to what extent this genre is able to raise awareness of the climate crisis in society. To do this, students are to use the theoretical knowledge acquired in the previous sections as well as their own experience of reading two novels.

To stimulate reflection, the teacher plays the video *Can These Books Save The Planet? The Rise of Climate Fiction*. Students are divided into two groups while watching. One group writes down arguments for and the other against the idea that cli-fi can influence the general opinion of readers. After watching the video, the groups summarize the arguments made in the video, and also work together to formulate additional arguments of their own. Finally, they present the results of the groups' work to the whole class, with the teacher writing them on the board or in a PC presentation projected on the board. The teacher facilitates the discussion. At the end, the students vote on which spectrum of opinion convinced them more.

Time plan:

Watching the video *Can These Books Save The Planet? The Rise of Climate Fiction* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUnTcNzLIVg&t=8s>) - 15 min

Group work - 10 min

Presentation of the results of the group work - 10 min

Voting - 5 min