



METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR PREPARING 4TH-GRADE STUDENTS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL PIRLS ASSESSMENT IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17936394>**

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 11th December 2025

Accepted: 12th December 2025

Online: 13th December 2025

KEYWORDS

Literary education, literary analysis and interpretation, didactic principle, deduction, induction, critical thinking, creative thinking, independent thinking, creative ability.

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the significance of developing creative abilities in primary school students by cultivating their logical, analytical, critical, creative, and independent thinking skills, which constitutes an essential aspect of learner-centered developmental education.

In the current context of globalization, the wide implementation of pedagogical innovative technologies in education systems worldwide plays a crucial role in enabling learner-centered developmental education. Through the development of students' logical, analytical, critical, creative, and independent thinking skills, their creative potential can be fostered, which is essential for raising the younger generation to a level that meets international standards. In particular, the teaching of reading in primary grades bears significant responsibility in fulfilling the requirements of the international PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) assessment, which monitors students' reading literacy and comprehension.

The PIRLS program, organized by the IEA — the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement — aims to determine the reading proficiency levels of primary school students in participating countries and to identify noteworthy aspects of their educational systems.

Although there are notable differences in the ages of students involved in reading literacy monitoring across countries according to global standards (for instance, children begin schooling at five in England, New Zealand, Trinidad, and Tobago, while in many other countries they start at six or seven), the requirements remain uniform for all participants.

The primary objective of assessing reading literacy according to PIRLS or TIMSS standards is to study and monitor the quality and trends of reading literacy periodically, comparing results obtained at different times based on diverse educational tools and samples,

and drawing appropriate conclusions. From this viewpoint, ensuring reading literacy—namely, students' competencies in listening comprehension, reading comprehension, speaking, and writing—is a pressing issue within Uzbekistan's education system.

The fourth year of primary education represents an important developmental stage. By this time, students must have acquired sufficient reading proficiency to successfully engage with knowledge and skills in subsequent stages of schooling.

In 2021, fourth-grade graduates of primary school were assessed under the PIRLS framework in two types of reading: reading during classroom instruction and reading outside of school. The assessment aims to:

- determine students' level of mastery within the system of literary education;
- determine the level of reading proficiency related to absorbing and practically applying information presented in the learning process.

In accordance with the conceptual principles of the study, students' ability to read literary and informational texts is evaluated according to four criteria:

1. Identifying information explicitly stated in the text (based on the analysis of informational texts);
2. Drawing inferences (literary analysis);
3. Interpreting and integrating information (literary analysis);
4. Examining textual content, language features, and structure (literary analysis).

The analysis of informational and literary texts enables students to understand content, emotionally engage with events, perceive the work as an artistic expression, evaluate characters' actions, draw independent conclusions, and learn to manage themselves in similar real-life situations. Therefore, scientific approaches to analyzing informational and literary texts are required in primary education. To achieve this, training courses should be organized for schoolteachers on the theoretical and methodological foundations of literary analysis. It would also be advisable to introduce a separate university subject, "Children's Literature and Literary Analysis Theory," alongside the existing "Mother Tongue and Children's Literature" course in faculties of primary education. The course "Methods of Teaching the Mother Tongue in Primary School" prepares future teachers methodologically; however, it cannot fully address this specific need.

To assist primary school teachers in preparing fourth-grade students for the international PIRLS assessment based on the textbook *O'qish kitobi* ("Reading Book"), H. Bakiyeva developed a methodological manual titled *Developing Literary Analysis Skills in 4th-Grade Reading Lessons* [1]. This manual incorporates relevant pedagogical experiences related to the issue and suggests additional methodological resources that teach students to analyze informational and literary texts. Nevertheless, these materials remain insufficient.

The international PIRLS requirements primarily depend on the literary, cultural, social, and educational value of texts recommended for reading and analysis. Texts included in textbooks must encourage independent and creative thinking. Students must be able to sense how a high-quality literary work stimulates various emotions (concern, empathy), inspires reflection, and allows them to evaluate different positions. Tasks accompanying texts should enhance students' reading literacy. However, deficiencies remain in this area within existing textbooks.

Raising students' reading literacy largely depends on teachers' knowledge of text analysis and their pedagogical mastery.

A review of textbook content—its relevance, artistic depth, and the quality of tasks—reveals texts that fail to stimulate emotional engagement, broaden imagination, or maintain interest. For example, in the 3rd-grade *Reading Book*, Hamidulla Murodov's story *New House* [2.6] encourages students to assist with construction work by carrying sand, bricks, and soil. Such a storyline raises questions about whether the text meets international standards.

Similarly, interpretive inconsistencies and lack of clarity appear in texts such as Gozal Begim's fairy tale *The Two Sister Rivers* [2.9]—for instance, the use of a proverb in the third paragraph, or unclear symbolic references to “golden earrings” placed on the rivers Syrdarya and Zarafshan. Other texts, such as *The Power of the Tongue* (a parable), Polat Mo'min's poem *Independence Comes from Unity*, Muhabbat Hamidova's story *Recognizing the Homeland*, and Kavsar Turdiyeva's poem *Walking Through a Flourishing Neighborhood* fail to stimulate reasoning or offer meaningful artistic quality. Such works do not foster critical thinking or aesthetic appreciation and do not contribute effectively to student development.

Tasks in textbooks should aim to deepen comprehension, foster independent inquiry, encourage creative thinking, relate content to real life, support interpretation, and develop speech. Conversely, tasks that merely require retelling the text should be avoided. Furthermore, insufficient attention is given to text artistry, linguistic features, plot coherence, character development, and generalization of themes.

Preparation for international PIRLS assessments must not be treated as a one-time formal event; it should take a central place in long-term primary education planning.

It is well known that within a learner-centered educational approach, reading literary works plays a crucial role in shaping students' artistic and aesthetic thinking, fostering self-awareness, cultivating patriotism, and enabling them to appreciate children's literature as an art form.

Today, primary school teachers require scientifically grounded and evidence-based methodological guidelines. Methodology should enable future teachers to independently and consciously approach literary education content, study others' pedagogical experiences critically, analyze outcomes, and draw correct conclusions.

The fundamental didactic principles of teaching reading in primary grades include:

1. Instruction must influence students' understanding in a comprehensive way.
2. Students must clearly comprehend the task or problem assigned to them.
3. Teachers must possess the skill to present new, complex instructional issues through familiar contexts and be able to connect deduction with induction in literary education [3, 207].

Modern literary education demands that the younger generation master the cultural heritage accumulated throughout human history, prepare for real life, consciously choose future professions, communicate respectfully, and develop intellectual capacity. To achieve this, teaching methods, objectives, and tasks must be clearly defined at every stage of literary education, taking into account students' learning capabilities.

A deep understanding of a literary work as an artistic phenomenon and the application of literary concepts to text analysis ensure the quality and effectiveness of reading lessons.

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