International Journal of Social Science, Education and Humanities
ISSN Print: 3104-4239
ISSN Online: 3104-4247
CD ISSN: 3104-4255
https://doi.org/10.63313/IJSSEH.9040

An Exploration of Group Reading in High School English from the Perspective of Moral Education

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How to cite this paper: Xie, Q. (2026). An Exploration of Group Reading in High School English from the Perspective of Moral Education. International Journal of Social Science, Education and Humanities, 2(3), 28–37. ISSN Print: 3104-4239; ISSN Online: 3104-4247.
https://doi.org/10.63313/IJSSEH.9040
Published: 2026-06-12

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Abstract

Integrating moral education into English teaching is a key direction for discipline-based holistic education. However, there remain certain challenges in implementing moral education in high school English instruction, primarily reflected in mechanical grafting of moral content and rigid approaches to moral education practices. Based on the essence of moral education and the advantages of group reading in fostering moral development, this paper explores methods for embedding moral education into high school English group reading through case studies. The approach involves using group reading to closely examine central texts, deeply explore thematic values, and set discussion topics; selecting related texts around the core topic and organizing them into a coherent group; integrating teaching objectives, designing collaborative learning activities, and facilitating inquiry-based interaction; and establishing an evaluation system to assess the effectiveness of moral education and guide continuous improvement. In doing so, moral education is naturally embedded in instruction, fulfilling the fundamental goal of fostering virtue and nurturing well-rounded individuals.

Keywords

Moral Education; Group Reading; Discipline-Based Holistic Education; High School English Reading

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background and Significance

Education Powerhouse Construction Plan Outline (2024–2035) calls for integrating student ideological and political education across disciplinary, teaching, textbook, and management systems, embedding it into moral, intellectual, cultural, and social practice education (State Council, 2025). *Implementation Manual for the Guidelines on Moral Education Work in Primary and Secondary Schools* further specifies that moral education should focus on ideals and beliefs, core socialist values, traditional Chinese culture, ecological civilization, and mental health (Department of Basic Education, Ministry of Education, 2017). Moral education should not be confined to

a single course but implemented across all subjects, deepening the concept of discipline-based holistic education. Integrating moral education into English teaching uncovers moral materials within textbooks, enhances students' core competencies, and strengthens their moral development, contributing to the goal of fostering virtue through discipline-based education (He Sha, 2024).

However, some problems still exist in practice. The lack of synergy between subject teaching and moral cultivation is reflected in two forms. First, mechanically grafted moral education penetration uses "implanting" or "forcing" to make far-fetched connections between language points and moral content. This undermines the integrity of language knowledge and reduces moral education to empty preaching, diminishing the effectiveness of both educational goals (Wang Yanping & Wang Yuyan, 2024). Second, rigid approaches fail to generate emotional resonance, such as arbitrarily attaching moral education labels to language points or designing preaching activities disconnected from reality. Such activities, lacking authentic situational support, struggle to touch students' hearts.

At a deeper level, current moral education infusion suffers from three disconnects: between cognitive and affective goals, between knowledge transmission and value guidance, and between classroom learning and real-life experience. To overcome this, a moral education infusion model based on thematic meaning exploration is needed, naturally integrating moral elements into language practice activities so that students achieve value identification through experience, reflection, and internalization.

Conducting high school English group reading from the perspective of moral education is an effective pathway for implementation. Compared with single-text reading, group reading enriches moral education approaches, deepens moral cognition, and promotes the internalization and application of moral values. Through the integration of multiple texts, students understand moral connotations in a broader context and reflect on values at a deeper level. Thus, using group reading to implement moral education infusion in high school English is both an inevitable requirement for discipline-based holistic education and an important breakthrough for improving moral education outcomes..

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Definition of Moral Education

Regarding the definition of moral education, several representative views are as follows: Moral education is "a systematic activity in which educators, based on the needs of a given society and the educated, follow the laws of character formation, and employ effective means such as verbal instruction and personal example to develop the educated in terms of ideological, political, legal, and moral qualities through internalization and externalization" (Lu Jie & Wang Fengxian, 1994). Moral education is "an activity that promotes the ideological awareness, quality

enhancement, and life development of the educated, guides them to properly handle relationships among heaven, earth, people, things, and the self, and achieves the unity of knowing, feeling, intending, and acting, through certain educational content and methods such as guidance, experience, and practice, with the aim of fostering moral growth, elevating spiritual realms, and perfecting life" (Liu Jiliang, 2010). Moral education is "an educational activity in which educators organize a value environment suitable for the moral growth of moral education subjects, promoting their continuous construction and improvement in the understanding and practical ability of moral values" (Tan Chuanbao, 2000).

The Ordinary High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision) clearly states: The implementation of the high school English curriculum should be guided by moral education, helping students learn, understand, and appreciate outstanding Chinese and foreign cultures, cultivate a sense of patriotism, strengthen cultural confidence, broaden international perspectives, and gradually enhance their cross-cultural communication skills, critical thinking abilities, learning capacities, and innovative competences, while forming correct worldviews, life perspectives, and value systems (Ministry of Education, 2020). The significance of moral education in the English subject is first reflected in its role as an implicit carrier of value guidance. Through text themes, cultural comparisons, and language activities, English teaching naturally integrates moral cognition and emotional experience, enabling students to subtly form correct values and a sense of social responsibility while acquiring the language. Second, moral education endows English learning with a deeper meaning of cultural dialogue. English is not only a tool for communication but also a bridge for cross-cultural understanding. By exploring moral concepts in different cultures and analyzing moral dilemmas in literary works, students can cultivate cultural inclusiveness, critical thinking, and global citizenship awareness in their language learning, achieving the integration of "learning the language" and "learning to be a good person".

2.2. The Application of Situational Teaching Method in Grammar Teaching

Research on the Situational Teaching Method (STM) in grammar instruction spans educational levels. In junior high, Han (2017) found STM superior to traditional methods for grammar achievement and interest. In senior high, Wangyin Li (2020) identified an implementation gap: exam pressure and teacher resistance limit STM use, though Li Wenwen (2024) suggests multimedia integration. At college level, Lin (2019) proposed a three-stage framework. Overall, despite proven efficacy, STM remains underdeveloped in high schools due to contrived scenarios and lack of structured guidance, leaving its potential largely unrealized.

3. The Exploration and Practice of Group Reading in High School English from the Perspective of Moral Education

The following selects the text *Tu Youyou Awarded Nobel Prize* from the Reading and Thinking module of Unit 1, Book 1 of the PEP High School English textbook as the central text to specifically explain how to integrate moral education into high school English group reading.

3.1. Intensively Read the Central text, Deeply Explore the Thematic Value, and Set the Topics

When selecting a central text from the textbook, teachers should focus on its moral education value. Take the text *Tu Youyou Awarded Nobel Prize* as an example. The thematic context of this text is "Man and Society" in relation to science and technology, as well as "Man and Self" in relation to career and life pursuits. The text contains rich elements of moral education, helping students develop qualities such as seeking truth and being pragmatic, perseverance in the face of failure, and the dedication to take on social responsibility. It holds high educational value and is suitable as a central text.

The text takes Tu Youyou' s winning of the 2015 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine as the core event, detailing her scientific research journey of discovering artemisinin based on ancient Chinese medical texts. It highlights how Tu Youyou' s team drew inspiration from *Emergency Prescriptions Kept Up One' s Sleeve*, succeeded in extracting artemisinin after over 190 failures, and made the key breakthrough of using low-temperature ether extraction, ultimately developing a life-saving drug that has treated millions of malaria patients. This text enhances students' national pride and cultural confidence, conveys the research qualities of seeking truth, being pragmatic, innovating boldly, and dedicating oneself selflessly, while also demonstrating the indomitable perseverance required for success. Furthermore, the text guides students to reflect that true success lies in bringing benefit to humanity—the contribution of artemisinin to global malaria control transcends individual achievement.

Issues are topics embedded in group reading materials that can be discussed by teachers and students. Group reading may involve one or multiple issues (Yu Zeyuan et al., 2013), and the design of issues should reflect relevance, openness, and discussability (Chen Yiyi, 2021). Based on the core value and educational objectives of the text, teachers can design the following issues that are close to students' real-life experiences and thought-provoking: (1) What is success? (2) How should one view the relationship between personal achievement and social contribution?

From the perspective of value guidance, these issues can effectively guide students to reflect on the multiple dimensions of success, cultivate their sense of national pride and social responsibility, and help them form a correct worldview, outlook on life, and value system. From the perspective of practical guidance, the issues address students' real-life dilemmas, such as "How to face setbacks" and "How to balance personal interests and collective interests". This design of issues achieves the

integration of knowledge learning and value guidance, the connection between text interpretation and life practice, and the fusion of personal growth and social responsibility, ultimately realizing the educational goal of English as a subject—the unity of instrumentality and humanity.

3.2. Focus on the Core Topics, carefully Select Related Texts, and Integrate the Group Reading Materials

The selection of texts should comprehensively consider the relevance of themes and content, the appropriateness of language difficulty, and the intertextuality and heterogeneity among texts (Hang Yujie, 2022). The scope of materials for extended texts includes but is not limited to textbook content and extracurricular resources. When existing textual resources fail to meet teaching needs, teachers may supplement, adjust, or delete content, and independently create extended texts that align with teaching requirements. It is important to note that the selected or adapted extended texts should maintain consistency with the core text in terms of thematic connotation and moral education elements, so as to ensure the coherence of group reading instruction and the effectiveness of moral education integration.

In this lesson example, the teacher selected two news reports from the China Daily website about two successful figures, Yuan Longping and Zhang Boli, as related texts. The former reports on the passing of Yuan Longping, the “Father of Hybrid Rice” , reviewing his lifelong dedication to hybrid rice research, which significantly increased global rice production and helped address the problem of hunger, highlighting his spirit of selfless dedication, persistent pursuit, and lofty ideal of eradicating global hunger. The latter tells the story of academician Zhang Boli leading his team to screen effective traditional Chinese medicine formulas and establish integrated treatment plans combining traditional Chinese and Western medicine, highlighting his spirit of benevolence, selfless dedication, and commitment to upholding tradition while pursuing innovation. These two texts provide successful cases from different fields, demonstrating the contributions of Chinese scientists to global issues, and serve as an effective supplement to the core text.

Given that the original texts are international English reports with complex sentence structures and many uncommon vocabulary words, which exceed high school students’ English proficiency, and that the combined length of the two texts is too long to be taught in a regular class, the teacher used artificial intelligence technology to adapt the texts for teaching suitability.

3.3. Integrate Teaching Objectives, Create Learning Activities, and Conduct Collaborative Inquiry

From the perspective of moral education, the view of English learning activities has a clear educational orientation: activities of learning and understanding lay the

foundation for students to deeply grasp the cultural values embedded in the text; activities of application and practice promote exploration of the deeper cultural phenomena and connotations behind the language; activities of transfer and innovation help students grasp the essence, distinguish truth, goodness, and beauty, and make correct value judgments and behavioral choices (Wang Qiang et al., 2021).

In high school English group reading instruction, teachers can integrate teaching objectives and design three progressive types of learning activities—learning and understanding, application and practice, and transfer and innovation—to help students progress from perceiving moral education elements to identifying with and internalizing moral knowledge, and finally to forming moral literacy and practicing moral concepts in real life.

Based on the preceding text analysis, the teaching objectives for this lesson example can be set as follows: identify the professions, difficulties, achievements, and character images of the three protagonists, summarize the definition of success, and analyze the relationship between personal achievements and social contributions; work in groups to introduce the person they consider the most successful and explain their reasons; and formulate and share their own plans for success.

3.3.1. Design Learning and Understanding Activities to Perceive Moral Education Elements

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher asks students to write down three English words that define success (e.g., money, family, happiness) and uses a word cloud generator to display the results in real time, creating cognitive conflict. At the same time, the teacher affirms students' responses, helping them recognize that definitions of success vary from person to person, and then introduces the texts of this lesson. The teacher asks students to read the texts and organize basic information, including the professions, difficulties, and achievements of the three protagonists. Then, the teacher guides students to summarize the virtues embodied by the three protagonists based on the texts, which are the moral education elements within the texts. Based on this, the teacher further guides students to reflect on what success means to each of the three protagonists. For Tu Youyou, success is not just winning the Nobel Prize, but transforming the wisdom of traditional Chinese medicine into practical medical breakthroughs. For Yuan Longping, success means freeing all people from hunger and serving people's livelihoods through technological innovation. Success lies in focusing on one thing for decades and creating extraordinary value in an ordinary field. For Zhang Boli, success lies in taking responsibility in times of crisis and promoting the modern application of traditional Chinese medicine. Success is the combination of intellectuals' social responsibility and medical benevolence. Following the above analysis, the teacher guides students to analyze and discuss the relationship between personal achievements and social contributions. Finally, under the teacher's guidance, students can conclude that the ultimate meaning of personal

achievement lies in social contribution, helping them establish correct life perspectives, worldviews, values, as well as patriotism and a sense of social responsibility.

3.3.2. Design Application and Practice Activities to Identify and Internalize Moral Knowledge

This type of educational activity refers to teachers designing practical tasks and situational problems to guide students in transforming the moral cognition and value concepts learned in the classroom into internalized moral literacy. In this process, students actively participate in problem-solving, collaborative inquiry, and other practical activities, gradually achieving deep internalization from knowledge acceptance to emotional identification and finally to behavioral practice, ultimately forming stable moral character and value concepts.

The teacher asks students to work in groups to select the person they consider the most successful, list that person's achievements, explain why they think he or she is the most successful, and analyze and discuss the reasons behind that success. After the group discussion, the teacher asks each group to send a representative to present the outcomes of their collaborative work.

In this teaching process, through carefully designed activities, the teacher not only effectively enhances students' teamwork skills, critical thinking, and language expression abilities but, more importantly, successfully guides students to internalize the moral education concepts conveyed in the classroom into their own value pursuits. Students gradually identify with and deeply understand the core moral concept of this lesson: true success lies not merely in the pursuit of personal fame and wealth, but more importantly, in whether one can create positive value for others, society, and the world. Only by possessing the qualities of self-confidence, self-improvement, diligence, perseverance, and the courage to face challenges, along with innovative thinking, entrepreneurial spirit, social responsibility, and a dedication to service, can one achieve true success in life. This process not only strengthens students' moral cognition but also stimulates their intrinsic motivation, enabling them to consciously practice these excellent qualities in their future learning and daily life, striving to become individuals who contribute positively to society.

3.3.3. Design Application and Practice Activities to Identify and Internalize Moral Knowledge

This type of educational activity refers to teachers creating real or simulated situations to guide students in transferring the moral cognition and value concepts learned in the classroom to new practical problems. Through independent inquiry and problem-solving, students achieve a deep transformation from moral cognition to behavioral practice.

The teacher guides students to formulate and share their own success plans based

on the definition of success and its contributing factors, including the career they hope to pursue in the future, the achievements they wish to attain, the difficulties they may encounter, and the solutions to those difficulties. After students complete their plans, the teacher invites them to present in front of the class, and evaluation activities such as peer assessment and teacher feedback are carried out.

In this process, through systematic guidance, the teacher helps students establish their career development directions, cultivate pioneering and enterprising innovative thinking and entrepreneurial spirit, while deepening their sense of responsibility as social citizens. The teacher emphasizes integrating students' personal growth goals with national development needs, the mission of national rejuvenation, and even the shared destiny of humanity, enabling students to recognize that true success lies not only in personal achievements but also in contributing to social value. This teaching model emphasizes the unity of knowledge and action, focusing on cultivating students' moral judgment, practical ability, and social responsibility, so that moral education does not remain merely at the cognitive level but is truly integrated into students' daily behaviors and life choices.

3.4. Construct an Evaluation system, Assess the Effectiveness of Moral Education, and Optimize for Improvement

A diverse and multi-dimensional moral education evaluation system can effectively deepen the effectiveness of moral education. Continuous moral education evaluation should run through the entire teaching process, focusing on three key dimensions during implementation: whether students have clearly understood the important moral concepts in the text; whether students identify with the moral concepts in the text; and whether students can reasonably evaluate and consciously practice the moral concepts in the text in new situations. This whole-process, multi-dimensional evaluation approach focuses on both cognitive internalization and behavioral externalization, enabling a comprehensive assessment of the actual effectiveness of moral education integration.

Finally, the teacher asks students to complete a self-assessment form (see Table 1). Through self-assessment, students re-examine and deepen their understanding of the moral connotations conveyed by the texts. By analyzing students' self-assessments, the teacher can gauge the degree of internalization of their moral cognition, including the depth of conceptual understanding and the intensity of emotional identification, and then optimize teaching strategies accordingly, providing personalized moral guidance for students. This process not only strengthens students' moral self-awareness but also provides an important basis for teachers to improve the effectiveness of moral education.

Table 1. Student Self-Assessment Form on Moral Education Outcomes

Self-evaluation Form about Moral Education

Statement	Self-evaluation	Detailed Description
I can understand the morals in the lesson.	Yes No Not sure	The morals that I have noticed:_____ _____
I can get some inspiration from the morals in the lesson.	Yes No Not sure	The inspiration that I have got:_____ The sentence that has inspired me most:_____ _____
I can make use of the morals I have learned to solve some real-life problems.	Yes No Not sure	The situation where I can use the morals to solve the problems:_____

4. Conclusion

This Integrating moral education elements into English teaching can fully realize the educational value of the subject, cultivating students' language ability, cultural awareness, and thinking quality while promoting the comprehensive development of their moral character, thereby effectively implementing the fundamental goal of fostering virtue through English education. As Zhao Jun et al. pointed out, "Contemporary moral education has moved beyond the limitations of traditional didactic models and places greater emphasis on students' active construction and internalization of experiences in the learning process" (Zhao Jun, 2022). Teachers can guide students through a gradual process of moral internalization—moving from "cognitive understanding" to "emotional identification" and then to "behavioral practice"—by conducting group reading activities. Specifically, teachers can first help students identify moral connotations in texts, then facilitate their identification with and internalization of the relevant values, and finally guide them to consciously put these values into practice in authentic contexts. This approach achieves an organic integration of moral education and subject teaching, thereby attaining the goal of holistic education. This teaching method is not only consistent with contemporary concepts of moral education but also effectively enhances the educational impact of subject teaching.

However, the moral education effects described in this paper rely mainly on qualitative analysis and lack multi-dimensional support from quantitative data. Therefore, future research could integrate big data analytics to develop dynamic assessment tools for evaluating the effectiveness of moral education, enabling an organic combination of quantitative and qualitative evaluation. In addition, if time and resources permit, researchers could extend the observation period to examine the long-term effects of moral internalization and the sustainability of changes in student behavior.

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