

## Existing Problems in The Teaching of Mirza Fatali Akhundzade in Azerbaijani Secondary Schools and their Solutions

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### Abstract:

This article explores the inclusion of M.F. Akhundzadeh's life and literary works in secondary school literature textbooks. It examines the extent to which his contributions are presented in the curriculum and highlights existing challenges. The study identifies gaps in the available materials and suggests ways to enhance the teaching process. To support educators, the article provides a list of relevant scientific and literary sources, including books, journals, and newspapers where his works have been published. Additionally, it recommends using documentaries, theatrical performances, and role-based readings to engage students more effectively. The article emphasizes the importance of supplementary materials, such as Akhundzadeh's selected works, historical records, and visual aids, to provide a more comprehensive understanding. It also suggests that his life and works be introduced in lower grade levels (5th–9th grades) to build a stronger foundation. By integrating these methods, students can develop a deeper appreciation of Akhundzadeh's impact on Azerbaijani literature and culture.

First of all, we must acknowledge that Mirza Fatali Akhundov is a prominent thinker with a special place in our literary history. Akhundov played a transitional role between classical and modern literature. Through his philosophical, artistic, and scientific works, he became a pioneer of literary innovations. He was the founder of dramaturgy and modern national prose, as well as the creator of the first systematic examples of literary criticism.

Akhundov's works were repeatedly published in Cyrillic script before the period of independence, and after independence, this process expanded even further. His works were staged during the Tsarist colonial period, and his comedies played a crucial role in the establishment of our theater.

The entirety of Akhundov's works is based on the promotion of human values. His main idea can be considered the formation of educated and broad-minded individuals. The themes of his works were as relevant in the period they were written as they are today. The calls for modernity, science, and education in these works continue to steer people away from fanaticism and backwardness.

As we can see, the teaching of Akhundov's works is extremely important. Firstly, because we need to study Akhundov's life and creative work, and secondly, because his works are fundamentally built on human values. But how is Akhundov taught in secondary schools?

Let's first examine the textbooks where Akhundov is mentioned. In the fifth-grade textbook, while we find many Azerbaijani poets and writers, as well as world literature figures such as Mark Twain and Jack London, there is no mention of Akhundov. The situation is the same in the sixth-grade literature textbook. Although it provides information about writers and poets from ancient times to the modern era, there is no reference to Akhundov or his works. Unfortunately, the same applies to the seventh, eighth, and ninth-grade textbooks.

It is true that in the eighth-grade textbook, there is a single sentence in the section titled "The Period of Enlightenment Realism in Azerbaijani Literature":

*"On March 10, 1873, Mirza Fatali Akhundov's play 'Adventures of the Vizier of the Khan of Lankaran' and on April 17, 'Haji Gara' were staged, marking the foundation of the national theater."* (Eighth-grade literature textbook, page 76).

As we can see, this information is extremely brief.

We first encounter Akhundov's name in the tenth-grade textbook. It should also be noted that since the 10th and 11th-grade literature textbooks cover Azerbaijani literature chronologically from ancient times to the modern era, Akhundov's name is not mentioned in the 11th-grade textbook either.

In the 10th-grade textbook, a brief biography of Akhundov is provided, including information about his family and teachers. It is mentioned that he was born in the city of Shaki and that his father was Məmmədağa, while his mother was Nanə Khanum. Although it states that Mirza Fatali Akhundov was raised under the guardianship of his maternal uncle, Akhund Haji Alaskar, the reason for this is not explained. The textbook also discusses how Akhund Alaskar took Mirza Fatali to Tbilisi and arranged for him to work as a translator in Eastern languages, as well as mentioning that Akhundov worked as a teacher at a district school in Tbilisi.

The textbook also briefly provides information about the later years of Akhundov's life: *"In the final years of his life, Mirza Fatali was unjustly dismissed from his position after being accused of anti-government activities. After suffering from a severe illness, he passed away in 1878. He was buried in the Muslim cemetery in Tbilisi, next to the grave of his teacher, Mirza Shafi Vazeh."*

Volumes of books could be written about Akhundov, who lived through many struggles. More information could have been provided in the secondary school textbook; however, no matter how much is included, fully reflecting his life remains a challenging task. On the other hand, the authors have presented the information concisely, considering the annual teaching hours and the students' age levels.

Nevertheless, certain aspects of Akhundov's life, as well as his literary and scientific works, must be conveyed to students. This places a significant responsibility on subject teachers. Teachers can gather additional materials and provide students with new insights. For this purpose, they can refer to *M.F. Akhundov's Selected Works in 4 Volumes* (Sharq-Qarb Publishing House, Baku 2005), Feyzulla Qasımzadə's *History of 19th Century Azerbaijani Literature* (Maarif Publishing House,

Baku 1966), and Feyzulla Qasımzadə's *The Life and Works of Mirza Fatali Akhundov* (Azerbaijan Publishing House, Baku 1962).

Teachers can also recommend reading literary works about Akhundov's life and career. This can be done on weekends, during autumn, winter, and summer breaks, as well as through extracurricular reading activities and literature clubs organized in schools. Suggested works include:

Əbdürrəhim bəy Haqverdiyev's *Xəyalat (Selected Works, Volume II, 2005)*, Çingiz Hüseynov's *Fətəli Fətəhi* (1986), Hüseyn (Arif) Hüseynzadə's poem *Ürəklər Birləşəndə (Selected Works, 1975)*, Əli Kərim's poem *Qarlı Qış Axşamında (Selected Works, Volume I, 1981)*, Qasım bəy Zakir's untitled poems dedicated to Akhundov (*Works, 1953*), Mahmud Tofiq's *Kəpənək Gözəlliyi*, Şəfayət Mehdiyev's play *Mirzə Fətəli (Ərk Qalası, 2012)*, Əlisa Nicat's novels *Gəncəli Müdrək* (2018) and *Mirzə Şəfi* (1984), Bəxtiyar Vahabzadə's poem *Payız Düşüncələri* (1974), Məhəmməd Hüseyn Bəxtiyar's *Səbuhi (Literature and Art Newspaper, October 21, 1983)*, Balaş Azəroğlu's *Şərqi Kəvakibi (Literature and Art Newspaper, October 28, 1988)*, Tofiq Mahmud's *Zülmətdə Yanğın (Azerbaijan Journal, 1962, No. 8)*, Əli Tudə's *Məşəl Olan Qələm (Literature and Art Newspaper, September 29, 1962)*, Emil Azər's *Səbuhi*, Atif Zeynallı's *Səbuhinin Qəzəbi (Elə Arxalan, Baku, Yazıçı, 1978)*, Ağacəfər Həsənli's *Qəflət Yuxusundan Oyatdın Şərqi*.

As seen, these works have been published in various books and periodicals. Teachers must be aware of the titles of these works as well as the books and publications in which they appear.

In the 10th-grade Azerbaijani language curriculum, the topic *Researching Newspaper Materials (Practical Work)*, which is allocated two class hours, can be used to study these works on Akhundov's life and literary career. Additionally, discussions can be held about Akhundov's perspectives on the East and the West.

During the process of teaching about Akhundzadə's life, teachers can also incorporate documentaries about his life. The film *Sübhün Səfiri (Ambassador of Dawn)*, scripted by Anar, can be shown to students as part of the decree signed by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, İlham Aliyev, on the occasion of Akhundov's 200th anniversary.

There is also limited information about Akhundzadə's works in textbooks. The works are briefly introduced, with their themes and content condensed into just a few sentences. Two of his works, *Hekayəti-Müsyö Jordan Həkim-Nəbatat və dərvişi Məstəli şah Cadukuni-məşhur* and *Aldanmış Kəvakib*, are presented in an abridged and simplified form. At the end of both works, there are reflections on the characters and artistic features.

Additionally, teachers can present Akhundzadə's comedies using online resources. Once his selected works are available in the school library, teachers can organize role-based readings of his plays. Literary clubs can also conduct readings of these works and prepare theatrical performances.

As previously stated, studying Akhundzadə's life and works is extremely important. It is well known that he constantly worked for the welfare of his homeland and that his works criticized backwardness and ignorance. To effectively convey this information to students, we can use the above-mentioned literary works and films, as well as role-based readings, theatrical viewings, and staged performances.

Additionally, the study of Akhundzadeh's life and works can be included in lower-grade (5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th) textbooks. Excerpts from his life, correspondence, work on the alphabet reform, and passages from his works can be included in these textbooks. Furthermore, literary works reflecting Akhundzadeh's life and legacy can also be incorporated into the curriculum. It is also possible to teach these aspects in extracurricular reading lessons.

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