

*On the Use of Original Audiovisual Documents and Manuscript
to Teach “The Little Prince”*

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Abstract

This article introduces several original documents used to teach French and French Literature to Taiwanese university students. The audiovisual documents were made in cooperation with a female French singer and harp player, a former Taiwanese student who studied French and visual arts, and a Taiwanese teacher. The result of our work is a video with a song, lyrics in French/English/Chinese, and dozens of drawings to illustrate the short movie. The other original documents are manuscripts of *The Little Prince* that were not included in the published version of the novella: two leaves discovered in 2012, notably including a previously unknown character, and a huge manuscript (twice the size of the published version) offered to Silvia Hamilton by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in New York in April 1943. Silvia Hamilton sold the manuscript to the Morgan Library in 1968. A book including the original leaves and the transcripts was published in 2013. The author of this article studied both manuscripts and published a short journal paper on the 2012 manuscript in 2023; the second paper, on the Morgan Library manuscript, was published in August 2024. Teaching materials are uploaded on a Facebook group (“Creative Teaching”), on the teacher’s website, and Moodle. Data is collected from September 2024 to June 2025. Using original documents, such as songs, drawings, short movies, and relatively unknown manuscripts, might increase students’ motivation and interest. Moreover, during the class, students will also be invited to write original short stories and make new audiovisual documents.

Keywords: *The Little Prince*, Morgan Library, Manuscript, Saint-Exupéry, Creative Teaching

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Introduction

Facebook was launched 20 years ago, in 2004. While there are numerous academic papers published on the use of learning platforms for language classes (especially English writing and conversation), research on the impact of a Facebook learning group focusing on Western Culture and Literature is scarce. This short article presents some of the posts shared online by the instructor since the beginning of the first semester (September 10, 2024) and notably focuses on creative teaching materials and research concerning *The Little Prince*: a song, drawings, original and little-known manuscripts of the novella. This paper is a preliminary discussion on the impact of Facebook as a tool to provide additional teaching materials outside the classroom in a university in the south of Taiwan. Some data has already been collected and analyzed, but this is a work in progress that will end in June 2025 (two semesters; including Freshmen and Sophomore students from three classes: Children's Literature, French I, and Introduction to Western Literature). The main focus is on *The Little Prince*, but the Facebook group created by the teacher (called "Creative Teaching") also shares posts about Literature in general. Only students from the teacher's classes may join the group. It is not a requirement. As of the end of October 2024, there were 94 members in this group, the instructor included. The data is based on information collected in the Facebook group; the teacher will later ask students to fill out a questionnaire and will analyze his teaching evaluation at the end of each semester. Data also includes a comparison with posts uploaded on LinkedIn and in the teacher's public Facebook group called "Sci-Fi and Fantasy". All the students who joined the "Creative Teaching" group also joined this group. Later, the teacher will also compare the impact of the information shared on the Facebook private learning group with posts uploaded on the E-learning platform Moodle.

Literature Review

Using social media may help measure students' learning progress and have a positive impact on their motivation. Cain and Policastri (2011) note that "while traditional face-to-face instruction offers numerous advantages for learning, it is constrained by time and space." The situation now is much better than during the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, there might be various reasons why classes are canceled: two times since September 2024 in our Adolescent and Children's Literature class because of typhoons and one time due to the celebration of National Day (October 10). Creating a Facebook group to provide additional teaching materials and posts related to Literature may mitigate the loss of several hours of class and keep students motivated. Ocaña et al. (2021) insist on the importance of "a clear presence of a teacher to create an environment where students feel motivated to share knowledge"; there is a "growing need for informal learning opportunities." Alm (2018) proposes that "language educators... should start acknowledging and encouraging the out-of-class language engagements of our students and design learning activities that allow learners to draw on their experiences as language users" (p. 17).

Most studies in this field focus on language learning, notably on English writing or conversation. For example, Andini (2019) analyzes the contribution of a Facebook group on writing in Indonesia. The study shows that students like to use the group to do brainstorming activities and to think critically. Peer feedback increases their motivation and helps them find ideas during the writing process. Rajagopal and Shah (2021) show that "Facebook is an effective and easily accessible tool" that encourages English language learning in ESL classrooms (p. 1345). Ravindran, Ridzuan, and Wong (2022) "investigate the impact of social media in the teaching and learning of speaking skills of EFL students" (p. 1); the study

“points to the positive impact and the benefits of using social media for speaking classes despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic” (p.8). Islam and Sakib (2024) show that students favor Facebook (wall, messenger, groups) more than YouTube for learning and academic activities, such as “attending online classes, communicating with class teachers and classmates, collecting information about the class and exam schedules, uploading, downloading, and sharing academic materials, participating in group discussions...” (p. 95).

The instructor could not find any studies on the impact of a Facebook learning group on courses of Literature, apart from a paper published by the teacher himself: Montoneri (2015) analyzes the impact of a private teaching group in a class of European Literature in Taiwan. The sample was much smaller as only 14 students were selected. By comparison, the present research includes 93 students and shares creative posts and the instructor’s publications on *The Little Prince*.

Methodology and Data Collection

The Data Source

This study focuses on Freshmen and Sophomore students is a university in Tainan (the instructor was hired in August 2024). The main data comes from the Facebook private group created by the teacher, which provides feedback (likes, views, comments), beginning September 2024. Data will be collected during the entire academic year (two semesters: September 2024-January 2024 and February-June 2025). Members of the private group are all students. Participation is optional. All the students already have a Facebook account. Students who accepted to join this group also joined the teacher’s public group (“Sci-Fi and Fantasy”). All the posts and comments are in English.

Empirical Study

The private Facebook group was created on September 3, 2024, before the beginning of the first semester, which started one week later. This group shares posts on *The Little Prince*, but also on Children and Adolescent Literature, French Language and Culture, and Introduction to Western Literature.

Preliminary Results

By October 31, the group had 94 members (teacher included). The biggest growth occurred at the end of September. There were 87 members on October 4 (graphic 1 below). The teacher told all the students that he was doing research and using data from the group and that results would be anonymized; joining the group was not a requirement. Students could choose to be friends with the teacher on his Facebook page. He would then invite them to join the group. They could still decide to join the group or not. They were also invited to join the teacher’s public group called “Sci-Fi and Fantasy” (224 members as of November 03, 2024). This public group shares the instructor’s publications and posts on science fiction, time travel, and fantasy in literature and cinema. For example, a post on September 20 introduces Hans Zimmer and his music, (53 views, 9 likes). Anybody may join this group, but more than half of the members are teacher’s students.

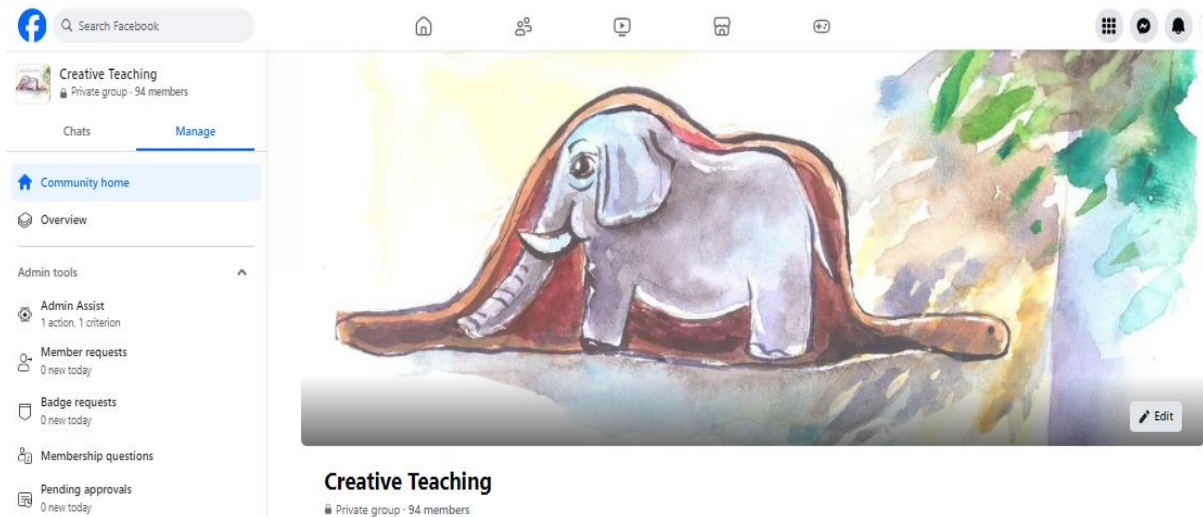


Graphic 1: Facebook Group, Number of Members Since 2024/09/03



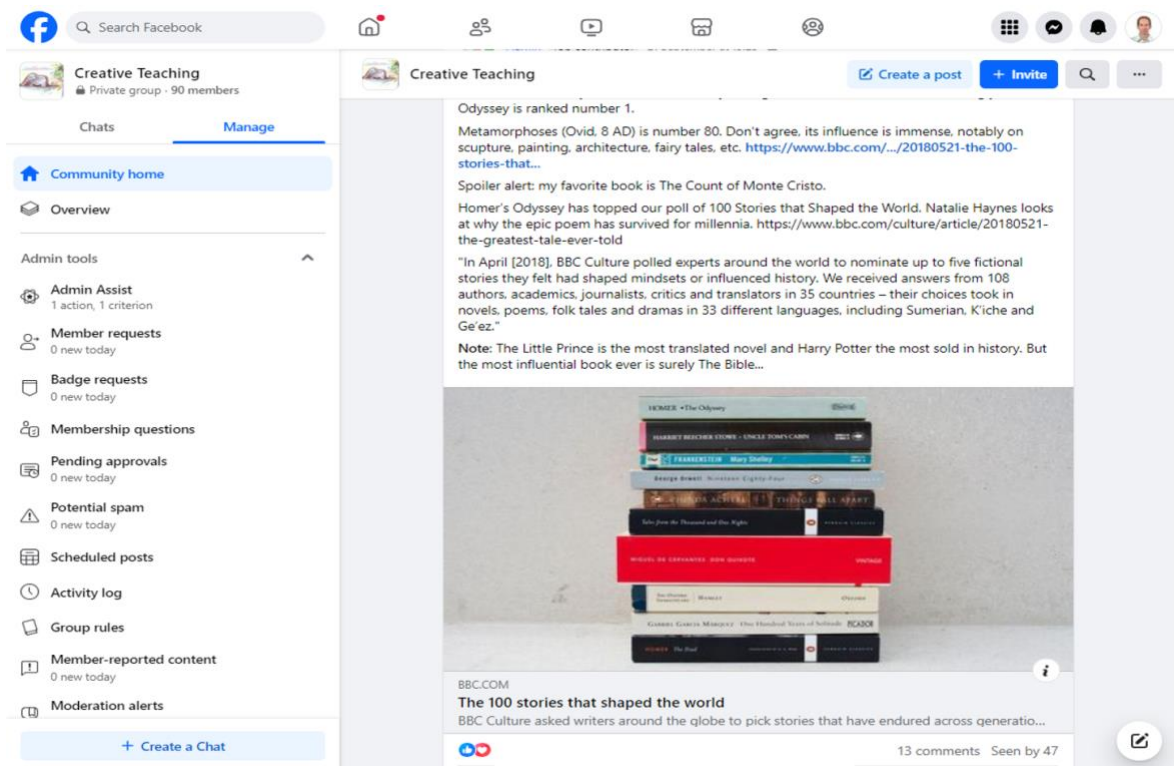
Graphic 2: Facebook Group, Active Members in October

According to the above graphic, 91 members were active in October (3 Oct 2024 - 30 Oct 2024). Activity was at its highest on October 3 and on October 29 (33 each). On October 2, a post on Pinocchio was read by 78 members (11 likes, teacher included). The second most viewed post was on October 5: a post on Marco Polo with 67 views and 11 likes (teacher included). *The Little Prince* song was seen by 42 members and liked by only 2, which is disappointing.



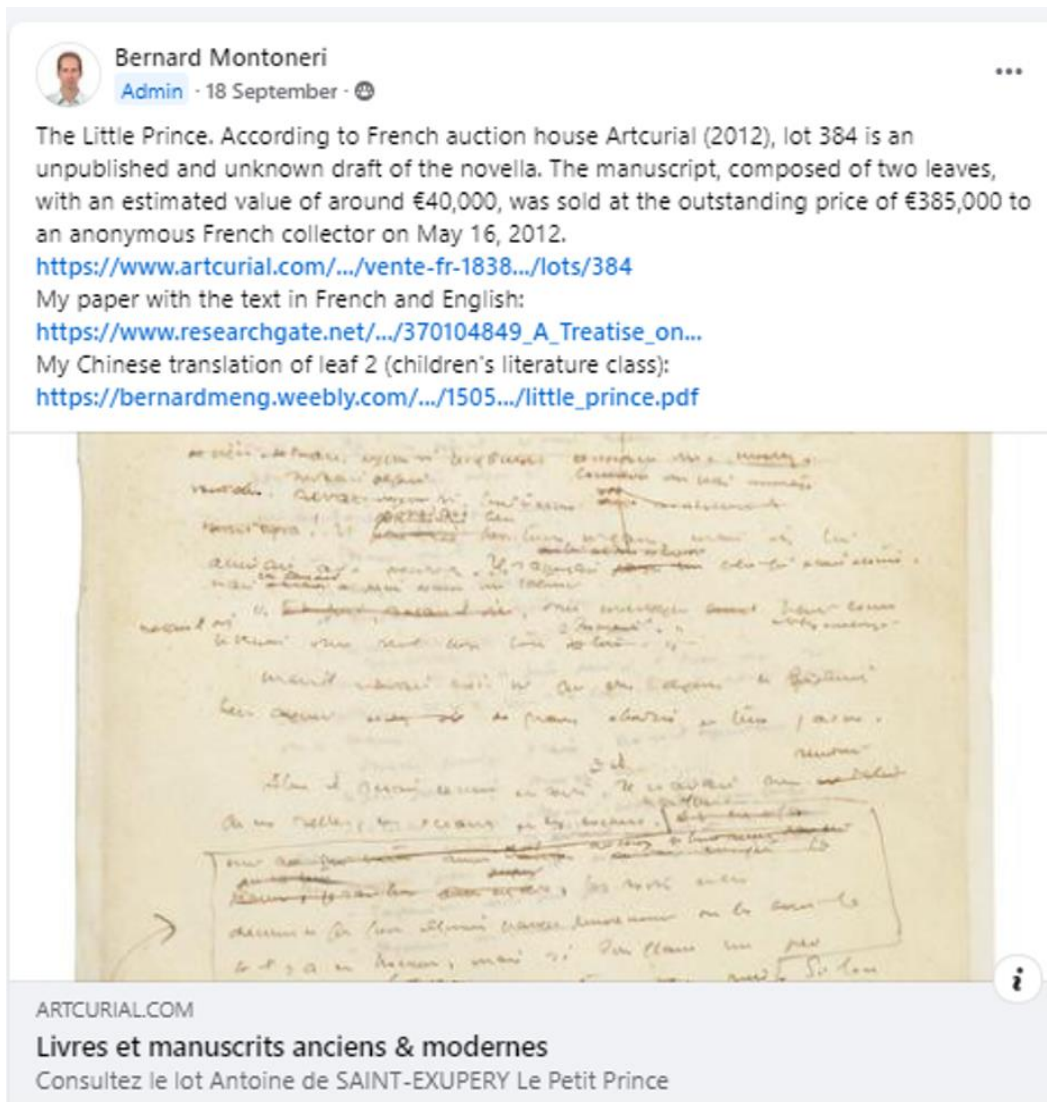
Picture 1: Facebook Creative Teaching Group. 94 Members

The cover picture is a drawing made by Ms. Jessie Chen, the teacher’s former student, on *The Little Prince* (a boa swallowed an elephant and has the shape of a hat; reference to chapter 1 of the novella). The drawing was uploaded on September 3.



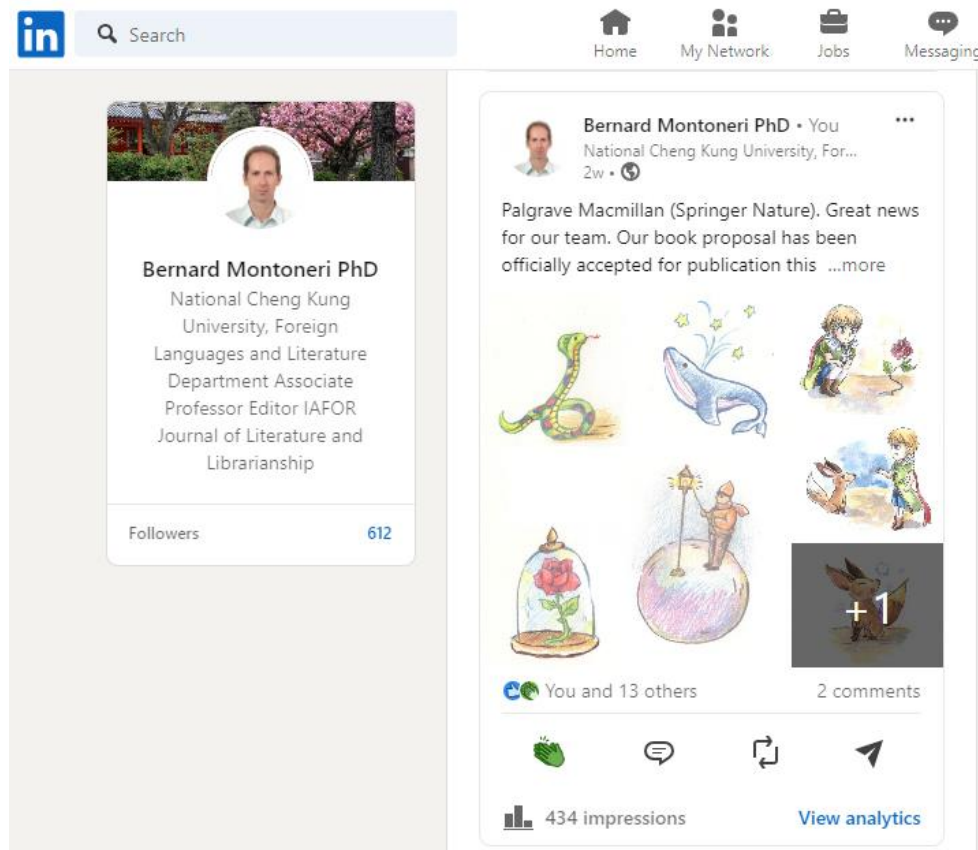
Picture 2: FB Group. Post on “100 Stories That Shaped the World”

So far, this post (picture 2) is the most successful in terms of interaction, with 13 comments (September 21; 47 views, 8 likes). Some students shared their preferences in literature. One student wrote that their favorite book is *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo.



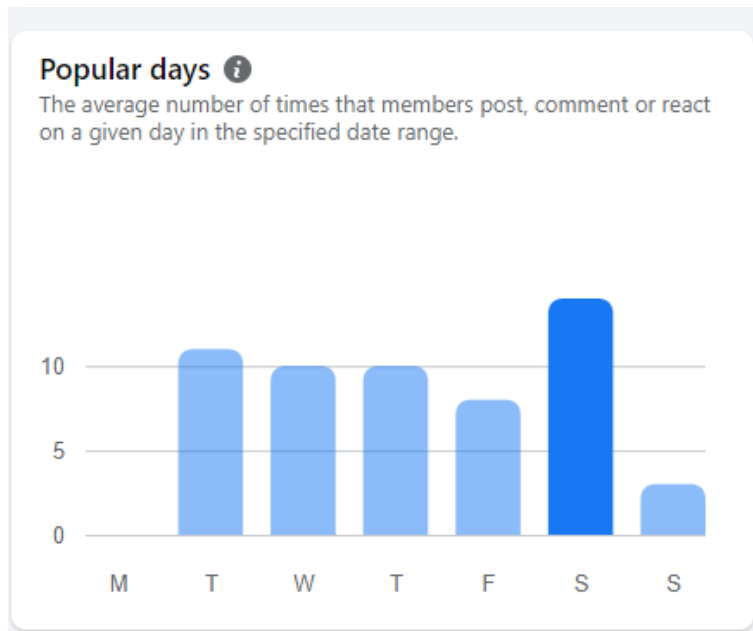
Picture 3: Post in the Facebook Group on September 18, 2024

Picture 3 is a post by the instructor at the beginning of the semester. It was viewed by 36 members of the group. It shares links to two leaves of *The Little Prince* discovered and sold in 2012 to an anonymous French collector. The post also shares the teacher's journal paper (Montoneri, 2023), which analyzes the two leaves. The second leaf is entirely new: it is a dialogue between the little prince and a man who is looking for a six-letter word beginning with a G that means gargling (very probably "guerre", war in English, showing the author's antiwar stance, despite his willingness to fight).



Picture 4: Post on LinkedIn October 16, 2024

The teacher also used LinkedIn to share information and posts about his research and *The Little Prince*: Picture 4 shows that this post was viewed by 434 and liked by 14; two comments. This is much more than in the Facebook group. However, the teacher has 612 followers on LinkedIn versus 94 members in the Facebook group. LinkedIn followers are more likely interested in research and publications: the teacher shared that he signed a contract with Springer Nature to edit a book in 2025 titled “Writing, Retelling, and Critically Reading Children’s and Young Adult Tales”. The teacher will write one of the chapters that will focus on the Morgan Library (New York) manuscript of *The Little Prince*. The teacher’s former student in his French class made the drawings above (uploaded on Facebook and LinkedIn with her permission).



Graphic 3: Facebook Group, the Most Popular Day for Posts, Shares, and Likes

According to the above graphic, it seems wise for the teacher to post more on Saturday. There is more interaction on that day (“The average number of times that members post, comment or react on a given day in the specified date range” for Saturday is 14), but there is almost no interaction on Sunday (three) and Monday (zero).

Conclusion and limitations

There are several differences between this research and Montoneri (2015): first, the size of the sample is bigger than in the previous study conducted almost 10 years ago (93 instead of 14); nevertheless, it is still difficult to generalize the preliminary findings presented in this short article.

Second, many of the posts are original teaching materials created by the teacher, one former student, and a colleague. The instructor also shares his research and publications on *The Little Prince*, notably two studies on original manuscripts of the novella (Montoneri, 2023; Montoneri, 2024). Third, this research not only analyzes interaction in the Facebook private group (“Creative Teaching”), but also compares feedback concerning the instructor’s teaching materials posted on his public group (“Sci-Fi and Fantasy”), and on the university E-learning platform Moodle (same students). A comparison with identical posts uploaded on LinkedIn is also presented to evaluate the feedback of the instructor’s LinkedIn followers who are mostly teachers and scholars. They appear to be more interested in posts sharing the instructor’s research and publications.

So far, the number of students’ comments is relatively small. It is a challenge to motivate them to participate more and to express their ideas and opinions online. Surprisingly, Monday is not a good day to make posts, probably because most students in the classes don’t have courses on that day and often take transportation to go back to university (long weekend). There is more interaction and feedback on Saturday and Tuesday. Most of the data is yet to come: a webpage is under construction regrouping all the teaching materials, all the publications, and all the creative documents made by the instructor concerning *The Little Prince*. Information about his page will be posted on social media. Moreover, one week after

the submission of this paper, students will pass the mid-term exams. They will also have to submit an essay and pass the finals. Later, they will be invited to answer a questionnaire and at the end of each semester, the instructor will receive his teaching evaluation. All this data will be analyzed during the summer of 2025.

Acknowledgments

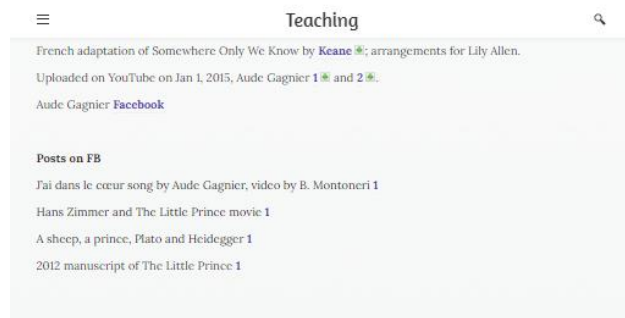
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Appendix

Update before submission, November 12, 2024

As of November 11, there are 96 members in the Facebook group, the teacher included. The instructor created a webpage on November 11 at the following address:
<https://bernardmeng.weebly.com/little-prince.html>

The webpage shares information about *The Little Prince*, including the instructor's teaching materials, publications, around 40 drawings, songs, PPTs, and links. A post was uploaded on LinkedIn the same day to share the news. The same post was shared on Tuesday in the Facebook group because, as we saw in graphic 3, there is a higher chance to reach the members of the group on that day (even though this is mid-term week). The webpage contains the teacher's publications on *The Little Prince*, notably Montoneri (2024), and shares the link to The Morgan Library & Museum manuscript. On November 12, the same post was also shared in the "Sci-Fi and Fantasy" group. It is too early to know the impact of this webpage. As usual many people read posts, but very few like them.



Picture 5: Part of Teacher's Webpage on the Little Prince. November 12, 2024

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