



APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH LITERARY TEXTS

GCE O/L

NEW SYLLBUS

(To be implemented from 2015)

Department of English

National Institute of Education

Maharagama

Sri Lanka

www.nie.lk

APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH LITERARY TEXTS

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(from 2015 onwards)

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Introduction

This new syllabus for Appreciation of English Literary Texts for the GCE O/L year 10-11 was undertaken with a team of experts in the field of English Literature who were teachers, teacher trainers, syllabus designers, poets and novelists. The syllabus includes a wider range of material taken from diverse ethno-cultural-social backgrounds with the intention of introducing students to an array of metaphors, meanings and experiences. The material also transcends time by actively blending past and present in its selection of material. In short, the syllabus attempts to disseminate a rich experience of the diversity of life through carefully selected material.

National Goals

- (i) Nation building and the establishment of a Sri Lankan identity through the promotion of national cohesion, national integrity, national unity, harmony, and peace, and recognizing cultural diversity in Sri Lanka's plural society within a concept of respect for human dignity.**
- (ii) Recognizing and conserving the best elements of the nation's heritage while responding to the challenges of a changing world.**
- (iii) Creating and supporting an environment imbued with the norms of social justice and a democratic way of life that promotes respect for human rights, awareness of duties and obligations, and a deep and abiding concern for one another.**
- (iv) Promoting the mental and physical well-being of individuals and a sustainable life style based on respect for human values.**
- (v) Developing creativity, initiative, critical thinking, responsibility, accountability and other positive elements of a well-integrated and balanced personality.**
- (vi) Human resource development by educating for productive work that enhances the quality of life of the individual and the nation and contributes to the economic development of Sri Lanka.**
- (vii) Preparing individuals to adapt to and manage change, and to develop capacity to cope with complex and unforeseen situations in a rapidly changing world.**
- (viii) Fostering attitudes and skills that will contribute to securing an honorable place in the international community, based on justice, equality and mutual respect.**

Basic Competencies

The following Basic Competencies developed through education will contribute to achieve the above National Goals.

(i) Competencies in Communication

Competencies in communication are based on four subsets: Literacy, Numeracy, Graphics and IT proficiency.

Literacy:	Listen attentively, speak clearly, read for meaning, write accurately and lucidly and communicate ideas effectively.
Numeracy:	Use numbers for things, space and time, count, calculate and measure systematically.
Graphics:	Make sense of line and form, express and record details, instructions and ideas with line form and colour.
IT proficiency	Computer literacy and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in learning, in the work environment and in personal life

(ii) Competencies relating to personality Development

- Generic skills such as creativity, divergent thinking, initiative, decision making, problem solving, critical and analytical thinking, team work, inter – personal relations, discovering and exploring ;
- Values such as integrity, tolerance and respect for human dignity;
- Emotional intelligence.

(iii) Competencies relating to the Environment

These competencies relate to the environment: social, biological and physical.

Social Environment - Awareness of the national heritage, sensitivity and skills linked to being members of a plural society, concern for distributive justice, social relationships, personal conduct, general and legal conventions, rights, responsibilities, duties and obligations.

Biological Environment - Awareness, sensitivity and skills linked to the living world, people and the ecosystem, the trees, forests, seas, water, air and life – plant, animal and human life.

Physical Environment -

Awareness, sensitivity and skills linked to space, energy, fuels, matter, materials and their links with human living, food, clothing, shelter, health, comfort, respiration, sleep, relaxation, rest, wastes and excretion.

Included here are skills in using tools and technologies for learning, working and living.

(iv) Competencies relating to preparation for the World of Work.

Employment related skills to maximize their potential and to enhance their capacity.

- To contribute to economic development.
- To discover their vocational interests and aptitudes,
- To choose a job that suits their abilities, and
- To engage in a rewarding and sustainable livelihood.

(v) Competencies relating to Religion and Ethics

Assimilating and internalizing values, so that individuals may function in a manner consistent with the ethical, moral and religious modes of conduct in everyday living, selecting that which is most appropriate.

(vi) Competencies in Play and the Use of Leisure

Pleasure, Joy, emotions and such human experiences as expressed through aesthetics, literature, play, sports and athletics, leisure pursuits and other creative modes of living.

(vii) Competencies relating to ‘ learning to learn’

Empowering individuals to learn independently and to be sensitive and successful in responding to and managing change through a transformative process, in a rapidly changing, complex and interdependent world

General Objectives of the syllabus

Aims

- Gains new knowledge and experience
- Develops critical reading and organized writing skills
- Develop skills to express, communicate, defend and share opinions
- Stimulate imagination and cultivate insight into human affairs
- Develop an awareness about creative writing and learn the basics of creative writing
- Objectives

Grade 10

- Be aware of the theme and various aspects of it globally and discretely.
- Be sensitive to other human beings.
- Be familiar with the various genres of literature.
- Appreciate language.
- Learn to recite and dramatize poems with the help of CDs.
- Learn to understand a meaning from the context; infer meaning.
- Summarize meaning in one's own words.
- Respond to texts with feelings of empathy and detachment.

Grade 11

- Develop and enhance humanity and human experience
- Think critically
- Learn to respect other cultures
- Distinguish of different styles/ genres of writing
- Encourage further study of literature
- Write critical essays.
- Literature because of its ability to freeze on a text ethno-social-cultural-economic and gendered experiences of human beings is able to match the given list of objectives in a teaching-learning situation. Literature transcends competencies in its textual resistance and representation of human experience. As a result, any teacher who sensitively grasp and disseminate the human experience in a poem and a prose would automatically be addressing the specified objectives. Therefore, we have deliberately avoided restricting the syllabus material into a series of competencies.

Significant changes

Themes

- The thematic approach for literature design is accepted after the experience of the previous syllabuses. However, we have expanded the scope of the themes in the present syllabus. The ‘war and violence’ as theme had been expanded to ‘conflict’ which gave us a wider range of experiences to explore. ‘Society’ poems have been diversified to include themes other than mortality – the new selection explores issues like freedom, commercialization of the mind and ethnic tensions. The ‘humor’ poems drive the reader back into their own life, keeping in mind the Freudian theories of laughter.

Time

- The material covers a large span of time from classical to the modern. The syllabus deliberately attempted to be inclusive with regard to the canon as well as the works of writers who are not in the canon. Thus in the same space we have included Keats, Dickinson, Tennyson, Dickens as well as Abeysekera, Gooneratne, Symborska and Narayan.

Span

- The syllabus has representative samples from a wide span of socio-cultural-ethnic experiences in its selection of material. There are works from Czechoslovakia, India, Sri Lanka, Japan, Africa, Britain and France.

Religion

- The syllabus has deliberately left out material that had a religious flavor. Religion could be found in the backdrops of some works, but those backdrops hardly has a bearing on the main themes of the work concerned

Asian Experience

- The syllabus also includes a generous sample of works from local contexts. Sanghakkara’s speech addresses the issues of war, cricket, violence and ethnic harmony; Deraniyagala’s Tsunami memoir depicts life-threatening experiences; Abeyseker’s novel brings to the foreground the love between a boy and a dog; and Kinoshita’s play demonstrates the conflict between human emotions and money.

Proposed Breakdown of the Syllabus

Grade	Term	Scheme of Work	Periods
10	1	<p><u>Poetry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Eagle • To the Evening Star • Farewell to Barn Stack and Tree <p><u>Prose</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lumber Room • The Lahore Attack 	35
	2	<p><u>Poetry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big Match- 1983 • The Terrorist ,He’s Watching • The Clown’s Wife • The Huntsman <p><u>Prose</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nightingale and the Rose <p><u>Novel</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One out of three to be selected. 	35
	3	<p><u>Poetry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the Nile • A Bird came Down the Walk • Breakfast • Once Upon a Time <p><u>Prose</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extract from Wave <p><u>Drama</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bear <p><u>Novel</u></p>	35
11	1	<p><u>Poetry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know Why the Caged Bird Sing • War is Kind • Richard Cory • The Camel’s Hump <p><u>Drama</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Twilight of a Crane 	35
	2	<p><u>Poetry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earthen Goblet • Father and Son • Upside Down <p><u>Drama</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Twilight of a Crane <p><u>Novel</u></p>	35
	3	<p><u>Poetry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear • Two’s company <p><u>Novel</u></p>	

4.0 Teaching Methodology

There are no established or accepted approaches to the teaching of literature. In language teaching of course one can list a dozen or so approaches or methods starting with grammar translation, extending to suggestopaedia and Total Physical Response. Teaching literature can also be viewed as a process - a process of developing skills of reading to gain critical insight. A literary text is a multi-layered artifact and hence needs complex skills of understanding. Inference, interpretation and evaluation are the highest levels of this reading process. These heights cannot be reached without the fundamental skills of comprehension for which the basic skills of reading for gist, guessing meaning from context and understanding co textual reference are crucial. Any practical approach to teaching literature must enhance fast reading skills. Reading 'fluency' as Brumfit and Carter (1990) call it, 'the basic minimum'

A certain amount of writing is available about the skills required for a serious study of literature [Spiro 1990] which are presented as (a) global (b) discrete (c) specific skills. The development of these skills can be visualized as the route of literary education. But one cannot think of it as a linear or streamlined one. What educationist must not do is to tie up the teaching of literature to any particular approach or method. The creativity of the learner must not be hindered in any way. This goes for the teacher as well. But it seems to be a useful exercise to consider the following competencies /skills based approach put forward by Spiro (1990).

- a) Understanding plain sense. (comprehension)
- b) Understanding the context
- c) Learning to empathize (express feeling)
- d) Learning to appreciate
- e) Learning to be creative

One can see how they parallel the comprehension, inference, interpretations and evaluation paradigm.

Whichever way one considers them, they have to be developed over time. It may not be possible to reach 'depth' at G.C.E. (O/L) which is the initial or beginning stage for the study of a second literature .but the route must be tread by any serious teacher or learner . To summarize them the methodology would comprise the development of

- a) Fast reading skills
- b) Skills of inference or reading between the lines
- c) Learning to respond to the text
- d) Learning to look at text creatively / critically.

5. Performance Evaluation

Appreciation of English literary texts is tested as a component of the G.C.E. (O/L) examination formatively as well as summatively at the end of a two year course of study. At school level it is assessed formally at term tests. It is also assessed informally in the classroom using a variety of techniques both oral and written. Conventionally literature is tested by written examinations. The test items most frequently used are the context question and the critical essay. The context question is more effective since it directly tests the candidate's familiarity with the texts. The critical essay tests the variety of skills listed in 4.0 above. The two types of items require assessment tools which are presented as criteria detailed out in band descriptors. (G.C.E. (O/L) Marking Scheme)

At term tests candidates are tested formally using the criteria detailed out at the national examination. The school based assessment takes a more informal nature. A variety of assessment tasks can be used. They are:

- dramatizations
- recitations
- group presentations
- debates
- creative writing sessions
- posters/ drawings
- simulations
- role plays
- questions of different types

Assessment tools for each of these activities may have to be developed. In using such tools the skills/competencies listed in 4.0 must be considered.

6. Supportive Materials

There would be two types of supportive materials

1. Print
2. Electronic

1. Print

- A teacher's guide with comprehensive guidelines to teach the prescribed texts in the syllabus
- Additional reading materials for the teacher's use

2. Electronic

- A CD for the poems
- A CD /DVD for the two dramas

Learning Outcomes

- Distinguish different literary genres.
- Learners are able to read literary texts with sensitivity and understanding
- Enjoy reading literary texts
- Develop critical reading and thinking skills
- Respond to literary texts sensitively and extend the experience to their own lives
- Respond to events in life with understanding, sympathy, and empathy
- Write organized texts using language competencies acquired
- Distinguish between books considered literary texts and others

8. Recommended Extra Events to Develop English Literature Skills

- English day activities
- English literature camps
- Poetry reciting competitions-(Intra/Inter school)
- Drama competitions-(Intra/Inter school)
- English Speaking clubs
- Literary Associations
- Assemblies conducted in English
- Debates on social issues -(Intra/ Inter school/house)
- Class libraries/school libraries/
- Creative writing- writing stories
- Book clubs, book readings

9. Syllabus Contents

Poetry

a. Nature

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. To the Nile | - John Keats |
| 2. A Bird Came Down the Walk | - Emily Dickinson |
| 3. The Eagle | - Alfred Lord Tennyson |
| 4. To the Evening Star | - William Blake |

b. Conflict

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. War is Kind | - Stephen Crane |
| 2. The Terrorist, He's Watching | - Wislawa Syzmborska |
| 3. Farewell to Barn and Stack and Tree | - A.E. Housman |
| 4. Breakfast | - Jacques Prevert(<i>translated by- Reggie Siriwardena</i>) |

c. Society

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Once upon a Time | - Gabriel Okara |
| 2. I know Why the Caged Bird Sing | - Maya Angelou |
| 3. Richard Cory | - Edwin Arlington Robinson |
| 4. Big Match 1983 | - Yasmin Goonerathne |

d. Life

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. The Earthen Goblet | - Harindranath Chattopadhyaya |
| 2. Father and Son | - Cat Stevens |
| 3. Fear | - Gabriela Mistral |
| 4. Clown's Wife | - John Agard |

e. Humour

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. The Camel's Hump | - Rudyard Kipling |
| 2. Upside Down | - Alexander Kushner |
| 3. The Huntsman | - Edward Lowbury |
| 4. Two's Company | - Raymond Wilson |

f. Prose

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The Nightingale and the Rose | - Oscar Wilde |
| 2. The Lahore Attack | - Kumar Sangakkara |
| 3. Lumber Room | - Saki |
| 4. An extract from "Wave" | - Sonali Deraniyagala |

e. Drama

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Twilight of a Crane | - Yu Zuwa Junji Kinoshita |
| 2. The Bear | - Anton Chekov |

f. Novels

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. The Prince and the Pauper | - Mark Twain |
| 2. Bringing Tony Home | - Tissa Abeysekera |
| 3. Vendor of Sweets | - R.K Narayan |

Curriculum Grid – Grades 10 & 11

Grade	Objective	Contents (texts)	Learning Outcomes
Grade 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sensitive to other human beings. • Be familiar with the various genres of literature. • Appreciate language. • Learn to recite/ dramatize poem with the help of CDs. • Learn to understand meaning from context (infer) meaning. • Summarize text in one's own words. • Respond to text with appropriate feelings. • Writes own notes on texts read. 	<p>Poetry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Eagle. • To the Evening Star. • Farewell to Barn and Stack and Tree. • Big match 1983. • The Terrorist: He's watching. • The Clown's Wife. • The Huntsman. • To the Nile. • A Bird Came Down the Walk. • Breakfast. • Once upon a time. <p>Prose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lumber Room. • The Lahore Attack. • The Nightingale and the Rose. • Extract from Wave. <p>Drama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bear <p>Novel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected Novel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read literary texts with sensitivity and understanding. • Distinguish one type of literary text from another. • Enjoy reading literary texts. • Develop critical reading skills. • Develop critical thinking skills. • Respond to literary texts sensitively. • Empathize with literary texts. • Writes creatively.
Grade 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be familiar with the various genres of literature. • Appreciates language. • Be aware of the different themes, issues raised therein and their relationships to the wider human context. • Respond to texts and enhance their own humanity and human experiences. • Learn to respect other cultures. • Think critically. • Distinguish different styles of writing. • Write critical essays. 	<p>Poetry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know Why the Caged Bird Sing. • War is Kind. • Richard Cory. • The Camel's Hump. • Earthen Goblet. • Father and Son. • Upside Down. • Fear. • Two's company. <p>Drama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twilight of a Crane. <p>Novel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected novel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads literary texts with sensitivity and understanding. • Understands the distinguishing feature of poetry, drama and fiction. • Reads critically, think critically. • Respond to literary texts sensitively and extend the experience gained therein to their own lives. • Respond to events in life with understanding, sympathy and empathy. • Distinguish between literary texts and others. • Write critical essays.



Appreciation of English Literary Texts

Teachers' Resource Book



G.C.E. (Ordinary Level)
(To be implemented from 2015)

**Department of English
National Institute of Education
Sri Lanka**

Web: www.nie.lk
Email: info@nie.lk



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Message from the Director General

The first phase of the new competency based curriculum, with an 8 year curriculum cycle was introduced to secondary education in Sri Lanka in 2007 replacing the existing content based education system with the basic objective of developing the national level competencies recommended by the National Education Commission.

The second phase of the curriculum cycle to be introduced to grades 1, 6, and 10 will start from 2015. For this purpose, The National Institute of Education has introduced a rationalization process and developed rationalized syllabi for these grades using research based outcomes and various suggestions made by different stakeholders.

In the rationalization process, vertical integration has been used to systematically develop the competency levels in all subjects from fundamentals to advanced levels using the bottom up approach. Horizontal integration is used to minimize the overlapping in the subject content and to reduce the content over loading in the subjects to produce more students friendly and implementable curricular.

A new format has been introduced to the teachers' resource books with the aim of providing the teachers with the required guidance in the areas of lesson planning, teaching, carrying out activities in measurement and evaluation. These guidelines will help the teachers to be more productive and effective in the classroom.

The new teachers' resource books and guides provide freedom to the teachers in selecting quality inputs and additional activities to develop the competencies of the students. The new teachers' guides are not loaded with subject content that is covered in the recommended textbooks. Therefore, it is essential for the teacher to use the new teachers' guides simultaneously with the relevant textbooks prepared by Education Publication Department as reference guides to be more aware of the syllabi.

The basic objectives of the rationalized syllabi and the new format of teachers' resource books, guides, and newly developed textbooks are to bring a shift from the teacher centered education system into a student centered and more activity based education system in order to develop the competencies and skills of the school leavers and to enable the system to produce suitable human resource to the world of work.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of The Academic Affairs Board and The Council of National Institute of Education and all the resource persons who have immensely contributed in developing the new teacher's guides.

Director General
National Institute of Education

Message from the Ven. Deputy Director General

Learning expands into a wider scope. It makes life enormous and extremely simple. The human being is naturally excellent in the skill of learning. A country when human development is considered the main focus uses learning as a tool to do away with malpractices identified with intellect and to create a better world through good practices.

It is essential to create valuable things for learning and learning methods and facilities within the sphere of education. That is how the curriculum, syllabi, teachers' resource books, and guides facilitators join the learning system.

Modern Sri Lanka has possessed a self-directed education system which is blend of global trends as well as ancient heritage.

It is necessary to maintain the consistency of the objectives of the subject at the national level. However, facilitators are free to modify or adapt learning teaching strategies creatively to achieve the learning outcomes, competency level via the subject content prescribed in the syllabus. Therefore, this Teachers' Resource Book has been prepared to promote the teachers' role and to support the students as well as the parents.

Furthermore, at the end of a lesson, the facilitators of the learning- teaching process along with the students should come to a verification of the achievement level on par with the ones expected at the examination by a national level examiner, who evaluates the achievement levels of subjects expected. I sincerely wish to create such a self-progressive, motivational culture in the learning-teaching process. Blended with that verification, this Teachers' Resource Book would definitely be a canoe or a raft in the endeavor.

Deputy Director General

Faculty of Languages, Humanities and Social Sciences

Instructions to use the Teacher's Resource Book

Under the educational policies of the government to revitalize and enrich the education system, syllabus revisions was undertaken by The National Institute of Education. At present revision has been completed for the subject entitled, Appreciation of English Literary Texts and this Resource Book is a companion guide to the syllabus content of the anthology designed for Grade 10 and 11.

Teaching literature involves developing competencies of language and literature; and it is both a cognitive as well as a linguistic process. The Resource Book has used this conceptual framework in its design. It does not advocate a rigid method or stratagem, rather, a free flowing approach, beginning with comprehension, activating appreciation and empathy and, ending with critical insight. A literary education should activate skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation and this is outlined in each genre and in each unit. Methods of assessment must be planned by the teacher or groups of teachers to match the objectives envisaged in the syllabus. The objectives relate to competencies which are mostly global.

No rigid method is advocated as literature teaching is a creative process. As was mentioned earlier, a framework is offered but it is left to the creativity of the teacher to use it in the best interest of the learners.

Project Leader

Resource Contribution

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Introduction

1.0 Aims of Teaching Literature

From time to time, educationists and policy makers in education have expressed the aims of teaching literature in schools. The most frequently voiced is that literature promotes the reading habit. Literary texts by their very nature engage the reader both in terms of content and language. Responding to literature is personal and gives pleasure to the reader.

For a large number of students, studying English literature at the GC.E. (O/L) maybe their first formal encounter with "literature". While gaining pleasure through reading, they will have tremendous opportunities for improving their own language as well. Access to a wide repertoire of words and varied nuances of meaning is one such opportunity. Since literary texts are "authentic" in their use of language, they will facilitate the unconscious acquisition of many structures and patterns of language.

There are, of course, more profound aims expressed, such as multi-cultural understanding and the inculcation of humanistic values - the idea that literature cuts across national and cultural boundaries and territories and speaks a common language of humanity which makes readers empathize with the diversity of the world and its varied life styles as well as with the multiplicity of life forms that exist on it. For Sri Lankan schools, the reading goals and linguistic aims are of primary importance. But no educationist can overlook the cultural and humanistic goals. A sensitive, well - informed and caring citizenry is a nation's pre-eminent and fundamental goal.

2.0 Rationale of the New Anthology

The new anthology has adopted current approaches in the selection of texts - it is theme based. In this approach, other criteria have also been considered such as the simplicity of language and student interest. The learners the anthology has targeted are between 15 and 16 years of age, and from the experience of teaching adolescents, it has been found that there are many issues that concern them-the awakening of love in its manifold forms, the interest in nature, the traumatic and unresolved violence and conflict in our society. In education, learner interest as well as national interest too should be considered. Hence the themes of society and the capacity to laugh at the ridiculous too, it is expected, will make readers appreciate the good and wholesome.

While being unified under a variety of themes, the texts show a range of human experience. A particular theme is looked at from different perspectives. The poetry in particular reveals a variety of forms and a range of techniques.

The dramas, both serious and comic in outlook, have their moments of intensity and reveal many facets of human life. They are refreshingly different from the dramas previously prescribed for GC.E. (O/L). A radical difference has been made in the approach to the novel. It demonstrates the syllabus designer's approach to the study of literature - as a stepping-stone to wider and better reading. One of the three prescribed novels will be studied and also used in School Based Assessment. It will be tested at the examination as well. Teacher can select the most suitable one for his/her students. If he/she prefers, the teacher can encourage them to read the other two novels as well. This will make studying literature an enjoyable experience. It is a painful reality that English literature is mostly studied for examination purposes and given an unfair prestige. It is expected that a more rational attitude will arise from the new approach.

3.0 Teaching Literature

The question is posed whether literature can be taught. Reading literary texts involves some sort of engagement by the reader beyond simply being able to understand the utterances in the text. How is this engagement to be fostered? It is clear that one cannot be taught to like a book. The development of a sensitive and committed appreciation of literature cannot be explicitly taught but it is possible to create the conditions for responding to a varied range of works of literature and some of the infinite number of appropriate responses. Reading is a process of meaning creation, which results from integrating the reader's needs, understanding and expectations with a written text. Since those vary from reader to reader, the responses too, will vary. Response is affected by unfamiliarity with the conventions used in literature, the difficulty of the level of language of the text and the inaccessibility of the cultural references. Teaching means clearing away those difficulties.

Recent experiments with assessing literature (Brumfit 1991) have brought the concept of literary competence to the forefront. This has made literature teaching parallel to language teaching and provides the teacher with a pragmatic and practical approach. The literature student embarks on a route of competence, which comprises reading skills, language skills and literary skills. The composite development of these skills will evoke appropriate responses. Literary skills are further looked at from the point of discrete and global skills, which are similar to the sub-skills of language teaching. These concepts fine-tune the teaching process. While conventional approaches and conventional teachers may frown upon these developments, they provide teachers and students in TEFL situations with practical modes of achieving literary competence.

Four major skills of literary competence have been listed by Spiro (1991), These are:

1. Comprehension (understanding plain sense)
2. Contextual meaning
3. Empathizing
4. Appreciating

The first level or stage of reading is similar to information seeking in a language text. Every text - literary and non – literary, conveys a certain amount of information. It is a situation where some communication is taking place. At its most fundamental level there is a speaker and a person spoken to. And there is a communication (message). The first level makes a reader aware of this content. The second level is the meaning created within that context. The context has a setting - i.e. geographical, historical, perhaps political - and a cultural setting which manifests itself in the language used for communication. Understanding the contextual meanings will clear the obstacles of reading the text. The third level is empathizing -responding personally to the text. Empathy is emotional and meta- cognitive. Both reference and inference are involved in empathy. The fourth level, which involves judgment and evaluation, is appreciation. It is a joyous reaction but also an intellectual (cognitive) reaction. Responding to literature has to be a process of reasoning. Without reasoning it will become a sentimental capitulation. The training in reading has to be a carefully developed thinking and feeling process.

4.0 Learning outcomes

The national goal of making an informed reader means a critical thinker as well. The learner must be able to appreciate any "well written" book and recognize a "good book" when he sees one. It is a training for life. But the whole enterprise of studying literature has been coloured by non- educational, even non-humanistic objectives. For most students and more for their parents, English literature has become a symbol of prestige, culminating in a fantasy of a distinction pass at the GC.E. (O/L) examination. The issue of certification and learning is a critical one.

TEACHING THE POEMS

1.0 Introduction

To teach the poems or to be more precise- to create an environment for enjoying the poems in the anthology - one must have a clear understanding of the following.

- a) What is a poem?
- b) What are the various aspects of a poem?
- c) How do the various aspects come together to create meaning?
- d) How does one respond to a poem?

2.0 What is a Poem?

Read the following dictionary definition:

“A verbal composition designed to convey experiences, ideas or emotions in a vivid and imaginative way, characterized by the use of language chosen for its sound and suggestive power and by the use of literary techniques such as meter, metaphor and rhyme.”

Now read the two definitions below

- "Poetic language cannot be understood in the same way that ordinary language is understood" (Briggs and Monaco 1990, p.xi)
- "A good poem is like a lens through which you can look at the universe, but the vision is yours" (Briggs and Monaco 1990, p.xiii)

Certain key ideas emerge:

- (a) that poetry must be distinguished from prose- i.e. it has its own form.
- (b) the distinction is in the language used in a poem- i.e. the intensity or beauty of language.
- (c) A poem conveys experiences, ideas and emotions in a vivid manner.

A poem, then, is compressed, succinct and vivid. It has form (outward appearance) as well as meaning (concept or idea). Alexander Pope says this very precisely in the following lines:

‘True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learnt to dance,
'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,
The sound must seem an echo to the sense:’

(An Essay on criticism)

3.0 Nature of Poetry

Poets have been no less ordinary men for being extraordinary creators. The creator, the artist, is in a sense, the ordinary man intensified: a person whose life is sometimes lifted to a high pitch of feeling and who has the gift of making others share his excitement. The so-called ordinary man, also, lives by the creative spirit. He thinks in images and dreams in fantasy; he lives by poetry. Why does he, then, view poets and poetry with fear and suspicion?

History is the record of men and women who were not only poets but workers, men of vision as well as action, dreamers and doers. William Blake designed, printed, and sold his own books. Robert Frost worked as a farmer and a teacher in country schools.

Poets have written on every subject ranging from the trivial to the sublime-but their central subject is humanity. Poetry is the expression of living people. Poems are people- they work, walk and talk. Poetry is human experience expressed in language which may not always obey the rules of grammar. If you are a human being who is really alive, you will be able to respond to the poet’s experience.

4.0 Power of Poetry

A poem delights us in many ways and for many reasons. It may arrest us by its startling freshness; it may win our affections by comforting; it may amuse us by its banter or humour; it may hold us by telling a story or persuading us about something too rude or too wild to be true. It is the combination of the strange and the familiar that is the chief power of poetry: the power of surprise. A poem says so much in so little.

A living poem is one that stays alive because it is rooted in mortal things as well as deathless emotions. It is felt first and thought out afterwards. It begins with an experience which then reaches out towards expression; an effort to find fulfillment. A good poem is one where an emotion has found its thought, and the thought has found its words. In the poet’s world, vision is added to observation, and the power of sight is strengthened by insight. Such poetry is ageless- and universal.

5.0 Teaching Poetry

Poetry, by its very nature, cannot be “taught” in the conventional sense. The teacher of literature is a stimulator rather than a teacher. His role is not to instruct but to excite the creative imagination of children and sensitize them to feel and to feel for others. He should be a powerful influence without trying to persuade anyone.

“I had a lover’s quarrel with the world” wrote Robert Frost. This accurately summarizes the poet’s spirit. It is a contemplation of the world which is free to question even to criticize, but always with love and understanding.

NOTE TO THE TEACHER

1. There is no exact method to teach a poem. The following procedures are suggested.
 - i. Setting the scene- creating the atmosphere / mood
 - ii. Understanding and interpreting
 - iii. Appreciation – encouraging personal responses
 - iv. Critical evaluation: drawing attention to universality and relevance

2. Discussion or class participation should be encouraged at every stage of the lesson. Let students share their experiences and exchange points of view. The teacher is advised to join in as a participant rather than as an instructor. Naturally, the teacher would be able to heighten and deepen their emotions and experiences and, thereby, to give them a deeper insight into the poem under consideration.

3. Please note that the methodology and tasks are both suggested. The teacher is not bound to stick to either the methodology or the tasks. He/She can adapt both to suit the level of his/her students. The interpretation of poems given in this guide, too, can be accepted, rejected or modified.

4. Newspaper cuttings, pictures and captions, advertisements etc. could be used with admirable effect to interpret them etc., create atmosphere, show relevance and universality of ideas, feelings, experiences etc.
5. Peer discussion in pairs and groups and reporting to the class are invaluable in promoting individual or personal responses.
6. Students should not in any way be inhibited by their lack of fluency in English. There should be a free and comfortable atmosphere in the classroom.
7. Teachers are advised not to try to teach grammar etc. through poetry. Language will unconsciously improve when language is used for real communication as in a literature lesson i.e. through exchanging ideas, feelings, opinions and points of view or brainstorming. Also their vocabulary will be enriched by the study of poetry. Students should be encouraged to use a dictionary. Using a dictionary is a skill which complements the skill of guessing the meaning in context.
8. Exploit the experiences and interests of students, e.g.: TV, in getting the poet's message across or planning activities. e.g.: write in teledrama form/ flashback/ dream sequences (Group work).
9. Encourage students to memorize significant lines from poems. These could be used to illustrate their answers and make their meaning clearer.
10. Illustrating poems with pictures/ drawings/ sketches are useful exercises to express students' interpretations and appreciation.

POETRY

NATURE

To the Nile

John Keat

1.0 Setting the scene

It may be useful to give a brief introduction to John Keats. A picture of him can be shown to the students. Keats' sensitivity to beautiful objects, birds, humans could be remarked on.

Since the topic of the poem is 'To the Nile', a discussion about the river would be meaningful- where it is located, what it was during historical times and how it is now - would provide a stimulus.

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

Try to answer these questions before reading the poem.

- How many lines are there in the poem?
- What are the words that rhyme?
- What is the rhyming pattern?
- Does the rhyme scheme change?
- When and where does it change?
- How can the change be explained in terms of meaning?
- What does it say about the structure of the poem?

Now read the poem.

- After reading do you feel that the poem has two parts?
- What does the first part say about the Nile?
- In this part the poet addresses the Nile. How does he address the Nile?
- Which qualities of the Nile are brought out by this form of address?

It is extremely respectful. The Nile flows from the Deccan plateau-from the Victoria Lake. This is one of the most ancient rift valleys of the Earth. The Nile is looked upon with respect. Keats uses a number of phrases to suggest that the Nile is ancient and regarded as holy:

- Son of moon-mountains Africa
- Chief of Pyramid and crocodile
- Nurse of Swart nation
- Fruitful

Can you define what their meanings are? Write their meanings in simple English.

If you read carefully you will find that there is a difference in contents in part I and part II of the poem. In part I Keats seems to give the ancient vision of the Nile as holy, as powerful and lush, the life giving Nile, the venerated Nile of myth and legend.

Part II seems to dispel this vision. The Nile is seen as any other river-watering and making the land green on its way to the sea.

- Bedew
- Green rushes
- Taste the pleasant sunrise (made the sunrise delightful) /
- green isle

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem

The poet presents two images of the Nile.

a). That of myth and legend – as a holy river which fertilized a desert and built ancient civilizations. In the past people who laboured under the hot sun and had to travel thousands of miles in the desert, deified the Nile. It was venerated and feared.

b). An ordinary river, like any other watering the land and making it lush. From its shores sprang ‘Swart nations’ (men with dark complexions). Perhaps referring to the Egyptians who held sway over the Nile valley for centuries.

But the poet shows a very practical output in the second part. The Nile is like any other river. It waters the land it flows through, makes it green and lush. One gets a beautiful picture of green growth and lush islands in this section. He dispels former illusions paving the way to the reality.

4.0 Reading for developing a critical outlook.

- What perspective of the Nile is given in the poem?

In the first eight lines of the poem (the octave), the poet gives a broad sweep of the Nile—a historical and mythical vision. He deifies it by personification. The Nile is no ordinary river. It is the son of the African moon-mountains (connoting the heavens). Rising from the snow-capped Deccan plateau, it flows across the desert. It has nursed swarthy nations (dark skinned Egyptians and Nubians who were strong military personnel). Apparently the power and the capacity of the Nile had been exaggerated. But in the sestet (the last six lines), the poet shows a very real vision of the Nile as a river watering and making the land lush.

Bedew green rushes

Sunrise (is made) tasteful green isle (have been formed)

It is life giving-the Nile is not a god. It is a river. It is part of nature.

Consider the techniques used by the poet.

- The form of the sonnet. How the flow of ideas is carried through the two parts of the sonnet.
- The poetic devices used. e.g. personification, inversions, metaphors, rhetorical questions and effects created.
- Keats uses archaic language.
 - Son of the old moon- mountains African.
 - That very while
 - Dark fancies err.
 - Green isles

What is the effect created?

5.0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate*

- i. Scrutinize a map of Africa. Trace the headwaters of the river and its downward flow. Which countries does it flow through?
- ii. What are the historical events associated with the Nile?
- iii. Write in simple words
 - a). Meaning of the first eight lines
 - b). meaning of the last six lines.
- iv. What is the ancient / mythical view of the Nile?
- v. How does Keats see the Nile?
- vi. Which aspect of nature do you see in this poem?

A Bird Came Down the Walk

Emily Dickinson

1.0 Setting the scene

It is important to reflect on Emily Dickinson's style of writing poetry- the condensation and the precise description to create a single impression and the mood. To Emily, nature is a living force, its inmates, particularly animals and birds are personalities with their own quirks and eccentricities, but also has dignity and pride. In this poem the bird is seen as having a particular dignity-self-sufficiency. It is self-assured, living its own life and finding its own food- when the poet-persona offers live food, he flies away with dignity and grace. The experience is not confined to place and time. It could happen anywhere and is timeless.

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

Answer the following questions.

- Do you think the poet has a particular intention when she states 'A Bird Came Down the Walk'? What reference does the word 'the walk' have?
- Comment on the 3rd and 4th lines of verse 1 and the 1st and 2nd lines of verse 2. What effect is created? How would you describe the bird's actions? Deliberate? Self-possessed? Arrogant? Why would you say so?
- Why did he let the beetle pass? Would you say that this action suggest selectivity in the bird's action? What quality could you attribute to the bird's character as a result of this action?
- How would you explain the lines;
 He glanced with rapid eyes
 That hurried all around
In spite of his self-assurance was he also being careful about his security?
- How did the bird react to the poet-persona's offer of food?
- How do you explain the rest of the lines?
- What was the flight of the bird like? What images are used to compare his flight?
- What impression of the movement of the bird do you get as a result?

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem

- The poet creates a lovely and affectionate picture of a bird. How does she do this?
- One gets the feeling that the bird is master of itself. What phrases and lines give you this impression?

- What is the relationship hinted at between man and bird here? How would you describe the action of the human? Condescending? Placatory? Charitable?
- The bird apparently took wing after the human's action. Why did it do so? Did the human's overture succeed?
- What lesson if any, can man learn from this experience about dealing with nature?
- The human is left with a singular impression of the bird's beautiful flight. How is this effect created?
- What literary devices are used to describe the bird's flight? What is conveyed by these devices?
 - a). The naturalness of its take off and movement?
 - b). The ease with which it negotiated the air?
 - c). The mastery of balance and destination?

4.0 Reading for developing a critical outlook

- Emily Dickinson uses many capital letters in the poem. Why do you think she does so?
- She also uses expressions and words in a deviant way. (in a way not generally used) E.g.; convenient grass, plashless, in halves- what are their meanings? What effects are created?
- Overall, what impression of nature is created by the poet? Does she also suggest how we should deal with nature?
- Who is in control in this situation? Man or bird? Explain your position.
- How would you respond to the following statement?
 'Nature is self-sufficient – Leave it alone
 Nature is beautiful – Admire it from a distance'

5.0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate*

- Draw a picture of the encounter between the poet-persona and the bird. Bring out the characteristics of the animal (bird) and the human.
- Paraphrase the last verse.
- Write an essay entitled 'Leave nature well alone-It can manage'
- Comment on :
 - a). the beauty of the bird
 - b).its self-sufficiency
 - c) its independence
 - d).man's pettiness.

The Eagle

Alfred Lord Tennyson

1.0 Setting the Scene

A brief introduction of the poet would be important in order to appreciate and probe into the poem.

Alfred Lord Tennyson excelled at penning short lyrics. Some of his famous poems are 'Break, Break, Break' and 'Charge of the Light Brigade'.

The topic of the poem is 'The Eagle' and the teacher should try to ask questions to bring out the qualities associated with the eagle.

e.g:-

- The eagle is a rare kind of bird and cannot be sighted easily. Where can you find an eagle?
- The eagle is used as a symbol in some organizations and institutions of some countries. Can you name a few?
(United States air force)
- Why do you think the eagle is admired in such ways?

2.0. Reading the poem for understanding

Think of the form of the poem before reading - how many lines, the rhyming words...etc.

Read the poem and answer the questions.

- The poet creates a vivid picture of the eagle's position. Where exactly do you think the bird is? What can you say about its lonely stature?
- Why do you think the poet uses the word "he" to describe the bird?
- Do you think it is easy to catch an eagle? Why?
- What impression does the poet wish to create by the line "the sea beneath him crawls"?
- What effect is created by the phrase "mountain walls"?
- Why do you think the poet uses the word "fall" instead of "flies"?
- Power, strength, swiftness, and agility could be associated with the eagle. Do you find these qualities within in this poem?

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem

- Which poetic device is used to express the inaccessibility of the eagle?
- What can be said about the language used?
- The eagle is portrayed as a symbol of power. How does the poet do this?
- The poet uses diction such as lonely lands, azure world, wrinkled sea and mountain walls to compare certain aspects of nature to the qualities of the eagle. Do you think the poet is successful in his effort?

4.0. Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook

- The poet uses symbolism, imagery and metaphorical language.
- What do we learn about the freedom of this bird?
- What qualities of authoritative men which are parallel to the bird are brought out?
- Do you think the simile “like a thunderbolt he falls” resembles the swiftness of a warrior? If so how?
- Would you agree that this poem is not a mere description of an eagle?
- “Crooked hands” is an image representing the potential danger. Elaborate on this.
- How does the poet reveal the destructive nature of the eagle?

5.0 Activities for the students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate*

- Students can collect badges/pictures or stickers carrying pictures of an eagle and explain it.
- An assignment can be given to students to write an article on ‘Isolation becomes inevitable when one reaches the top rungs of a ladder of supremacy and fame’.

To The Evening Star

William Blake

1.0 Setting the scene

William Blake was born in London, England, on the 28th of November, 1757, to a middle-class family of artisans. He was the third of seven children. The Blakes differed with the established church and was believed to have been members of the Moravian sect. The Bible had a great influence on Blake as a child. William Blake was a very versatile person, being a poet, engraver, painter and printmaker as well as visionary. Some consider Blake 'far and away the greatest artist Britain has ever produced!' Blake is generally acclaimed for his powerful expression and creativity.

To the Evening Star is a poem addressed to the first astral body one sees in the sky after sun set. The evening star is also the planet Venus. Blake uses both strands of meaning. The second and third lines convey the beauty of the evening star which is seen as one solitary star in the evening before moon or other stars mark their presence. Line five introduces the idea of Venus, the Roman goddess of love, beauty and fertility. The poet takes the reader through the idea that the evening star is beautiful. Then he introduces the idea that Venus facilitates love and fertility. Her touch is gentle and she cools and beautifies the earth and those who are in it.

Lastly the evening star is looked upon as a power that protects;

The fleeces of our flocks are cover'd with
The sacred dew: protect them with thine influence!

Evening gives way to night and the evening star is no longer seen. Night is the time of danger/evil. Ferocious forces prowl in the night. The poet- persona appeals to the goddess to protect the innocents (our flocks) from night prowling predators;

The wolf rages wide
and then the lion glares
by scattering her sacred dew (like holy water).

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

Read the first five lines. Note the following.

- Reflect on the phrases used by the poet to describe the evening star. How is the evening star described? What does she wear? What does she carry? What actions are attributed to the evening star? What do the following phrases and lines mean?
‘Light thy bright torch of love’
‘ thy radiant crown put on’
‘smile on our loves’
‘drawest the blue curtains of the sky’
‘scatter thy silver dew’.
- What is the atmosphere created by the Evening Star? Which words and phrases convey this atmosphere? What happens after the Evening Star withdraws?
- What is the appeal made to the evening star?
- With which character does the poet empathize?

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem

- The Evening Star is presented as a goddess (goddess of love). Which techniques are used for this purpose?
- It is suggested that the goddess (Venus) makes the earth fertile (both land, plant and man). How is this communicated?
- How does the poet convey the idea that the evening star (Venus) loves the earth and everything in it?
- How does the poet convey the beauty of Venus?
- The Evening Star (Venus) is appealed to, to protect the sheep of the shepherds. The dew that falls in the evening is likened to holy water that protects men from evil. Does the poet go beyond the pagan belief and associate the Evening Star with heaven?

4.0 Reading for developing a critical outlook.

- The poet merges two concepts -The Evening Star and Venus. How does this association make the poem exciting to read?
- Venus is in turn associated with the forces of goodness and protection. Does this make one think of the many faces of nature? In what way?

5.0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- Draw a picture of the Evening Star and write a few lines about what you feel when you see it in the sky.
- Imagine the picture that Blake creates and the effects he refers to. Which associations could be made by Sri Lankans when they see The Evening Star. Reflect on them.

CONFLICT

War is Kind

Stephen Crane

1.0 Setting the Scene

Teacher can provide details about the poet when introducing the poem. Stephen Crane (1871-1900) is one of the most influential realist writers in America. His works also established the foundations of modern American naturalism. Many critics have appreciated his innovative writing skills which are full of vivid intensity, irony and distinctive diction. He is best known for his novels; 'The Red Badge of Courage' and 'Maggie: A Girl of the Streets'.

The title of the poem can be used to stimulate the students.

- Is war kind?
- What does war bring us?
- Who are the people who suffer mostly in warfare? (politicians / commanders / soldiers/ ordinary people)
- How do they suffer? Why do they suffer?

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

- In each stanza, the poet is addressing someone. Who are they?
- All of them are weeping over someone lost in the war. Over whom are they weeping?
- Now explain the way these people died on the battle field.
 1. Lover
 2. Father
 3. Son
- Which aspects of war are brought out through the description of each death? Are they positive or negative?
- How does the poet describe war? Is it a realistic description?
- Which words/phrases create the horror of war?
- Explain the meaning of
 - a). 'the affrighted steed ran on alone'
 - b). 'yellow trenches'
 - c) 'a field where a thousand corpses lie'

- The poem also views about the pomp of war sarcastically. What do you understand by the following phrases?

1. 'Hoarse, booming drums of the regiment'

2. 'These men were born to drill and die

The unexplained glory flies above them'

3. 'Swift blazing flag of the regiment

Eagle with crest of red and gold'

4. 'Point for them the virtue of slaughter

Make plain to them the excellence of killing'

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem

- Which aspects of war are brought out in the poem?
- Note the repetition 'War is kind'. What is the tone of the poem?
- The poet brings out two contradictory situations in the poem: the grandeur of war vs. the horror of war. What is his purpose? How does he criticize the political agenda in a war?
- The last stanza evokes pathos. This final image shows the epitome of grief, as a mother cries over her dead son, the son she raised, and had all her hopes on. What message is brought out through these lines?

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook

The poem is a very good example of irony. Verbal irony plays a major role throughout the poem. The repetition of 'Do not weep, War is kind' is used ironically to negate the idea of the glory of war.

The poet brings out two contradictory situations together.

The fabricated splendour and grandeur of war by the war makers are made to face the grim realities or horrendous aspects of war. Thus he criticizes the glorification of war. Note the sarcasm evoked in 'These men were born to drill and die'. What does it criticize?

The poem creates poignancy and pathos for dying soldiers and their weeping loved ones. This illustrates that it is the ordinary masses who suffer in a war.

The simile 'humble as a button' emphasizes the horror and pity of war.

The tone of the poet is critical and sarcastic.

The theme involves the negation of the glorification of war. The poem surpasses time and place. It carries a universality as it deals with a very common situation in the world.

5.0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate*

- Make the students to find similar situations from local contexts. This may help them further to empathize with the poem.
- Encourage the students to find many other examples (songs and poems) that dismiss the glory of war and reveal the reality.

e.g. Heal the World – Michael Jackson.

Where have all the flowers gone – Pete Seeger

The Terrorist, He's Watching

Wisława Szymborska

1.0 Setting the scene

Wisława was a Polish poet, essayist, translator and recipient of the 1996 Nobel Prize in Literature. She was born in Prowent which is now part of Komuk. She later resided in Krakov.

The title of the poem is suggestive. It gives a context and creates tension. The context is common to many societies. Sri Lanka too underwent this kind of situation for over thirty years. Deliberately planned violence and assassinations were common in Sri Lanka and continues unabated in many societies. The teacher can remind students about some major events and make students sensitive to the violence which is still being deliberately perpetrated in certain parts of the world. The poet captures the moment of assassination/ destruction. The terrorist has set the bomb and is waiting to see the blast from a safe distance.

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

The first stanza gives the setting. The bomb is set in a bar. Can you think why a place like a bar would be selected for such a purpose? What is the intention of this terrorist? Is it the same as that of all terrorists?

- Does the stanza give you a clue as to what device is used? Which phrases/ lines provide you with the clue?
- At what time would the bomb explode? What time is it now (as you read the first stanza)?
- The time is emphasized in this stanza (thirteen twenty, thirteen sixteen). Why is digital time used?

In the second stanza a picture of the terrorist is given.

- What does he do after setting up the explosive device?
- Why has he crossed the street?
- Why doesn't he leave the place of the blast?
- Is this behavior usual with terrorists?

Read stanzas three, four, five and six. Through whose eyes do we see the situation? The narrator sees the actions of the terrorist as well as the people. The terrorist sees a lot of movement of people- men, women, girls and boys. The narrator sees them too. How does the narrator see each of them? (With grief, fear or mechanically)

- Does the terrorist have even a twinge of conscience about the people who are going to get killed?
- Does the narrator have pity?
- How do you interpret the line “the short one, he’s lucky, he’s going on a scooter” and the lines;
“The girl, she’s walking along with a green ribbon in her hair
was she that dumb, did she go in or not”
- Do you think they show any kind of ‘softness’ on the part of the terrorist?
- Whose point of view do you find here? The terrorist’s or the narrator’s?
- The terrorist seems to be looking at his watch all the time. Why does he do that?

The narrator is also conscious of time.

- How much time has passed from the time the bomb was set up to the time the girl in the green ribbon passes the bar?
- The narrator seems to read time mechanically too on his watch. e.g. “thirteen twenty minus ten seconds. What is the effect?”
- How much time does the bald-headed man have to go and get his gloves?
- Do the people going in and coming out of the bar know about the impending disaster? Who feels the tension? The narrator or the terrorist?
- On whose account is the tension? Why does the narrator feel tense?

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem

The poet presents the action of a terrorist dramatically synchronizing the action into a ‘movie’. He traces the action and the impressions of the terrorist within four minutes;

thirteen twenty

thirteen sixteen

The time is thirteen sixteen. The time bomb is set to go off at thirteen twenty. Does the use of digital time seem to lengthen the period of tension?

‘There’s still time for some to go in and some to come out.’

The presentation becomes very visual and you await the auditory impact – the bomb to blast. From stanza to stanza the poet keeps the reader reminded of time - out of 4 minutes the countdown begins. Reflect on how the countdown technique works in this poem.

The poet uses two observations in this poem- that of the narrator's and of the terrorists'. The latter waits to see the result of his actions from a safe distance. The narrator observes the terrorist as well as the events in the bar. He seems to be telescoping the actions. The attitudes of the two observations are contrasted. The terrorist apparently wants to see his action bearing fruit: the bomb to go off and the destruction to take place. The narrator seems to watch the human tragedy helplessly. How does the poet bring out the two attitudes?

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook

- In this poem, the poet presents a common event in contemporary society. How does he/ she make the reader feel it as a common/ familiar situation?
- How significant are the following details in determining this?
 - a) the bomb is set in a bar.
 - b) the victims would all be ordinary men and women.
 - c) Their behavior is usual and normal (green ribbon in her hair, they are talking, crummy gloves)
- Is the poet conveying the idea that terrorism/ violence has become common in modern society?
- What view of the terrorist is conveyed? How important are the following details in deciding this?
 - a) the distance keeps him out of danger.
 - b) just like a movie.
 - c) we'll see when they carry them out.
- Does the poet convey the idea of destiny/ fate at any point – some are saved by chance? Others rush into fate?

5.0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

Imagine what happened after the bomb went off.

Farewell to Barn Stack and Tree

A.E.Housman

1.0 Setting the scene

A certain amount of reading on A.E. Housman's life and poetry will be useful for teachers to appreciate the poem.

The title can be used to stimulate, and make students aware of the background of the poem. For this purpose, the following questions will prove useful:

- i. Where would you find a 'barn'?
- ii. What is meant by 'stack'?
- iii. What is the picture created by the word 'tree'?

The setting of the poem is rural. Which other words suggest the rural agricultural background?

How does the background of the poem differ from the local Sri Lankan background?

What context does the title suggest?

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

Read the first four verses.

Answer the following questions.

- What is the situation that is hinted at here?
- The speaker is taking leave of Terence? Who do you think Terence is? What is his relationship with the speaker?
- Apart from the human, the speaker takes leave of non-human/ inanimate objects. What are those?
- What is the speaker's predicament? Why does he leave? Does he want to leave?
- What do the 2nd and 3rd verses reveal about the strain/ stress the speaker is going through?

Read the next three verses.

- Which verse gives a clue to the conflict? What had caused the quarrel?
- Does the speaker feel guilty about what he has done? Which lines convey this?
- What do the last two lines tell us about the character of the speaker? Is he by nature a violent person or not? Give your reasons.
- What aspect of normal human life is he going to miss? Do the lines also convey anything about his future?
- How would you describe the conflict in this poem? Is this kind of conflict universal? Do such conflicts go this far?

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem.

- Do you think the poem has left out vital information? Does this affect understanding?
- Does it enrich its reading? Is the reader forced to bring his/ her experience of the world into the reading? What is the effect created?
- Do you think the violence was premeditated or impulsive.
- Write the meaning of the two lines given below :
I wish you strength to bring you pride
And a love to keep you clean
How important are these lines in understanding the conflict and the ensuing violence?
- How is the story narrated? Linear or in broken up scenes? What do they tell us about the psychology of the speaker? The narrative skills of the poet?

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook.

- The poem uses the form of the ballad. Which features of the ballad are used in the poem? How does it add to the interest/ tension created by the poem?
- It seems that the conflict had originated from love. The brothers seemed to have loved the same woman. Which words/ phrases suggest that the woman had not been faithful to the speaker?
- As brothers do you think the persons mentioned here behaved appropriately? How could they have resolved the conflict?
- What is the result of the conflict/ violence on the two brothers? Personally on the speaker? On the mother? On the property / farm?

- The writer uses ordinary, homely images like:
 - a) Barn and stack and tree
 - b) Scythe and rake
 - c) Rick
 - d) Fold
 - e) Empty plate

What do they mean?

What effects are created?

- Which features of the ballad are found in this poem? How do they enrich the narrative?
- What is the tone of the poem? Is the tone consistent throughout the poem?
- Would you think this poem is particularly relevant to adolescents?

5.0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- Prepare an activity to make students aware of background and context.
- How could you make students empathize with the context? Students should relate to both brothers. Prepare some questions for this purpose.
- Do you think students should think beyond the context? About the effect of this event on their mother and their property? Why would you think so? How will you extend their imagination?

Breakfast

Jacques Prévert

1.0 Setting the scene

A brief introduction to Jacques Prevert can be given to the students.

Prévert was born on 4 February 1900 and grew up in Paris. After completing his primary education, he quit school and went to work in a major department store in Paris. He was called up for military service in 1918. He died on 11 April 1977. He participated actively in the Realist movement. His poems are often about life in Paris and life after the Second World War. They are widely taught in schools in France and frequently appear in textbooks published worldwide.

As the title of the poem is Breakfast, a discussion can be conducted about the preparation of breakfast and different types of breakfast items. The teacher can also talk about the person who prepares breakfast in a Sri Lankan family and in other countries.

As the theme is conflict, a discussion can be made about day to day family conflicts.

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

The students can read the poem individually or in pairs.

- The narrator observes the actions of 'He' silently. Which feelings do you experience when you read the ten lines from the beginning?
- How do your feelings change when you arrive at the eleventh line?
‘ Without speaking to me’
Note the emotional feelings of 'I'
- The narrator continues to describe the actions of 'He'. What do you notice in his actions?
- Note the development of emotions in the mind of the narrator.

The narrator adds another line to her previous expression.

‘ Without speaking to me
Without looking at me ‘

We can clearly understand the frustrated feelings of the narrator. She expects at least a look from him.

Note the actions of 'He' subsequently.

It was raining outside. The rain has trapped "Him" inside. Usually the rain enhances the relationship of a couple. But here 'He' puts on the rain coat and goes out into the rain. We can notice that 'He' attempts to move away from the company of 'I' where as 'I' yearns for his company. This brings the narration to a climax.

Note her emotions at the climax.

Without a word

Without looking at me

Even a word from him may satisfy her

The poet concludes the poem with a resolution. She is not strong enough to do anything but weep.

I took my head

In my hands

And wept

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem

- What is the relationship between "I" and "he" of the poem?
- What do you think of the scene depicted in the poem?
- Compare and contrast the mood of the two people referred to in the poem?
- What effect is created through the following lines? "Without speaking to me", "without looking at me", "without a word", "without a look"
- "I put my head in my hands and I wept". Why did the speaker react in this manner?
- What are your views about the behaviour of "he"?
- Why do you think the poet has used the background of "rain"?
- What effect is created by the repetition of the word "I" at the end of the poem?

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook

- What feelings do you experience when you read the poem? Analyze your feelings.
- What is the tone of the last three lines?
- What is your attitude towards “ I “ and “ He”

Read the poem again, paying attention to the following questions:

- How is the relationship between “I” and “He “illustrated?
- Which words highlight a restrained relationship between “I “and “He “?
- Which techniques has the poet used in bringing out the theme?

➤ For the teacher

- What would be your difficulties in making the students understand the theme?
- What is your opinion about the speaker being silent instead of expressing aggressiveness?
- How would you show similar situations in society?
- How would you make the students empathize with the calamity of the speaker?

4.1 Literary Techniques

The poem is presented like a monologue and projected as a series of flashbacks. She recollects how he poured coffee, put milk and sugar, stirred it and drank it without speaking to her. Then she visualizes how he lit a cigarette, made rings of smoke and putting ashes into the ash tray. Thus she creates a series of visual images in the mind of the reader. She continues this in the rest of the poem

The poet uses short snappy lines employing the technique of enjambment

he put on
his raincoat

Repetition of the word ‘without’ is noteworthy in the process of the actions. First person narration gives a sense of authenticity to the poem. Dramatic presentation makes the actions lively. Each new action is elaborated with details.

he made rings
with the smoke

‘rain’ symbolizes the way the spouse of the narrator is trapped inside the house. It is an impediment for him. However he breaks the impediment and goes out in the rain wearing his raincoat and the hat. It intensifies the conflict within his mind and his behavior creates painful feelings in her. For her ‘rain’ strengthens the feelings to be with him.

Repetition of ‘And’ gives an anaphoric effect to the poem, intensifying how she reacted to the indifference of her spouse.

5.0 Activities for the students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- Write all the verbs in the poem and categorize them in different ways.
- Write down the possible thoughts of ‘He’ after leaving home.
- Write down the possible thoughts of ‘I’ after ‘He’ had left home.
- Write down the ways of approaching any reconciliation between ‘I’ and ‘He’
- ‘A faltering relationship where communication has ceased captures sadness and frustration in married life’. Would you agree that this is the theme of the poem?

SOCIETY

Once Upon a Time

Gabriel Okara

1.0 Setting the Scene

Giving a brief introduction on the Nigerian poet Gabriel Okara would be helpful for the students to get an idea on the issues that Africans and Nigerians have to deal with.

- When somebody starts a speech/story with the words ‘Once upon a time...’ what do you hope to hear about?

"Once Upon a Time" is a poem by Nigerian writer Gabriel Okara which expresses concern for the influence of the Western world on age-old African customs.

2.0 Reading the Poem for understanding

- Who speaks in the poem?
- Is the poem about the speaker's past? How do you know?
- In the first 3 stanzas, what are the situations that the speaker sees changes in?
- What does the poet say in the 4th and 5th stanzas?
- List the changes the poet has learnt to do to suit the world?
- In the 6th stanza, what does the poet say he wants to learn?
- In the 7th stanza what does the poet ask his son to teach him?
- Which time is the speaker happy about?

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem

- What does father mean by 'used to laugh with their hearts'?
- What change does he imply by saying 'but now they laugh with their teeth/ while their ice-block cold eyes/search behind his shadow'?
- What does he try to convey by bringing in a contrast between the past and the present?
- Why does father ask his son to help him to unlearn what he has learned?

The major themes given in the poem are:

- a). Appearance versus reality (Fake affection)
- b). Change that comes through exposure to other cultures
- c). Adaptation to new ways of life
- d). Innocent childhood versus adulthood

- Give 3 examples (words / phrases) which highlight the poet's theme of appearance and reality.
- How does the poet show that exposure to other cultures brings change in people's behaviour?
- Does adaptation to new ways of life bring good effects or bad effects? Give reasons quoting from the poem.
- According to the poet, how does innocence of childhood disappear when one moves into adulthood?

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook

- What special effect is brought by the title "Once Upon a Time"?
- What kind of link does it have with the beginning of every fairy tale, which begins with the words, "Once Upon a Time"?
- The early values of people that the poet appreciates in the poem are sincerity, good-nature, simplicity, wholeheartedness, hospitality, friendliness and overall satisfaction. Find words and phrases which highlight these.
- How does the poet show the deceptiveness of the present day human (not expressing our true feelings) .Find words and phrases which highlight this.
- How does the poet show that people are bound by the trends set in motion by society? Find words and phrases which highlight this.
- How does the poem show that modernization forces people to be insincere? Find words and phrases which highlight this.
- Do you think that this influence has spread all over the world?
- Which overall message does the poem give to the reader /society?

4.1 Literary Techniques

- Slow Paced. The poem moves at a slow pace. The poem uses repetition and quotations to maintain a sense of deliberateness throughout the poem
- Personal monologue explaining personal experiences. The entire poem has the man talking to his son. The son remains mute throughout the entire poem. The man explains to his son about the change that has taken place in African society and asks him to help him to change himself.
- First Person Narrative. The poem is in the first person narrative and the poet uses the word 'I' to depict an autobiographical narration by the man.
- Begins on a negative tone and ends with a positive one. The man complains and laments on the change he sees in his culture as well as himself. But at the end, he still sees the 'ray of light' in his son, who has not been affected by this negative change and asks him to help him to regain his child-like innocence once again.
- Analysis of the title. The title of the poem, 'Once Upon A Time', has special relevance to the beginning of every fairy tale, like Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White, Rapunzel, and others. It was probably chosen by Okara, as the man in the poem expresses his desire to go, 'back in time', and regain his child-like innocence.

5.0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- Whom does the poet symbolize through
 - a) The earlier person he was
 - b) The person he is now, having undergone a change, influenced by society
 - c) Through whose help, does the poet want to become genuine and sincere again?
- Think of your own experience as an adolescent. Reflect on what affected you most in life.(parents/ family/ peers/ society/ media)

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

Maya Angelou

1.0 Setting the Scene

Dr. Maya Angelou is one of the most renowned and influential voices of our time. Celebrated as a global renaissance woman, Dr. Angelou is a poet, novelist, educator, dramatist, producer, actress, filmmaker, and civil rights activist.

She was born on April 4th, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri, and raised in St. Louis and Stamps, Arkansas. Being an Afro-American, Dr. Angelou experienced the brutality of racial discrimination. She is considered as a spokesperson of black people and especially black women for their civil rights. Angelou is best known for her series of seven autobiographies, which describe her childhood and early adult experiences. Her first autobiography is named as 'I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (1969)'. It discusses about her life up to the age of seventeen.

The poem 'I Know Why the Caged Bird Sing' was first published in her book, "Shaker, Why Don't You Sing?" in 1983. The poem is a metaphor illustrating social discriminations faced by people. The poet is expressing her feelings at the discrimination she faced during her life. The teacher can build up a discussion focusing on the difference between a caged bird and a free bird.

The students should be made aware of the social injustices faced specially by the lower social stratum in society.

- Ask the students to find different reasons that make people suffer all over the world. e.g. poverty, racism, political crises, social class and a person's creed etc.

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

- Read the first stanza. Where is the free bird? Explain its actions.
- Now read the second and third stanzas. Where is the caged bird?
- Why can he not fly like the free bird?
- What does the caged bird sing?
- Now read the fourth stanza. Which luxuries does the free bird enjoy?
- Can you describe the feelings of the caged bird? Are they different from the feelings of the free bird? If so, in what way are they different?

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem

The poet uses the 'caged bird' as an extended metaphor in the poem. The caged bird represents the oppressed people of the world who suffer from numerous social injustices. They are repressed throughout history and denied their rights and their personal freedom.

- What is meant by the following phrases?

- 1 'His bars of rage'
- 2 'His wings are clipped and
His feet are tied'

He is shackled and bound. His feelings are described in 'bars of rage'. He is watching in agony how his free counterpart enjoys the privileges which he is denied.

- What is symbolized by the cage? What situations make people to be caged in life, denying their freedom?
1. Poverty and ignorance
 2. Class and caste
 3. Racism
 4. Political conflicts
 5. War and violence
 6. Social inequalities
 7. Gender discriminations

The clipped wings and tied feet symbolize their vulnerability. They are unable to stand on their own feet and do as they wish due to various inequalities they face.

The poet contrasts the situations of the two birds. She creates a powerful image of the free bird whose limit is the sky. In the poem, the free bird is a symbol of the privileged class which holds power. They are blessed with power, wealth and freedom to do anything without fear of retribution unlike the oppressed classes.

Yet the imagery created by the caged bird arouses our sympathy. A bird trapped within a cage is not free to come and go as he pleases. He cannot fly freely in the wind or claim the sky as his own. Angelou depicts the anger and frustration felt by the oppressed. They are not trapped within a literal cage, but they are trapped in social prejudices, and insulted and branded as inferior.

Yet despite the clipped wings and tied feet they yearn for freedom. Their struggle and agony can be heard in their songs. Their voices like that of the caged bird are heard on distant hills and throughout the nations: the voice for freedom from all the social barriers that torture them.

The poet uses another powerful symbol in the fourth stanza. She says that ‘the fat worms’ are waiting for the free bird. This suggests that while the privileged masters enjoy all the comforts, in society, the poor sufferers “stand on the grave of dreams”. This contrast further emphasizes the social disparity where one party is enjoying life; while the other is fighting hard for survival.

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook

The theme of the poem deals with social disparity due to many reasons. The poem discusses the oppression, suppression and the struggle for survival of the lower class in capitalistic societies where humans are divided according to their class, wealth, skin colour and political ideologies. How does the poet bring out this theme?

This is a modern poem which utilizes symbolism and visual imagery to their maximum capacity to bring out the social injustices. Discuss the effect of these..

The repetition of the third stanza highlights the suffering of the oppressed, arousing the sympathy of the reader. The tone of the poet is sad and melancholic. The poem itself becomes the voice of the caged people; denied of freedom and social justice.

5.0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- Prepare an activity that makes students aware of the background of the poem.
- Teacher can motivate them to find examples for social injustice in many countries in order to make them empathize with the context.
 - e.g. Poverty in Somalia
 - Colour bar in South Africa
 - Gender inequalities in India and other Asian countries

Richard Cory

Edwin Arlington Robinson

1.0 Setting the scene.

It will be useful to give a brief description about the poet and his work.

Put the old adage ‘Appearances are deceptive’ on the board. Get the students to talk about its meaning. /Whether they agree with it/ Reasons for their answers.

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding.

- Write down the words and phrases used in the poem to describe Richard Cory.
- Describe the social class/background, appearance and the personality of Richard Cory.
- Who is the narrator of the poem?
- What can you say about the social background of the narrator?
- What impact does Richard Cory have on them?
- What did the people do to make their lives better?
- What happened to Richard Cory at the end?

3 0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem.

- What are the theme/s of the poem?
- How does the poet picture the ‘pavement people’ and Richard Cory in the poem? What differences do you find in them?
- How effective is the context created by the poet in bringing out the theme/message of the poem?

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook.

- How many stanzas are there in the poem?
- If you divide the poem in to two how can you divide it?
- What can you say about the use of the language in the poem ?
- What are the poetic devices you find in the poem? What impact do they have on the reader?
- Out of the four verses the poet uses three to discuss about Richard Cory’s appearance, qualities , personality and to say how people see him. The poem ends with a note that Richard Cory committed suicide. The poet does not bother to explain the cause of his death. What kind of an impact does this create on the reader?
- How critical is the poet about the false social values and different perspectives of social standards ?
- How successful is the poet in bringing out the realities of human societies ?

5.0 Activities for students.

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- Why do you think Richard Cory committed suicide?
- Can you relate this incident to present society?

Big Match, 1983

Yasmine Gooneratne

1.0 Setting the scene

A certain amount of information about the poet may be useful, since she is a Sri Lankan poet who has received international acclaim.

Information about the events of 1983 has to be given- paper cuttings of the event, or Internet downloads can be useful. But such information has to be filtered without creating an environment of dissension or conflict. Memory is strictly for detached critical evaluation, not for rousing emotions. The poem is set in the background of the social unrest of 1983. The poet presents a clinical and critical perspective of the violence and analyzes the politico-social factors behind it. The poet brings out powerfully the strife in civilian life and the fracturing of human relationships. To read the poem, it is necessary to reflect on the following.

1. Title of the poem
2. Structure of the poem
3. The nuances of the word, “match”

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

2.1 Title of the poem

Based seemingly on a very ordinary and very familiar event in Sri Lanka – a big match (a cricket match?) Big matches are well-known, both locally as well as internationally. The term is very often used in relation to matches between big public schools. But the writer nuances the term. She exploits two meanings springing from the term.

- (a) match as a game- an encounter between two groups of players.
- (b) as a stick, topped with sulphur which is used to ignite a fire.

The two meanings are fed into each other. The violence of 1983, is seen as an encounter between the two major ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. This encounter ignited fires of hatred. The lighting of a fire it literally used as there was an actual conflagration when residences, properties, number of people were set on fire. The nuance creates an ironic effect.

Big Match, 1983 was a ‘game’ to a small minority, but to the innocent, hapless majority it was a horrible experience of plunder, pillage and death.

2.2 Structure of the poem

The poem is long. It has seven stanzas. They project various facets of the situation and the poet handles the tone sensitively.

Stanza 1

Stanza 1 sets the tone for the rest of the stanzas. The poet makes an ironic introduction by projecting the reaction of the media. The media attempts to blow up the situation and tries to take advantage by sensationalizing the human tragedy. The irony is turned on the media in turn. Tourists and expatriates are also made fun of. The tourists 'scuttle' for cover (like hares perhaps). The expatriates who had come on a wave of nostalgia are forced to flee, the instinct for self-preservation driving them back to the places, from where they had come.

Stanza 2

The poet contrasts the situation of the citizens who are hapless victims of violence generated by opportunistic politicians "a treacherous politics of language." Since independence, politicians have ridden on the waves of hysteria generated by emotions roused by language and race. Erudite analyses and academic detachments are of no help.

Yet find no comfort in our neat selection.

No calm abstraction and no absolution.

Stanza 3

The poet nuances the expression 'Big Match' further. This time it is both match as 'game' as well as 'fire' caused by striking a match. The psychology of the mob which is a feature of the game is found in the violence created by hate politics. The conflagration created by the 'uncontrolled mobs ring factory and hovel.'

The violence was irrational, meaningless and inhuman, larger than any experienced hitherto. The poet uses the metaphor 'dizzier heights' generating sarcasm. During cricket matches youthful exuberance harasses civilians and violate their rights. Politics based on narrow parochialism had surfaces in violence in 1958. This is escalated in the unchecked brutality of 1983.

Stanza 4, 5 & 6

Have to be read together as the lines and meanings spill over. From a perspective of distance foregrounding the social, historical and political landscape, the poet moves to particular incidents and events. The poet takes a more intimate look at individuals – civilians affected by the violence.

In most cases, they were innocent victims who gave no offence, brutalized because of ethnic identity. The case fronted in stanza 4 is obviously a middle aged man of middle class background, who seems to be retired, educated and refined. He has a personal library which he loves above everything – more than life itself. He lives “in a tall house” (significant as it suggests safety – beyond reach).

‘dim with books and pictures’ (perhaps an old house in which his family had lived for generations.)

Again the senseless violence is commented on as “never a dull moment” suggesting that the person meets the situation which offers him no choice with cynical irony. This is further extended in

your brave lads
dash out at dawn
to start another day

A section of the civilian population was the perpetrator, patronized by those in power.

The helplessness of the victims is brought out in stanza 5. There is no law to protect them as all law and order is overturned. The civilian (retired, Government servant, private sector executive) waits like a stoic for his fate to be killed in the fire set to his house. He had taken the necessary precautions (ironic in tone!) He has sent his wife and children to safety and waits to sacrifice himself for his books. This has symbolic meaning :

Books represent knowledge, wisdom, humanity and civilization itself. It is humanity and civilization that is threatened. He has no alternative and meets the situation with ironic humour.

Never a dull moment
No one can complain of

The expression ‘that’s for sure’ pushes the meaning towards sarcasm. He does not want his books to be burnt :

It won’t be my books
that go up first but me

Stanza 6

Reads like a postscript. It captures the spirit and nuances of polite speech and deepens the sarcasm.

Even the well-meaning neighbours and friends could not do anything to stop the violence as they too are threatened by it. So the speaker who is from an ethnic minority, hunted down because of his ethnicity, braces himself to his fate while still retaining his civilized demeanor.

Indirectly the poet refers to another event which was part of the violence – the disconnection in communication. The power lines were deliberately cut so that the victims could not ask for help or give information.

Stanza 7

The last stanza sums up the incident in a bloody close.

The violence consumes both sides. The first two lines refer to the retaliatory violence in the north – the nascent military organizations that were being formed.

Third and fourth lines refer to the violence in the capital- apparently targeted at Tamil business places.

The sixth line seems to refer to soldiers who have died in the violence. Even children are not spared. The boy referred to here could belong to the minority ethnic community. But the poet deliberately generalizes to suggest that violence consumes all.

In each case both the civilians and the executors of law 'look away'. The hapless victims seek security and sanctuary in a religious institution- significantly under a bo tree, but he is not spared. His neighbour flings a shower of sticks and stones. The symbol of Buddha's enlightenment fails to save them. The last four lines constitute a commentary. Humanity- human relationships and human instincts are 'ravaged by pieties and politics.'

The alliteration which creates a pun captures ironically the issues involved in the violence. The mixing up of religion and politics! Language and religion have crept into politics and roused hatred which has made humans, brutes. The poet concludes the poem with the vivid statement:

Sri Lanka burns alive

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem.

3.1 Theme of the poem.

Conflict in the form of racial violence is the theme of the poem. The poet traces the onset of violence and also analyses the causes. Politics based on parochial issues – language, race and religion, is the root cause. The poet also conveys the idea that violence begets violence. The violence in the South creates a backlash of violence in the North. Violence becomes a force by itself, sweeping away religious tenets, beliefs and symbols. Man becomes mechanical, non-feeling and robot like. It is this insensitivity that the poet highlights. The media is also criticized. They exaggerate and sensationalize. There is no attempt to quench the violence and control it.

3.2 Literary Techniques

Irony

Yasmine Gooneratne uses irony in varying degrees to analyze the situation. Sometimes it is very pithy like when she talks of the tourists and the expatriates. Very often it is sharp, incisive-almost satirical. e.g. humans who look away and the policeman who looks the other way.

The elderly civilian who waits for a horrible death by burning falls back on irony too- a bitter sarcasm that has a cutting edge. The satire is directed towards the media, the expatriates and the tourists. The poet creates a grim world of hatred and callousness, where humans are reduced to beasts.

Imagery

Metaphor of the match – The word creates nuances-the conflict is a match- an encounter between two groups. It is also a match stick- that lights a fire. The fire metaphor is used throughout the poem. It is a sacrificial fire. A certain group of people are sacrificed to quench the fire of hate. Fire and hate are used synonymously and alternatively. Then the fire escalates. Very subtly match and fire are intertwined.

Big match fever flaring high and fast
has both sides in its grip.

Fire in turn has become fever heat.

The fire burns innocent individuals ‘It won’t be my books that go up first but me.’

The nuances of the word are exploited to intensify the irony.

Finally the fire ignited by language and religion consumes the whole of Sri Lanka.

‘Sri Lanka burns alive’

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook.

The poet presents an analytical and satirical view of the violence of 1983. She is sympathetic towards those affected, by the violence of persons who, fired by language and religion, harassed the minority community. She is also philosophical about violence – that violence once begun will become uncontrollable. It consumes both the victim as well as the perpetrator.

The poem presents a very bleak view of Sri Lankan society – its politics and value system. It is presented as a society of hatred where the majority harasses the minority. Is this a fair criticism? Is it true? From the time of independence to around 1956 there was no violence. One has to consider why the violence surfaced after 1956. The socio-cultural factors are not taken into account – Even in 1983, only a tiny minority of people were involved in the violence

5.0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

Teacher can collect newspaper cuttings of the 1983 riots and lead a discussion about how and why the conflict occurred.

- Students can discuss about how understanding between communities can be brought about.

LIFE

The Earthen Goblet

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

1. 0 Setting the Scene

A brief introduction about the poet would help the students. - Harindranath Chattopadhyaya lived in Punjab. Harindranath became a lover of books, painting, poetry and a lover of music (in short, a lover of all the beautiful things of life.) He mainly wrote poems on nature and the natural way of life.

- What do potters use to make clay pots and pans?
- What do they do after digging out the clay from the earth?
- After shaping the pot on the potter's wheel, what do they do to the new clay pot?

2. 0. Reading the poem for understanding

- From whom does the poet ask a question in the 1st stanza?
- What does the poet ask the goblet about?
- What do the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th stanzas discuss?
- What do the words "a little flower whose root was in my bosom" signify?
- What do the words "drawn out the living breath of me" tell us about the goblet's feelings?

3. 0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem

- What does the pot say in answer to the question "How did you feel, /when you were being twirled/ upon the Potter's wheel?"
- What does the pot say about, "the little flower"?
- Why does the pot say that its "unshapely natural state was the best"?
- Which line of the poem says about closeness to nature?
- How does this poem relate to the way people deal with nature, changing it the way they want?

In this poem the poet speaks to an earthen goblet and asks it what it felt about its creation on the potter's wheel. The goblet answering the question says that it felt it was cruel to be turned from its original ball of clay into a new shape. It also says about the closeness it had with nature and the friendship it enjoyed with a natural flower, which is a part of nature. It repents about the unnatural shape it has been given by the potter. In this poem, the poet indirectly focuses on the way people deal with nature changing it the way they want without giving a thought about retaining its original form and beauty.

This poem also gives the implication as to how a person from a rural area, much attached to rural life is made to undergo change in modern society, with no choice. This person was brought to the city and was made to adapt to modern life, despite his disinterest. At the end, he turned out to be a gentleman in the city, but his attachment was for the humble, down-to-earth life style close to nature, with his girl in the village.

4. 0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook

- What is the attitude of the goblet towards the change it underwent on the potter's wheel?
- Why did the goblet feel a "vast feeling of sorrow"?
- Which words voice the desire of the goblet to be a part of nature?
- In the modern day, children are made to follow and adapt to new trends of education and are encouraged to be certain role models and develop new preferences. Do you think the poem leads the reader to this concept?
- When the ball of clay becomes a goblet it becomes rigid, leaving all traces of flexibility. In the modern world, too, children are directed to give up their flexibility and become rigid role models. Does the poem indicate an implication of this idea?
- When the ball of clay is changed into the shape of a goblet, it remains a goblet, and cannot be changed into a different shape. But, if it remains as a ball of clay, it has more potentiality to change into any shape. Does this idea signify the trends of the modern world?
- When it was under the earth, the ball of clay remained a bit of shapeless clay. But when it underwent the treatment of the potter, it became a beautiful, attractive work of art. Do you think this change is needed in the world?

5. 0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- What are the symbols drawn from nature used in the poem "The Earthen Goblet"?
- What words and symbols highlight the harsh and rude nature of the potter?
- How does the ball of clay present its great desire to be close to and to be a part of nature?
- Which words highlight this need?

Father and Son

Cat Stevens

1.0 Setting the scene

1.1 A brief introduction to the singer

Steven Demetre Georgiou, born on 21 July 1948 and commonly known by his stage name, Cat Stevens, is a British singer, song writer and multi-instrumentalist. In 1979 he left his music career to devote himself to educational and philanthropic causes in the community. He received several awards for his work in promoting peace in the world. In 2006 he returned to pop music with his first album of new pop songs in 28 years. He was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2014.

1.2 Before reading, make the students listen to the song. Some questions can be asked about the structure of the song.

- How does a song differ from a poem?
- What speciality can you identify in this song?

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

- Is there a conversation between the father and the son?
- What does the father attempt to convince his son of?
- How is the response of the son presented in the song?
- What differences do you notice between the father and the son?
- What is the father's attitude to life?
- What is the son's attitude to life?

The song frames an exchange between a father and his son.

The father does not understand the son's desire to break away and shape a new life.

The son cannot really explain himself but knows that it is time for him to seek his own destiny.

This is not a conversation between a father and son. In the first line 'you' is understood and the in the next lines we see "You're, your, and you". The Father is speaking to the son (or at him). But the son is not speaking to his father. He is talking to a third party or, most likely, to himself. That is not a conversation. The father is speaking unilaterally to the son. The son is not speaking back. The emotions of the son are projected using a high tone.

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem

This is a good example of what happens to Fathers and Sons at an age where the son might feel like a man but the father is still treating him like a boy. The son is frustrated and wants to go out into the world to make his dreams come true.

The first verse is the father's advice to his son before he heads off into the world.

His father gives him typical parental advice to keep his dreams simple, and to be careful.

The advice to find a girl and settle down" along with," I am old but I'm happy" are an attempt to convince his son towards a conservative path.

He knows the son lacks experience and may do something stupid and impulsive with the lines, "there's so much you don't know",

"Take your time, think a lot, think of everything you got, for you will still be here tomorrow but your dreams may not". The words emphasize the love the father has for his son and his desire to see his son happy and not broken by the world.

The son answers back with the typical response of a frustrated youth whose father's love for him is limiting his potential and holding him back.

This frustration is well depicted in, "from the moment I could talk, I was ordered to listen".

The line, "If they were right I'd agree/ but it's them you know not me" suggests that it may be a response to other people like the son who the father knew and who had failed.

At the end of the song the son states that he must satisfy his desire to venture out with the line, "I have to go". It seems that the son heeds his father's warnings and will keep them in mind but also must find out for himself his own path to success.

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook

There is an interesting lyrical technique with the second and fourth verses being sung from the son's perspective. "Now there is a way" is metaphorical and symbolic.

The song is very emotional and melancholic as the love of a father makes the son become frustrated and unhappy.

Lewis Carroll's young man says " You are old, Father William."

Steven's old man replies, " I am old but I am happy"

The young man at great risk is going to take the road not taken by the old man who is inclined to take the conventional path to happiness.

- Defend the point of view; ‘The explicit generation gap makes life embarrassing for both the old and the young’
- Consider the techniques used by Cat Stevens
 - The lyrical technique of the singer presenting both father’s and the son’s feelings in different tones
 - The poetic devices; repetition, rhetorical questions, metaphors, use of imperatives and suitable tenses

5.0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- Do you ever have arguments with your parents? On what? How do you feel after the argument?
- Do you think the suggestions made by the father to overcome the problems of the son are acceptable to you and your friends living in Sri Lanka?
- Debate for and against this statement; ‘Parents know best. Children must obey them always’

FEAR

Gabriela Mistral

1.0 Setting the scene

The Poet's real name was Lucila Godoy Alcayoga. Gabriela Mistral was her pseudonym. She was a Chilean poet, diplomat, educator and feminist who was the first Latin American poet to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1946. Mistral was born on 7th April 1889. She died on 10th January 1957.

When one reads the title, one becomes slightly tense because one expects to read something frightening. But the fear in this poem is more anxiety than fear. It is about a mother's anxiety. Every mother has this kind of fear- worry, hope and tension – about what her child/ children would become. Some mothers have very high hopes. They are very often related to material success- success in education, employment, money making, and gaining status. But some think in terms of happiness, although this means much less in material terms. Read the poem and find out the mother's fears.

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

The first stanza gives a setting as well as an attitude. This mother like any other mother is anxious about her daughter. But she is a modest mother. She talks of her straw bed and simple every day actions. She wants to comb her little daughter's hair. The mother's gentle love comes through. She wants her daughter to be herself- to have her feet on the earth – 'to play on the earth'- enjoy the simple, everyday things of life. In the third stanza, she drives the point deeper, with stress on the words 'even less'. She emphasizes the fact that she does not want her daughter to become someone remote or exclusive like a queen. She wants her daughter to stay rooted to her origins and to be herself- not to have unrealistic or unrealizable false goals. She wants the relationship between her and her daughter to remain as it always was – loving, affectionate and normal.

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the Poem

Through this poem of three stanzas, the poet presents not only the genuine love of a mother but also an attitude that the mother criticizes. Most mothers – parents in general- wish higher, better lives for their children than what they themselves have experienced. This is very much the situation in contemporary society- particularly Sri Lankan society. This poem seems to have a message very relevant to modern Sri Lankan society where parents have highly exaggerated, unrealizable goals for their children which misdirect the young and break the relationships between parents and children. The relationship between a mother and a daughter (father and son) is a sacred one. The poet suggests that human relationships are more valuable than any material success (even becoming a princess/ or a queen).

The mother wants the daughter to be herself without getting trapped in unrealistic or false aspirations. It is also suggested that children are influenced by others ('them' : who could be teachers, peers, media, pressure groups in society). In the face of such pressure a child/ adolescent could be quite helpless – but the mother can only hope and wait. This mother's hopes are in sharp contrast to other mothers. So the poem appeals for human values to be restored and material success should take second place.

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook

The poem conveys a simple message but a fundamental one- that love is greater than wealth or success. How does she do it? Notice that the language is particularly simple and she uses simple, familiar imagery (swallow, princess, queen). But they have symbolic meaning. The swallow is a migratory bird – seeking warmer climates for survival – so the metaphor suggests opportunism and self-seeking. Children leave parents to realize their selfish goals. The words princess and queen are metonymic, suggesting wealth and status of the highest kind. The 'golden slippers', 'meadows', 'throne' and 'straw bed' are also metaphors used by the poet.

- How do you distinguish the two types of imagery? Reflect on the lines :
'She would fly away into the sky-and never fly again to my straw bed'
- Which technique is used here? What is the effect created?
- The mother speaks of simple, homely actions like 'comb her hair,' 'play on the meadow', 'sleep at my side', 'rock her'. She also uses expressions like 'fly away into the sky', 'rest in the eaves', 'in tiny golden slippers', 'put her on a throne'. How do you interpret the two sets of actions?
- The poet persona's attitude may seem an old-fashioned one, when you think of contemporary society. How would you defend it?
- Do you think children should be free to reach their goals? Should parents obstruct them?
- Should children forget their parents after realizing their goals?

5.0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- What anxieties do your mothers have regarding the following contexts?
 - Your education
 - Your career
 - Safety
 - Relationships with your friends
- How do you react to these anxieties?

The Clown's Wife

Johnson Agard

1.0 Setting the Scene

Johnson Agard was born in British Guiana (now called Guyana) in the Caribbean, in 1949. He moved to the UK in late 1970 and is well known for powerful and fun performance of his work.

Bring a picture of a clown and use it to elicit the title and to talk about clowns. (Who they are/ What they do/ How they look like/ Where you can find them.etc.)

The teacher can further discuss the hardships they undergo to entertain people.

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding.

Before reading the poem notice the structure of the poem

The poem has 6 verses. The first and last verses have only two lines. The 2nd 3rd and 5th verses have three lines and the fourth has four lines.

Read the poem and answer the following questions.

- Who talks about the clown?
- How does the clown look like when he is on the stage?
- How does the clown behave when he comes home?
- What does the wife do to cheer him up?
- Does the wife know what goes on inside the husband's mind?
- What does the clown say to himself? Do you think that he is happy?

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem.

- What can you say about the relationship between the clown and his wife?
- What can you say about the lifestyle/ social background of the two characters? What evidence do you find in the poem to prove your point?
- Which aspects of life does the writer discuss in the poem? What is the impact, the change of roles has on it? (Husband becomes a clown on the stage /at home the wife acts out the role of the clown to cheer the husband)

Note

The poem looks at the life of the clown through the eyes of his wife. This brings out the authentic or accurate facts of his real life.

The image created of the clown in the poem is sympathetic. Teacher can discuss the reasons for this. His poverty, his salary may not compensate for the hard work he does during his performances.

Students can also discuss the love of his wife. It is pathetic that there should be another person to cheer the clown up. Discuss the dual personality of the clown – his private life and public life.

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook.

- Comment on the language used, the effect of the use of the word ‘me’ and the rhyming pattern.
- What are the poetic devices used in the poem?
- How does the irregular versification help the poet to convey his message?
- What is the effect created by the phrases ‘king on a throne’ and ‘hear him moan’ in verse two?
- What do you understand by the phrase ‘world on his shoulder’?
- Why do you think the wife refers to her husband as a ‘poor soul’? How does this contradict the earlier reference ‘king on a throne’

The poem deals with the difference between appearance and reality, and sufferings of the poor. The students’ empathy with such people is important here. Clown’s traumatic life – while he is suffering he has to put on a happy face before the audience.

5.0 Activities for students.

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- Encourage the students to find similar life stories of people.
- How could you get the students to empathize with the situation described in the poem?
- Get the students to discuss about situations in which they had to hide their true feelings and put up another face before other people.
- Find some other workers who suffer like the clown does, while working for the other people.

HUMOUR

The Camel's Hump

Rudyard Kipling

1.0 Setting the scene

Rudyard Kipling is one of the finest writers of short fiction in international literature. He is more famous for his insightful stories of Indian culture and Anglo Indian society. He was born in India, Bombay to English parents and was educated in England. Kipling is equally renowned for his masterful, widely read stories for children.

The Camel's Hump is a metaphorical poem embedded with a moral.

This is a summary of the tale called 'How the Camel Got Its Big Hump'. It would be useful to understand the background of the poem.

Long ago when animals just began to work for man, there lived a camel in the middle of a desert because he did not want to work. Presently on a Monday morning a horse came to the camel with a saddle on his back and said "Camel, O Camel come out and trot like the rest of us". "Hump!" said the camel and the horse went away and told the man that the camel had refused.

Presently the dog came with a stick in his mouth and said "Camel, O Camel come and fetch and carry like the rest of us". "Hump!" said the camel and the dog went away and told the man that the camel had refused again.

Presently the ox came with the yoke on his neck and said "Camel, O Camel come and plough like the rest of us". "Hump!" said the camel and the ox went away and told the man that the camel had refused.

At the end of the day the man called the three animals and said "The 'hump thing' in the desert refuses to work and the three of you should work double time to make up for it". The disappointed and angry animals met the Djinn (the magical creature) in charge of all deserts and complained about the camel's behavior. The Djinn later met the camel and requested him to work and told him "It is Thursday and to cover the three days, you should work without eating". But the camel only said "Hump" and no more. Finally the Djinn said, "If I were you I would not say that again" and requested the camel to work. But the camel said "Hump" again, but no sooner had he said this, his back began to puff and puff into a big lolloping hump. The Djinn said "Today is Thursday and you have not worked since Monday. Go and join the three and work". The camel, though he refused at the beginning, later joined the three to work. And from that day to this day the camel has always worn a hump. But he has never caught up with the three days that he had missed at the beginning.

Questions about camel could be asked to arouse interest in the poem.

- Can you think of a valid reason for the poet to choose the camel in this poem?
- Which special qualities do you find in a camel?
- Which other animals have humps?
- Do humans get humps? When?

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

Answer the following questions

- How does the poet express the idea that camels are a rare kind of animal?
- What exactly is a cameelious hump?
- What reason is given for humans to develop humps?
- The poet seems to be sarcastic about lazy people. Which lines reveal this idea?

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem.

- Do you think the irregular rhyming pattern and long vowel sounds (to-oo-oo...) contribute to arouse humour in the poem?
- What feeling is aroused by the 3rd stanza of the poem?
- What solution does the poet provide as a cure for the developed hump?
- Humour is created by absurdity. Where do you find such instances in the poem?

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook

- Do you think there is a special reason for choosing blue and black to describe the hump?
- The word hump represents something beyond its literal meaning. Comment on this?
- Though this poem seems suitable for children, there is an underlying message (warning) for gluttons and couch potatoes. Do you agree?
- It seems that the poet is sarcastic about people who do not work enough. Does he wish everyone to be workaholics?
- How well has the poet used humour in conveying the theme of this poem?

5.0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- Find stories (tales) and relate them to the class where a camel is a character.
- Paraphrase the poem.

Upside – Down

Alexander Kushner

1.0 Setting the Scene

It can be helpful to students to give a short introduction on the poet.

Alexander Kushner was born in Leningrad into a Russian-Jewish family. After graduating from Herzen University he taught Russian literature for a period of 5 years. After that he became a full-time writer and poet and published about 15 collections of his poetry and two books of his essays.

- How would you see the objects around you if you stand upside down?
- How would the others react if you always do things in a wrong manner?
- How would you feel if others always laugh at what you do?

2. 0. Reading the Poem for understanding

- Why was the central character the talk of the town?
- What made him do the mistakes he did?
- How did the others react to the mistakes of that person?

3. 0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem

The poem Upside – Down is a poem that presents humour, about a person who misunderstood everything and behaved in a silly manner which amused everybody and evoked laughter.

He interpreted everything he came across in a totally different way. The poet presents a number of simple situations that this person did not take care to understand, but acted in a silly manner, which evoked laughter.

- The poet creates the image of a person who does not take an honest effort to do things correctly. How does the poet create this image?
- Is the reaction of the people towards Upside - Down's behaviour reasonable? Give your view on this.
- Which literary devices does the poet use to create the image of the humorous character of Upside - Down?
- Cite an example of a situation which uses irony as its main tool. Does this situation create humour?
- Quote examples of the internal rhyming patterns in the poem.
- How far are they successful in creating humour?

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook

- How does the title “Upside Down” match the actions of this person?
- Pick out words and actions that highlight the absurdity of the central character.
- Humour in the poem is created through exaggeration of situations. List the situations mentioned in the poem that arouse humour through exaggeration.
- Mention any thing that this person attempted to do seriously.
- List two situations which show Upside Down’s lack of closeness to everyday life.
- What does the response he gave to the waiter at the restaurant, tell us about him?
- Of the two, the clown in the circus and this character, who did things that he had seriously learned and practiced?
- Is there any serious aspect brought into the poem by his aunt’s letter?
- How far does the rhyme scheme contribute **to** create the absurdity of the central character?
- In day-to-day life, we come across situations, where relevant answers are not given to questions asked. Such responses evoke humour. Find a similar situation from the poem.
- Why doesn’t he attempt to correct himself?
- What, do you think, is the theme of this poem?

4.1 Literary Techniques

Simple flow of action: The poet, in each stanza, presents a series of silly mistakes of the central character and how he never followed others and made a fool of himself. The poet easily achieves the goal of creating humour through repetition of the actions of the character

Implication : The poet avoids mentioning any attempt that this person took to correct himself. This careful avoidance brings us to the focal information that he enjoyed being the cynosure, but never took anything seriously.

Rhythm and Rhyme: The rhyme scheme used here provides a light rhythm and makes the poem flow easily. It points to the light humourous nature of the character who does not think seriously about what he does, but only enjoys the laughter that his behaviour evokes.

Repetition: This poem uses repetition as its main technique, presenting the incidents through a simple flow of action, of the silly mistakes of the central character and how the society reacted to them. The poet easily creates humour through the actions of the character.

5. 0 Activities for students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- Write a story depicting Upside Down as the central character.

The Huntsman

Edward Lowbury

1.0 Setting the scene

Edward Joseph Lister Lowbury was born in Hampstead on 12th December 1913. He was a pioneering and innovative English Medical bacteriologist and pathologist as well as a poet.

His first collection of poems was published while he was working in Kenya. Later starting from 1961 he published regular collections of poetry. In 1974 he was made a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

He has a place among those of any age who continue to be read for having given lyrical expression to a striking or moving thought in plain and concise language.

The poem 'The Huntsman' is a poem based on Kenyan folklore.

It will be useful for the teachers to know about the life and poetry of Edward Lowbury. A brief introduction to the poet will be helpful to the students to understand and appreciate Lowbury's poems.

- A discussion can be led to brainstorm students' knowledge about stories related to hunters and their knowledge about African countries and the tribes that live there. Get the students to discuss about the life style /dress/ food/ clothing of the tribes. Teacher can bring a picture of an African tribesman as a stimulant.

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

- What is the name of the hunter?
- What kind of an image do the first two lines create of the hunter?
- What did the hunter find in the forest? What is special about it?
- Whom did he inform about this event?
- Did he believe him? What was his reaction?
- Can you imagine how the hunter might have felt after hearing the king's order?
- Were they able to find the skull easily?
- Did the skull talk when Kagwa came with the guards?
- What happened to Kagwa?
- What happened after that?

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem.

- Describe the image of the hunter created by the poet in the first verse.
- How does this contrast with the silly way of behavior of the hunter?
- How does the writer use the behavior of the hunter to bring out humour?
- What effect do the last four lines of the first verse have on the reader?
- Why did the skull keep quiet when the huntsman came with the guards?
- The skull speaks after the hunters went away. What is funny about this?
- What do you think is the message or theme the writer tries to bring about?
- How does the last stanza confirm this?

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook.

- The poem has rather short lines. What effect do they bring in? Do you think that they help to depict the unthinking childish behavior of the hunter?
- What can you say about the rhyming pattern in the poem? How does it help to bring out the theme effectively?
- How does the writer use the elements of irony and suspense to bring out humour in the poem?
- What are the poetic devices used in the poem?

5.0 Activities for students.

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- How well does the quotation ‘Speech is silver, silence is gold’ describe the message of the poem?
- Role play the incident described in the 2nd and 3rd verse.

Two's Company

Raymond Wilson

1.0 Setting the Scene

Teacher can introduce the poet and his other works to the students. Dr. Raymond Wilson is a well-known author from New Kensington, Pennsylvania.. He has published essays, articles, or chapters in books, encyclopedias, and dictionaries and many articles in professional journals. He is a Professor of History and the former chair of the Department of History at Hays University, Kansas.

He is a member of several professional organizations and has been accorded numerous honours and awards. In 2002, he received the Fort Hays State University Pilot Award for outstanding teaching.

Since the poem is a humorous poem the teacher can very well create the curiosity of the students at the beginning. He/She can utilize the topic as well as the introductory sentence: 'The sad story of a man who didn't believe in ghosts'

2.0 Reading the poem for understanding

- What is wrong with the house?
- How does 'he' react towards these ghost stories? Does he believe them?
- How is he going to prove that he is right?
- List out the sounds he hears and his reactions towards each sound.
- What is the safest place he finds to hide?
- What is wrong with the place he has found to hide?
- Which words create fear and ghastly atmosphere in the poem?
- Find out the meaning of the following words and phrases
 - a. tittle-tattle
 - b. hunchback moon

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the poem

- Read the first stanza again. How do you analyze the qualities of 'he'? How does he differ from 'they'?
- What kind of atmosphere is created in the second stanza?
- Now note the sounds he hears and his reactions. What effect is created through the lines in brackets?
- The last lines bring out the climax. How does it create humour?
- The title becomes ironic at the end. Who are in company?
- How do you comment on the introductory line? What effect is created through the phrase 'The sad story'?

4.0 Reading the poem for developing a critical outlook

The poem is merely humorous. The character 'he' is depicted as a person who shows off too much confidence. Yet the way he reacts towards various sounds reveals his real inner self producing humour. It is funny to see that the 'tittle-tattle' he just laughs off becomes real at the end.

The structure of the poem also contributes to create humour. The introductory line itself is a kind of warning on what is going to happen to this man.

The second stanza describes his qualities. The third part describes his challenge and the ghastly atmosphere around the house.

The next couplet begins the adventure of the man and the last stanza heightens the humorous effect through his actions and thoughts leading to the climax.

At the end, the title and the first line become ironic.

The poem consists of rhyming couplets. The simple spoken language and fast rhythm have also contributed to produce humour.

The poet is laughing at a certain human weakness through humour. He laughs at the quality of boastfulness or overestimation of us in the poem.

5.0 Activities for Students

**Please use the activities below wherever you feel appropriate.*

- Which other ghastly sounds can you add to the poem and the reaction of the man towards them to create humour?
- Write what will happen the following morning. How will the man face his friends? What will he say?

PROSE

Teaching Prose

Introduction:

The 'anthology "Appreciation of English Literary Texts" contains all the important literary genres. Prose is one of them. Under prose, there are two main categories; short fiction and non-fictional prose. Under the second category, there is an extract from a speech and an extract from a biography. They are real life narratives and are selected for their factual content as well as for the power of the language in which they are communicated. The content is of significant value in the modern world. One, draws attention to the obligations of humans to other humans and the other, to human tragedy caused by nature. In both, one experiences deep human emotions. The Nightingale and the Rose and The Lumber Room are imaginative stories created by writers. Therefore they belong to the category of short fiction and they have to be appreciated in a special way. An introduction to the short story is given before the guidelines to the two short stories. The paragraph below is to facilitate the teaching of non-fictional prose.

Rationale for teaching prose

Teaching the prose passages is expected to be a bridging activity between the teaching of language and the teaching of literature. In grade ten, students begin their first study of English literature. They have to be inducted to the study of literature. Hitherto in their school career, they have not experienced such a study. They may have read poems, stories and plays privately or as part of the language syllabus. In the latter, they may have merely read them for meaning.

The two prose passages contain many facts. But the facts in themselves are not important. Along with the facts there are feelings, attitudes and perceptions. Those tell us much about the nature or the characters involved and the significance of the situation they underwent. Such situations can be generalized a wider human context. It is this process of reading, comprehending and empathizing the students are expected to undergo in reading prose. The medium is familiar to them since prose texts are very much like the language texts they have read, whereas in other genres highly advanced reading skills like inference and critical evaluation are involved.

The teacher is expected to make the students comprehend the text; make them aware of the many levels of meaning in the words and phrases used (contextual meaning) and also to stimulate response.

The Lahore Attack

An extract from the Colin Cowdrey Lecture by Kumar Sangakkara.

1.0 Setting the scene

1.1 Introduction

This is an extract from Kumar Sangakkara's Colin Cowdrey Lecture delivered on 5th of July 2011 at Lords which mesmerized the whole world, by its sincerity, dignity and patriotism. The elocutionary force of the speech comes from its sheer love and regard for his country and countrymen. It is a unique expression of responsibility as a leader, for Kumar it as a leader in cricket. He thinks that the love and regard the people of Sri Lanka have for the game of cricket and cricketers should be reciprocated by the cricketers themselves.

1.2 The Author / Speaker

Kumar Sangakkara (Kumar Chokshananda Sangakkara) is one of Sri Lanka's foremost cricketers who has received international acclaim. He was born on 27th October 1977.. Sangakkara was one of the most important members of the team that won the 2014 World T20 as well as the team that made the finals to the 2007 World Cup and the 2012 World T20.

Sangakkara captained the national team from 2008 to 2011 stepping down after the 2011 world cup finals. The same year, he was named the ODI cricketer of the year at the ICC Cricket Awards Ceremony.

2.0 Reading the extract.

This extract is part of an oral delivery and has features of oracy, like elocutionary force and emotionally charged expressions. It deals with an awesome experiences faced by the cricketers and their narrow escape. Read the extract from line 1 to 16 and answer the following questions:

- (a) How does the speaker prepare the readers/ listeners for the frightening event?
- (b) When does the turning point occur?
- (c) Write the following sentence in your own words :
"the first test played on a featherbed passed without great incident."
- (d) What was Sangakkara's anticipation of the second test?
- (e) Would you consider Thilan Thushara's words as 'ominous'? Is it a flash-forward remark? Why? (read from line 20 to 39)
- (f) Who were hit by the terrorist attack? What was the nature of the injury suffered by each player?
- (g) How did Sangakkara face up to the situation?
- (h) How did the other players face up it?
- (i) What was the emotional impact of this event on the cricketers?
- (j) It is apparent that the attack made the cricketers empathize with their countrymen who were threatened by terrorism. What line shows this empathy?
- (k) To what does the speaker attribute the cricketers' strength and self-confidence?

- (l) Why does Sangakkara cite the soldier at the checkpoint? What does he try to illustrate by this incident?
- (m) What does the last line tell us about the relationship between the public and cricketers in Sri Lanka?

3.0 Reading for Appreciation and Enjoyment.

The extract reveals both reason and emotion,

- (1) What ideas are put forward by Sangakkara about:
 - (a) his role as a cricketer?
 - (b) his relationship with his fellow cricketers?
 - (c) his relationship with the public?
 - (d) his responsibility towards his countrymen?
 - (2) What are Sangakkara's feelings towards,
 - (a) his fellow players injured in the attack?
 - (b) soldiers who sacrificed their lives to defend the country?
 - (c) people affected by violence?
 - (3) Would you consider Sangakkara,
 - (a) a great leader? Find evidence from the text to support your position.
 - (b) a great Sri Lankan? Illustrate with examples.
 - (c) a great humanist? Illustrate.
- It was conventionally accepted that a good cricket player was also a good leader. What features of the 'good cricket player' and the 'good leader' are revealed by the extract?

4.0 Reading for developing critical insight.

- (a) Sangakkara's speech is an unequivocal expression of commitment to his game. Would you agree with this statement?
- (b) The speech shows Sangakkara's love for Sri Lankans. What has inspired this love?
- (c) Could Sangakkara's speech be used as a charter for cricketers?
- (d) Do you think Sangakkara's greatness is due to cricket? Or do you think Sri Lanka cricket took a new dimension because of Sangakkara's personality?
- (e) What lessons could a young person learn from Sangakkara's speech?
- (f) What features give the speech the power that it has?
- (g) Are there instances of humour in the speech? What are they? What is the effect of the humour?
- (h) Would it be correct to say that Sangakkara is a great orator? What arguments would you put forward to support your view?

Wave

Sonali Deraniyagala

1.0 Setting the scene

Read the following statements by two critics on Sonali Deraniyagala's book.

- (i) "Most moving book I have read about grief. It is also a very fine book about love."
William Dalrymple

- (ii) "And while on *Wave*, love reveals itself by the bleak intensity of the pain of absolute, irreplaceable loss. It is in the end a love story and a book about the importance of love."
Cheryl Strayed- *New York Times*

Reflect on what kind of book, *Wave* is.

Now read this account about the author.

Sonali Deraniyagala is a Sri Lankan who studied, worked, married and lived in England. An economist by profession, she married Steve Lissonburgh – a research professor and had two sons – Vickram and Malli. In 2004 the Lissonburghs came to Sri Lanka on holiday. On 26th December they were caught in the devastating tsunami which swept over southern part of Sri Lanka. They were in a hotel in Yala which was overrun by the fateful tidal wave. Sonali lost her husband, her two young sons and her parents. She was herself badly injured but survived. For a long time, she could not accept the truth of her loss and attempted several times to kill herself. But her watchful relations prevented her from harming herself. After about three years, she went to her home in London where objects used by her husband and sons and memory persuaded her to accept the truth of her loss. Sonali now lives in New York and works as a visiting lecturer at the University of Colombia. *Wave* is her memoir, recording the events of the fateful December 26th. It brings back her pain and agony. It is a living testimony of the horror of the tsunami and of human suffering and endurance.

2.0 Reading the extract

The extract takes the reader from the sudden, unexpected awesome sighting of the tsunami to the moment of her consciousness after the vehicle in which she and others were trying to flee overturned and she was left battered and alone. What she witnessed at the beginning was the 'white curl of a big wave'. The narrative is a second by second observation and report of the horror created by an undersea quake near the Achan Island close to Indonesia which killed 230,000 people.

Notice how the extract begins – with a simple, warm family experience – a mischievous show of power by Malli, bullying a little girl. What can you gather about the relationship between the author and her sons?

The action in its real sense begins in the fourth paragraph.

- Who notices the wave first?
- What was the author's reaction to her friend's observation?
- Was she alarmed/ concerned/ surprised? What action did she take?
- When did surprise/ amazement change to alarm? What words/ actions reflect this?
- How does the author describe the advancing force and fury of the tsunami? Which words does she use?
- Did the author know that they were struck by a tsunami?

Read paragraph 8.

The action changes drastically here. The author grabs her sons and runs away. Was she aware of the danger threatening them? Or was it instinct? Which line helps you to answer this question?

Read paragraph 9.

There is an unusual number of repetitions in this paragraph? How do you explain it? What does it reveal about the author's frame of mind? What reason does she give for not calling her parents?

Paragraph 10

What does it communicate about the intensity of the moment and the feelings of the subjects?

Paragraph 11, 12

Suggest a period of relief. The actions are minutely described. At the end of paragraph 12, the author says, 'the waves must have receded, I thought'

What aspect of a tsunami does this line highlight?

Paragraph 13 and 14

- What truth about human behavior in a crisis is reflected here?
- What do you think of the driver of the jeep / about Anton?
- Would you agree that both negative and positive features of humanity are shown in these two paragraphs?

In these two paragraphs the author thinks of her parents.

- What triggered off this reflection?
- Could it be that they felt relieved and safe.
- Could it be the fate of Anton and Beulah?

Paragraph 15 is very short. It seems to suggest an intermission, like the two phases of the tsunami – the first short and less intense, the second long and ferocious.

Paragraphs 16 and 17 describe the final onslaught of the tsunami on the jeep. The ferocity of the wave topples the jeep over.

Paragraph 18 seems to be the beginning of a new chapter. There seems to be a time gap between what happened in paragraph 17 and paragraph 18.

Notice that the author:

- is alone
- is hurt
- is in an unknown place
- is utterly helpless

It is the aftermath of the tsunami and the author is now all alone.

3.0 Appreciating and enjoying the text

- This is a gruesome and poignant experience. What are the gruesome moments? What are the poignant moments?
- The extract is full of suspense. How is the suspense kept up?
- The narrative is authentic, living/ lived experience but the writer keeps back her feelings. Are there moments when feelings break through? Note those moments – what feelings seep through?
- The extract is a classic example of how humans face unexpected natural disasters. What are the most vivid moments?
- Even at the most disastrous moments, humans demonstrate they are capable of love and sacrifice. Give example from the text.
- Remember the narrative is written after the disaster. But the writer does not break down into sentimentality. What does this reveal about her mind and character?
- You see both the tsunami and its impact. Trace them from the beginning.

5.0 Reading for developing critical insight.

- It is clear that neither the author nor others around her knew about tsunami. Do you think they would have acted differently if they knew?
- The author's innate instinct seems to be that of a mother – to protect her children. Do you think her priorities were correct?
- The narrative leaves out a certain amount of information.
e.g. the fate of the parents
the fate of Beulah and Anton
the fate of Steve and the boys

This is partly because of ignorance. The fate of those characters were never found out. Do you think the impact of the narrative would have been different if one knew their fate?

This narrative has been described as a story of grief and of love. How do you respond to these evaluations?

Teaching the Short Story

1.0 Introduction

Teaching the short story demands at least two important literary skills

- a) Meaningful reading or engagement with the text
- b) Ability to identify and understand the genre

(a) Genre

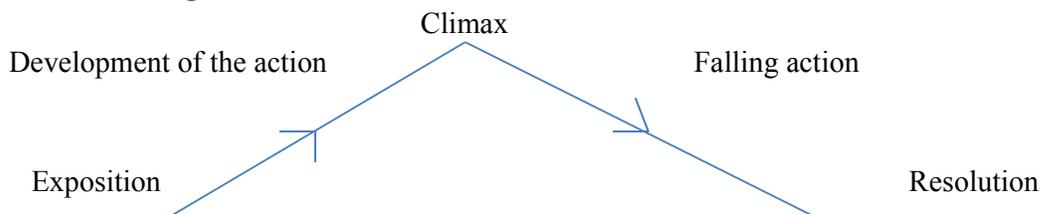
The short story is a literary genre that came into prominence in the late 19th century. It can be distinguished from the novel or novella by its shortness. It must also be distinguished from traditional short narratives like the folk tale and the fairy story because it presents 'a slice of life'. Looking at a few definitions would be helpful at this stage.

(i) 'A short story is a piece of fictional writing usually less than 5,000 words that contains these basic elements, character, setting, plot, conflict, resolution, climax, dialogue, protagonist and antagonist (www.iclasses.org/assets/literature/literary_glossary.cfm)

(ii) 'A brief fictional work that usually contains one major conflict and at least one main character. From these two definitions, one can identify the most important features of the story.

- (a) shortness - can usually be read within a short period.
- (b) conciseness - information is precisely presented.
- (c) leaves behind a single impression
- (d) the conciseness demands that the reader brings his/her experience to appreciate it.

Understanding the Genre



(b). Components

A short story (like the novel and the drama) has four components;

- I. Plot
- II. Setting
- III. Characters
- IV. Theme

(i). Plot

The selection and arrangement of events is called the plot. The plot could be arranged in a number of ways. In some short stories the events move in a linear direction with one event leading to another. In others there is constant forward and backward movement, from past to the present, then to the future and again to the past.

The plot has several stages.

- introduction of characters
- the situation (initial conflict)
- the development of the action which creates heightened suspense/tension
- climax (the peak point of the action)
- falling action and conclusion

(ii). Setting

The background against which the incidents of the story takes place. It gives where, when and social conditions under which the story moves along. It includes the atmosphere and the tone of the story as well.

(iii) Characters

The 'living beings' in the story that seemingly think and act in order to keep the story going. The characters must seem to be 'living' or real individuals so that the reader feels strongly about them.

(iv) Theme

The message/messages conveyed by the story. It is what the story is about and it helps the reader to understand an eternal truth or truths.

(v) Point of view

The position from which the events of a story seem to be observed and presented. In some short stories the narrator tells the story as though he was actually taking part in the event. This is called the first person point of view. In others, the narrator does not appear in the story and relates it as an outsider who knows everything that goes on including what the characters think and feel. This is the third person omniscient point of view. Also, there can be third person limited point of view, in which the narrator confines the readers' knowledge to what is observed.

(vi) Tone

The way in which the author's language suggests his attitude to the events and the characters described.

(vii) Mood

The particular feeling the readers derives from the short story.

The Nightingale and the Rose

Oscar Wilde

Note on the Author

Oscar Fingall O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born on 16th October 1854 at 21 Westland Row, Dublin, Ireland (now home of the Oscar Wilde Centre, Trinity College.) He had been publishing lyrics and poems in magazines since his entering Trinity College, especially in Kottabos and the Dublin University Magazine in mid 1881. His novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), and the social comedies *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895), and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), established his reputation. Wilde published *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* in 1888, and had been regularly writing fairy stories for magazines. In 1891 he published two more books, one being *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories*. He is known as a writer, a poet and a playwright. Wilde died in Paris, France on 30 November 1900 at the age of 46.

Note on the short story

Oscar Wilde's work titled *The Nightingale and the Rose* has features of the fairytale but it also has the elements of social satire in it. Wilde begins the story with a central character who is a young male student. As the narrative opens, the young man is looking out of the window. He dreams of a young woman whom he believes has captured his heart. He wants to escort her to a dance. But she demands a red rose to accede to his request.

The nightingale is the one who overhears the young man complaining about the young girl's refusal to dance with him. The young man is eager to give her a rose, but is unable to do so. Wilde structures the story, so that the nightingale tries to bring the two lovers together.

First, the nightingale visits the rose-trees in the garden. Of all the types of roses, it is the white rose that tells the nightingale of a way to produce a red rose. The white rose adds a condition; the nightingale must sing the sweetest song it knows, and sacrifice her life in the process.

The nightingale notices that the young man is in tears and proceeds to carry out the instruction, of impaling her heart on a thorn so that the blood can stain the rose. At the end the student takes the rose to the young woman, only to be rejected again because another man, the Chamberlain's nephew has sent her some real jewels, and jewels cost far more than flowers. The young man no longer believes in love and throws away the rose. He returns to his study of Metaphysics. The story brings out the hypocrisy of people and the false values of society.

Setting the scene

The teacher can start a discussion with the students creating a situation for them to respond.

1. Do you read love stories? About whom are they?
2. Have you read fairy tales where angels help lovers to get married? What role do these fairies play?
3. What material things do lovers expect as tokens of love?
4. Do lovers make sacrifices for each other?
5. In the short stories you have read, what kind of sacrifices have lovers made? Are they practical or can they be labelled as foolish acts?
6. In the stories you have read, have you found lovers who betray each other for selfish reasons? What do you think about them?

Next, the teacher can introduce the new vocabulary in the text.

Vocabulary items related to the text

Students would benefit if new vocabulary items are introduced before giving the questions on the plot. (To find literary meanings)

Suggested vocabulary items (Refer to the dictionary and find the meanings of the following as they appear in the text *The Nightingale and the Rose*.)

wretched, pale, ball, passion, murmured, company, lean, clasped, courtiers, ridiculous, cynic, mystery, soared, grove, spray(of a tree), sun dial, scythe, chilled, veins, thorn, pierce, chariot, heather, frankincense, pallet-bed, ebb, pang, girdle, film(over eyes), ecstasy, cavern, choking, gutter, Chamberlain

Questions on the plot

a) Read the story from the beginning to, “For a red rose . . . laughed outright” and answer the following questions.

1. How many characters are introduced first? Who are they?
2. Find the following details related to the story.
 - a. The place described at the beginning of the story and the time of the day.
 - b. Time of the year (season) and the atmosphere/mood suggested by it.
 - c. What are the social backgrounds of the characters and are they the same?
3. Do you find any problem faced by the first character? Where is he planning to go the following night?

4. How is the problem caused/created? How is the conflict resolved?
5. What are the three things the student wishes to do if he gets what he wants?
6. Who hears the problem and what is the response made?
7. What is your impression about the young student and the young girl?
8. “but in all my garden there is no red rose”, says the student. What do you think is the symbolic meaning of this?
9. Do you think the young girl truly loves the boy? Why? Give reasons? What are your feelings about her? (like / dislike / hatred / neutral / sympathetic)
10. How does the nightingale respond to the boy’s wail?
11. Who else happens to hear this problem and what is their response? What do those characters symbolize?

b).Next read the story up to, “At noon the student opened his window and looked out.”, and answer the following questions.

1. Describe the steps the nightingale takes to help the boy solve his problem.
2. Give the meaning of the phrase, “She passed through the ...garden.”
3. Who gives the nightingale a clue to the resolution and what is it?
4. Describe the nightingale’s opinions/views about love, manhood and life. Support your answer with quotations from the text.
5. Which contrasting features do you see in the bird’s way of responding to the problem and in the boy’s way of response? Refer to the line, “She swept..., the young student was still lying on the grass.”
6. What request does the nightingale make to the boy when she tries to console him?
7. ‘Love is a wonderful thing.’ How does the Nightingale suggest the wonder of love by comparing it with Philosophy and Power?
8. Why can’t the student understand what the nightingale says?
9. Who understood the nightingale’s message and why?
10. What do “the note book and the pencil in pocket’ suggest of the boy?
11. What does the student think of the nightingale and arts?
12. Do you think he is right and why?
13. How does the nightingale attempt to produce a rose? Describe what he did.
14. How does the nightingale try to forget about her “fierce pang of pain”? What message does it convey (of songs/music)?
15. What sort of interesting idea is blended in the nightingale’s song?
16. Finally how does nature respond to the last burst of music of the nightingale?
17. What kind of rose does the nightingale manage to produce?

c).Next, read up to the end of the story and answer the following.

1. Next day at noon what does the boy see? How does he respond to it?
2. What do you understand about the likes and the social position of the young girl through the following line? “The daughter of the professor...her little dog was lying at her feet.”
3. What response can one expect from the girl when the student takes the rose to her (when referring to her demand at the beginning)? What was her actual response?
4. What does she mean when she says,” Everybody knows jewels cost far more than flowers.”
5. What is suggested by, “and he threw the rose ...a cart wheel went over it.”
6. Does the girl’s behavior could you say that she is ungrateful? What other characteristics do you find in her?
7. What does she mean by “... who are you ... nephew has?”
8. What does the student realize and how does he try to resolve his problem?
9. What message is the writer suggesting through this resolution?

8. Reading the text/Engagement with the text

i) Initial conflict –

- Fiancée (girl friend) demanding a red rose as a token of love from the young student
- Looking for a red rose to please her
- An immature and impractical demand and therefore the young man feels desperate

ii) Development of the action -

- The nightingale hears the appeal and visits three rose trees
- The nightingale sacrifices her life for a red rose

iii) Climax –

- The student finding the red rose and presenting it to the girl.

iv) Falling action/Conclusion –

- Refusal by the girl
- Announcement of the new found love and its advantage over the other.
- Withdrawal of the student and returning to the study of Metaphysics
- The social comment that is made in the story

9. Characters

The nightingale and the oak tree

“The Nightingale and the Rose” is a story in which the first character that appears is a student. . The story opens with the character of the student, perhaps a student of philosophy. This young man is in despair because of the refusal of his love. The main characters, apart from the young student and the young girl, are animals or elements from nature, such as a little Green Lizard, a Daisy, a Butterfly, a Nightingale, a Rose-tree and an Oak-tree.

A nightingale is a small song bird that is often associated with love, innocence and romance and it represents goodness and virtue. At a deeper level the Nightingale could be assumed to represent the author, Wilde, and the student as ignorant society with its cynicism. At another level, the red rose could be taken to represent artistic representation and unrequited love. The symbols criticize society’s lack of appreciation for the arts. A rose at a very superficial level is merely a flower. The oak tree seems to suggest the wisdom the student lacks. The girl apparently suggests materialism and superficial values.

Questions

- What do you think of the student’s way of responding to the problem? How successful is he? Give your opinion.
- Do you approve of the conduct of the girl? Discuss.
- What role does the nightingale play in the story?

(a) Here is a list of qualities

Unintelligent, sensible, dull, shallow, immoral, kind, cruel, honest, unscrupulous, virtuous, dissolute, austere, sensual, polite, insulting, pretty, congenial, impolite, cheerful, sullen, supportive, merry, grumpy, petulant

- What do the following quotations tell us about the student/ nightingale /the girl? Refer to their behaviour at different situations/incidents and find out the relevant qualities from the list given above.

The phrases

i) She said that she would dance with me if I brought her a red rose” (The relevant qualities are the girl is immoral, cruel and dissolute)

ii) “Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose my life is made wretched.”

iii) “...for he only knew the things that are written down in books.”

(iv) “Death is a great price to pay for a red rose,...”

10. Theme/s

a) Theme of love

The short story suggests that,

- True love needs sacrifice.
- The nightingale sacrifices her life to make the other happy.
- The nightingale sacrifices her life to make the young student happy.
- Conditional love is seldom genuine.

b) Reason vs. passion

- Passion is a destructive element that brings waste reigns over passion.

c) Education

- Theoretical education creates an unbalanced individual.

d) Human hypocrisy and deceit

e) Materialism versus romanticism

Questions

- Write a paragraph on what the boy needs to understand.
- What prevailing attitudes/values does this story criticize?

11. Atmosphere and Tone

a) How do the following expressions in the story contribute to the creation of tone?

- “She said that she would dance with me if I brought her red roses,” cried the young student.
- “I am afraid it will not go with my dress” she answered;

b) How is atmosphere created?

12. Literary Techniques.

In the tale, Oscar Wilde uses many figures of speech to enrich the semantic expressions. Personification is a typical rhetorical device in fairy tales. The main characters, apart from the student, are animals or elements from nature, such as a little Green Lizard, a Daisy, a Butterfly, a Nightingale, a Rose-tree and an Oak-tree. "But the Tree shook its head." is an example of personification. In the story, the Nightingale symbolizes goodness and virtue and sacrifice, and the Rose stands for true love and true art. The oak tree stands for wisdom and the girl symbolizes materialism and hypocrisy. The student symbolizes cynicism as he can't appreciate beauty. The most frequently used stylistic characteristic is comparison: "His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face

like pale ivory” Furthermore, this tale also applies similes like "Her voice was like water bubbling from a silver jar." metaphor like ". . .and pulled out a great dusty book, and began to read. " an antithesis which makes the language diversified and beautiful.

13. Review

A. Some experiences demanded by the story are given below. Reflect on them.

- The nature of true love
- The impulsiveness of youth
- Objectives of education
- False values of certain individuals in society
- Materialism versus romanticism/idealism

B. Which character do you like the most in "The Nightingale and the Rose"?

Discuss with reference to the text.

C. What is the turning point of the story “The Nightingale and the Rose”?

Why do you consider it to be the turning point? Discuss with reference to the text.

Extended Activity

Match the following words/phrases with their meanings.

Word/Phrase Meaning

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 1. murmured | a sudden strong feeling of physical pain |
| 2. Pang | a channel at the edge of a road |
| 3. gutter | complained about something but not openly |

More words can be added to this list.

Reference

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia & Courtesy of Amazon.com

The Lumber Room

Saki (Hector Hugh Munro)

1.0 Setting the scene

1.1 The Author

Hector Hugh Munro was born on 18 December 1870 and died on 13 November 1916. He was better known by the pen name, Saki. He was a British writer whose witty and mischievous stories satirized the society and culture. He is considered a master of the short story.

Munro's father was an officer in the Burma Police. After the death of his mother when he was two years, he was raised by his aunts who frequently resorted to corporal punishment. He was brought up in a regime of strictness and severity. This left an indelible mark on his character, and is immortalized in a number of short stories, especially *The Lumber Room*.

The teacher can start a discussion with the students creating a situation for them to respond to.

- Have you ever been punished at home?
- What was the reason for the punishment?
- What was the punishment given?
- Who gave the punishment?
- How did you respond to the punishment?
- How did the other members of the family respond to it?
- How did you behave after the punishment?

2.0 Reading the short story

- Why was Nicholas 'in disgrace'?
- What was the punishment given to Nicholas?
- In what manner did his aunt attempt to hurt Nicholas?
- What made Nicholas happy at the departure of his cousins?
- How did the aunt try to prevent him from entering the gooseberry garden?
- How did Nicholas make his aunt suspicious of what he was trying to do?
- What compelled him to enter the lumber room?
- How did he enter it?
- What wonderful things were there for his eyes to feast on?
- What feelings did he experience about the details of the tapestry?
- What made Nicholas leave the lumber room?
- What had happened to the aunt?
- How did Nicholas respond to the requests of the aunt?
- How was the aunt rescued finally?

- What had made the expedition to the beach punitive?
- What is revealed by the thoughts of Nicholas at the end of the story?

Since in the previous story, questions were given under each section to facilitate reading, teachers are expected to prepare similar questions to facilitate reading, in case they get the children to read the story in parts

2.1 The Plot

The Exposition

Nicholas gets into disgrace with his aunt. So his cousins are to be taken to Jagborough sands that afternoon and he has to stay at home. The aunt was absolutely sure that the boy will get into the gooseberry garden and orders him not to enter it.

The Complication

Nicholas gets into the lumber room,(it is a store room for extra furniture, but other items too may be stored there) a storehouse of unimagined treasure. Every single item brings life and imagination to Nicholas and is symbolic of what the adults of the real world lack. The tapestry awakens his imagination to a great extent. The pots and candlesticks stir up his creative mind and lastly a large square book, full of pictures of birds, makes it a superb expedition for him.

The Climax

While Nicholas is admiring the coloring of a mandarin duck, the voice of his aunt comes from the gooseberry garden. She has slipped into the rainwater tank and cannot get out. She commands the boy to bring her ladder and he ignores it saying that it may be the sound of the Evil One. The aunt realizes that her punishment has boomeranged on her.

The Resolution

The furious aunt maintains the frozen silence of one who has suffered undignified detention in a rain water tank for thirty five minutes. Nicholas is also silent in the absorption of an enchanting picture of a hunter and a stag.(This could be symbolic)

3.0 Appreciation and enjoyment

The whole short story can be divided into two parts: The child's world and the adult's world. The author seems to be suggesting that adulthood causes one to lose all sense of fun, imagination.

- The aunt is obsessed with punishing and nitpicking the children.
- Nicholas imagines the whole story behind the tapestry while the aunt comes out with boring stories and ideas like a circus or going to the beach-(the humdrum vs. creative; the conventional vs. new)

- She tries to convince Nicholas about the fun of a trip to the beach, of the circus, but lacks the imagination to sound convincing.
- She describes the beach outing as beautiful and glorious but cannot say in detail how beautiful or glorious it would be because she is not creative.
- The Lumber room is symbolic of fun and imagination of the child's world which is definitely lacking in the adult world. It emphasizes the frustration and pain that adulthood and pride can bring.
- She puts punishment and withholding of enjoyment as more important than getting to know the children and moulding their lives.
- She keeps all the beautiful and creative things of the house locked away in a lumber-room seemingly not to spoil them.
- The purpose of the objects which is to beautify the house is lost, leaving the house dull and colourless.
- The children are deprived of beauty and imagination

3.1 Characters

Nicholas

Nicholas is the chief character.

We first meet him when he is playing tricks on his relatives (putting a frog in his bowl of bread and milk) and this is how he appears throughout the story.

Everything Nicholas does is about testing the limits of authority.

His point is that the "older and wiser and better people" represented by his self-styled aunt did not believe there could be a frog in his bread and milk, and there was! Nicholas makes his "aunt" furious because her punishments have no power over his lively, curious and imaginative nature.

Left at home while the other children are out "enjoying" themselves in adult-sanctioned ways, Nicholas discovers a world of pure freedom and joy in the lumber-room - significantly, a place where adults seldom go and which they don't care about.

He secures his afternoon of freedom by tricking the aunt, turning her nosiness and eagerness to punish her. The story ends with Nicholas in disgrace as usual, but completely untroubled by it as he silently revels in his private, free world of imagination.

The Aunt

The aunt is a wet blanket, a spoil-sport. She is an unimaginative self-proclaimed adult who demonstrates a very negative attitude towards children. We can infer it from her habit of devising 'treats' for the children for the sole purpose of excluding one or all of them as a punishment. She presumably does this in order to assert her authority. From a child's point of view, she is an infuriating grown-up - she often does not listen when the children tell her things, and changes the subject when challenged.

She is a small minded woman of few ideas, with immense powers of concentration. Nicholas is self-willed, stubborn and equally obsessive (about getting into the Lumber Room, and about thwarting the aunt) but he is a small boy. The aunt's obsession (with outwitting Nicholas) is revealed as actually very childish.

Nicholas is the 'hero' of this subtly subversive story. The aunt is the 'foil' against which Nicholas's character emerges - a boy of many ideas, imagination and quick wits. We applaud rather than condemn Nicholas's disobedience and his triumph in this war of wills, mostly because the aunt's behaviour is revealed as absurd, and she appears to deserve her 'punishment'.

3.2 Literary Techniques

- Third person narration
- A chronological order in the plot
- Use of a large variety of epithets to highlight the child's world and the grown-up's world (grim chuckle, alleged frog, unknown land, stale delight, mere material pleasure, bare and cheerless, thickly growing vegetation)
(frivolous ground, considerable obstinacy, trivial gardening operation, unauthorized intrusion).
- Use of Metaphors

A circus of unrivalled merit and uncounted elephants (to lay stress on the Aunt's narrow – mindedness)

The flawlessness of the reasoning, self-imposed sentry-duty (characterizes the Aunt as a very strict person)

- Use of Rhetorical Questions

But did the huntsman see, what Nicholas saw, that four galloping wolves were coming in his direction through the wood?

4.0 Themes

- Stupidity, moral degradation, hypocrisy and ambition boomerang on the person who emits them in a hostile manner.
- Children may be more innovative than the adults.
- The adults must be very careful in punishing the children.
- Generation gap.
- Using religion to instill fear.

DRAMA

Drama

1.0 Introduction to drama

The word drama derives from Greek verb “dran” which means “to perform”. Drama is a story presented in dialogue form by actors on a stage before an audience. The literary genre that includes all plays and the profession of writing, producing and performing plays is generally referred to as drama.

It is believed that drama originated from ancient Greek and medieval Christian religious ceremonies and ever since it has developed in different directions. Aristotle divided drama into tragedy and comedy, a distinction valid for classical times. With the development of drama in the medieval and the modern world, this is too rigid a distinction. Whether ancient or modern, plays represent a wide range of emotions and views of the world. The dramatist indicates his moral attitudes through the speeches and actions of the characters. In teaching and learning drama it is crucial to have an understanding of the four major elements of drama, namely story, dialogue, action and character.

Dramas or plays are written for performance. Because of this, they are different in their nature from novels or poetry. Reading a novel or poem is a private act. But a drama is written so that the lines might be spoken by actors in a public theatre, and it is shaped with the conventions of theatre in mind. So to learn to read a play is to learn to understand its potential as theatre. If one does not see that potential in the text, it will impoverish the text for the reader.

2.0 Story

It is inevitable that the events in a drama tell a story. The ability to understand the story would be the basic desire of a person watching a drama, but as teachers and learners of drama, it is necessary to understand not only “what happens” but also “why”. This requires an understanding of the plot or the arrangement of events in the story. Almost every play has five structural elements: exposition, complication, crisis, falling action and resolution. Here is what they mean

Exposition- this provides the essential background information, introduces the cast, begins the characterization and initiates the action.

Complication- This introduces and develops the conflict.

Crisis- This is the turning point of the play when the emotional intensity is at its highest. It may involve an event leading to a decision or there may be an open conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist.

Falling action and Resolution- In a tragedy, falling action results from the protagonist’s loss of control and a final catastrophe often appears inevitable. In a comedy the plot itself overflows with complications where all the characters face difficult situations. By an unexpected twist in the plot, these complications are often resolved. An effective resolution or denouement shows the skill of the dramatist, as that is where he gets his message across.

3.0 Dialogue

Dramatic dialogue is very different from the dialogues we exchange among us in our day-to-day lives. Our everyday conversations, out of context, may not be interpreted correctly due to direct or indirect references to previous situations. Another feature of dramatic dialogue is that it leaves out trivial details. Each utterance is meaningful because the story in the drama should be presented within 2 or 3 hours of stage time. Hence irrelevant details and unnecessary repetitions are left out.

On the other hand, dramatic dialogue should include sufficient background information for the audience to find out without much difficulty the time, place and circumstances of the action (setting). Some playwrights make use of a narrator but others bring out the background information gradually during the first act.

4.0 Action

Sometimes the action in a play is indicated or suggested in the script, but as readers and learners of drama we may imagine the characters to be moving about with gestures and expressions appropriate to the dialogue. Being aware of the action and stage directions would make the understanding wholesome as these emphasize the themes and characters introduced in the dialogue.

5.0 Character

Details of each character are conveyed to us in different ways.

- a) The name and physical appearance (although not very reliable)
- b) His/her behavior or patterns of action during play (E.g. mannerisms)
- c) Through the dialogue and through asides or soliloquies and in the way a character speaks (word choice, grammar etc.)
- d) How the character responds to other characters.
- e) What others say about a character?

The understanding of a drama depends on the extent to which the audience understands the personalities and motives of the major characters. Good characterization is a reflection of the skill of the dramatist.

6.0 How do we read drama?

Reading drama is not exactly the same as watching a play performed for an audience. Your reading would not be coloured by the interpretations of directors and actors. But there is other information that you have to take into consideration for the correct understanding of a play. This is:

- a) **Dramatis personae or the cast of characters**
In a play, a list of characters generally precedes the dialogue. This list may give short descriptions of the characters and their relationship to other characters in the work.
- b) Some playwrights give the setting or the time and place of action at the beginning of the text of the play.

- c) Instructions for the actors and the stage directions are given within parentheses in the body of the text.
- d) This (c) is to be followed very carefully because through these the reader imagines what would happen when the play is acted on stage. This sheds light on the characters and would do justice to the intention of the playwright.

Twilight of a Crane

Junji Kinoshita

01. Introduction

Twilight of a Crane belongs to the modern Japanese dramatic tradition. It is a play adapted from a Japanese folk-tale by Junji Kinoshita and translated into English by Taskeshi Kurahashi. Kinoshita says that the play represents “my attempts to elicit, in my own way, beauties and delights implied in the themes of Japan – simple, benign and minute.” He wrote the play during the winter of 1948, and it was published in the January issue of the *Fujin Koron* (Women’s Opinion). Searching for a theme, particular to the Japanese people, which is vital to a dramatic tradition, he identifies the Japanese folk-tale as the pivotal point. He summarizes his perceptions in the following manner. “There was something about the folk-tale that reminded me of the sentiments of our own souls’ native place.” He sees the Japanese folk-tale assimilated into the lives of the people.

The translator observes that Kinoshita has positively brought imaginative and poetic elements into the Japanese theatre through plays like *Twilight of a Crane*.

2.0 The plot of the play.

A woman who is really a crane becomes the wife of a mortal man in gratitude and love for saving her life:

“You were once so innocent and kind that you could take the arrow out of my back solely through tender-heartedness and only out of sympathy for me.”

She brings peace and happiness into his life until two vulgar friends of his discover a beautiful cloth which she has woven out of her feathers. They play on the husband’s greed for money until he bullies his wife into making more of this cloth (Senba Ori). This she does, hidden away in her crane form, but in the end she exhausts herself- and he has also broken his promise to her, which was not to look on at her weaving and been terrified to find a bird instead of his wife- and leaves him, flying away in crane form.

(adapted from G.S. Fraser)

2.1 Development of plot/ structure of play

- Play begins with suggestions of innocence and simplicity of the relationship between Yohyo and Tsu. They play with children the games of the children. There is a simple innocent life of love. (beginning to Sodo). “Is that Yohyo’s wife?”
- Coming of Unzu and Sodo – corruption of Yohyo- complication of plot. Sodo “Well, if it’s so, if that’s true, we can still make a lot of money, that’s the whole point of the deal.” Tsu becomes aware that her husband is moving away from her towards the greed of the two men. “But you are moving to the other world, where I can never live. You are casting your lot with those malicious, terrible people who shot me with an arrow.”
The play turns – a gap is caused between Yohyo and Tsu.
- Plot further complicates. Tsu tries to win Yohyo back to love and the innocent life they have been leading. Tug of war between Tsu and Sodo and Unzu to win Yohyo to their side.
- Climax – Yohyo is won over by Unzu and Sodo – Greed wins over love and innocence. Tsu’s identity is challenged. She makes a last gesture of sacrifice and leaves.
- Tsu takes on her former identity and goes back to nature.

3.0 Characterization

Twilight of a Crane has mainly four characters, one female and three male. But there are hosts of formless symbolic characters in the children which could be any number, representing innocence and simple rural life. The female character Tsu dominates the play, idealized to a degree. The male characters are distinguished but slightly. Yohyo, the husband of Tsu presented as kind and good and tender- hearted at the beginning undergoes change, showing the human weaknesses of greed and fickleness. He vacillates between love for his wife and love for money. Sodo is presented as the harder and the greedier of the two villagers. The men who are all villagers have degrees of roughness and crudeness in them whereas Tsu is presented as a refined person of exquisite sensibility.

Tsu – the protagonist / heroine of the play.

Kuzuko Tsurumi writing in January 1952, observed “Sayonara, honto ni Sayonara”, (Goodbye truly goodbye) were the parting words of Tsu, at the critical moment of departure from her beloved, from the world of the humans to the world of nature. She uttered these simple, pathetic and beautifully echoing words, and she really meant them. In this goodbye and the words used, Kinoshita presented a deeply philosophic problem of the present-day Japan. Tsu then is not merely a character but also a symbol – she represents the absolute goodness which she as a symbiosis of man and animal (human and nature) is capable of. Being bird, she has no use for worldly things. But she is capable of giving love and yearns for love. The following traits can be found in her.

i. Intelligence

She is quick to learn. She learns the songs and the games the children play. She is sensitive to the sinister intentions of Sodo and Unzu.

ii. Honest and truthful

She speaks the truth to Yohyo and is firm in her stand.

iii. She is dignified and principled- Once she realized that Yohyo loves money more than her and is using her to acquire more money and his greed has no bounds, she leaves him.

iv. She is innocent and simple. Totally uncorrupted. She is like a child herself and plays the games of the children. She weaves the rare, precious cloth to make Yohyo happy, to give him a secure life.

v. She is capable of deep poignant love. She loves Yohyo for saving her life. She gives freely what she has- the feathers to weave the cloth at the cost of her strength and life (Yohyo does not know or ask her for the Senba Ori at the beginning)

Yohyo -Tsu's husband

He is simple, peasant, innocent, and honest. He saves the wounded crane shot by a fellow villager. He has natural kindness in him and has no greed or ambition. He is happy and contented with his way of life. He is childlike and plays with the children. He loves Tsu sincerely and is devoted to her, "cold soup is no good for my sweetheart." But he is a weak person because he is easily swayed by Unzu and Sodo. He cannot see through their cunning. He becomes a willing victim and barter away the most beautiful and valuable thing in his life. Tsu and what she represents : peace and happiness and self-contentment.

Unzu

He is a villager to whom Yohyo sells the 'Senba Ori'. He cheats both Yohyo and Sodo for he pays Yohyo only a minimal amount of what the cloth is worth and hides its real value from Sodo ("wretched thief"). Like Sodo he is ignorant and superstitious. Although he is cunning, he is simple, for he does not understand the value of the cloth. He had been making a cheap profit. Like his friend Sodo he is chauvinistic and has no regard for women or consideration for them. He joins forces with Sodo to pressurize Yohyo.

Sodo

Another villager with similar traits. He is even cruder because he walks into the weaving room and discovers the crane feathers. It is he who plots to win over Yohyo “the best idea is to get him on our side and get his wife to weave a lot more of the cloth.” He is more cunning than Unzu because he knows the Senba Ori can be sold for thousands of dollars but he hides it from Yohyo. He is hard “what the hell will pity and sympathy do?” Enticing Yohyo to make more and more money he destroys Yohyo’s happiness and his very life.

4.0 Themes in the play

- i. Love - as the foundation of happiness and peace. The unconditional love of Tsu. Yohyo barter away love for money and ruins his life.
- ii. Money - greed. The corrupting elements. It entices Yohyo and destroys his relationship with Tsu- Unzu and Sodo are agents of money- buying and selling- the capitalist society.
- iii. No mutual understanding - Yohyo cannot understand Tsu. He reaches out to a different value system. Tsu doesn’t understand Unzu and Sodo as they represent another way of life- greedy, vicious and corrupt.
- iv. Femininity vs. male chauvinism Tsu gives all to the man she loves- Unzu and Sodo wants to exploit her.
- v. Innocence vs corruption
Tsu and (Yohyo too) children are innocent. They play innocent games and are happy with a simple life. Unzu and Sodo look towards Kyoto representing money, the urban, commercialized life and corruption.
- vi. Natures vs. Human
These are presented as being opposites- Nature is innocent, simple. Humans are corrupt, deceitful and greedy.
- vii. Identity
Tsu has two identities. She discards the identity of bird (animal) for the sake of love. She takes her ‘nature’ identity once she is betrayed.

Setting

Japan – in a rural area, near a lake- Time Winter – As stage directions indicate, poor farming community. Twilight as suggested by “the setting sun is illuminating the western sky.”

6.0 Literary Techniques

a) Flashback and flash forward – The coming events are forecast by Unzu's words 'fanciest cloth you ever did see! – made of a thousand feathers plucked from a live hen crane.

Unzu finds crane feathers in the weaving room.

Yohyo remembers saving a crane.

"Crane? You say a crane? Yes, I remember now! One day when I was working in the field, a crane came down with an arrow stuck in its back and saved its life.

b) Suspense – Tsu did not want anyone to peep into the weaving room (she took the form of the crane to weave) But Unzu peeps in – He urges Yohyo too to look.

Yohyo - "I'll never peep at you"

changes to

Yohyo - "What a crane..... in this room? I want to see"

Tsu - "I can no longer take the form of woman"

c) Irony - Dramatic irony that covers the whole play. Tsu wishes to give Yohyo and easy life by weaving beautiful cloths and expensive cloth with her crane feathers because she loves him so much. But this very cloth destroys his love. He becomes greedy for money. Money destroys love.

Verbal irony - Children follow the shadow of the crane- Children are simple, unspoilt like Tsu – Tsu being nature is aloof from other humans except Yohyo but is close to the children.

Sodo - "Well, now, it's very nice to have got two pieces of cloth – God bless us. (He is impervious to the human tragedy and is lead only by greed)

d) Song - gives mood to the play. Conveys the simplicity, the sincerity and the innocence of the relationship between Tsu and Yohyo – a pristine love where there is total commitment to each other (the marriage between man and nature)

e) Title - Twilight of a Crane – Play is set in the twilight (between night and day). It also suggests the ambiguity of the identity of Tsu. She is both woman and bird and changes from one to the other. Her life as Tsu is short. It is like twilight.

It also suggests the fantasy that is woven into the play.

6.0 Approaches to Teaching

(1) (i) For students fluent in their English, who can independently read the play. Let them read the play at home/ school in one go. Give them the following guidelines. Follow the plot/ action in the play:

- (a) Conflict is introduced into the relationship between Tsu and Yohyo by Unzu and Sodo.
 - (b) Yohyo hitherto – loving and gentle is roused to dissatisfaction. He threatens Tsu to make more cloth, so that he can make more money.
 - (c) Tsu realizes that Yohyo has changed- that he is consumed by greed.
 - (d) She tries to bring back Yohyo to his former innocent, loving self but fails.
 - (e) She weaves two more pieces of cloth at risk to her own health and eventual freedom. (if she uses all her feathers she will not be able to fly)
 - (f) Sodo and Unzu crudely intervene and expose her bird identity. They force Yohyo to betray her.
 - (g) Betrayed and disillusioned Tsu reclaims her bird identity and flies away.
 - (h) Yohyo is devastated. He is left with money but no love.
-
- (ii) Discuss the characters using the guidelines given.
 - (iii) Discuss themes with guidelines given. Illustrate with plot and character.
 - (iv) Discuss techniques in relation to plot, character and themes.
 - (v) Do a holistic/ global evaluation, pulling all the strands together.
-
- (2) For students who are weak in their language, who cannot read the play on their own, teacher can divide the play into reading units, following the development or plot/ suspense in the play. In each part, discuss the characterization, themes and techniques. Do an overall discussion after the play is read.

The Bear

Anton Chekhov translated by Julius West

01. Introduction

The Bear is one of Chekhov's lesser-known plays performed in 1888. It is subtitled 'Farce in One-Act'. A farce is "a type of low comedy that employs improbable or otherwise ridiculous situations and mix-ups, slapstick and horseplay, and crude and even bawdy dialogue" (Murfin & Ray 2003)

The three main characters in this play create humour with their absurd behavior and dialogues. Their emotions are exaggerated and change unexpectedly. The play is also suggestive of the emancipation of women.

2.0. The Plot of the Play.

Elena Ivanovna Popova is a landowning widow mourning for the death of her husband who had died seven months ago. Her aged footman, Luka, coaxes her to stop being buried inside the four walls and to enjoy life. She refuses firmly as she intends to prove her true love and faithfulness to her husband, in spite of him being unfaithful to her. He reminds her that she is still beautiful. The bell announces the entry of Smirnov, a person who comes to collect the money due to him by her husband. Popova refuses to see him but without courtesy he enters the dining room. As she does not have spare cash she promises to pay the day-after tomorrow. She also says her 'state of mind' prevents giving money matters her concern. Smirnov refuses to leave. In the argument that follows Popova calls Smirnov a bear for his boorish manners. Smirnov challenges her to defend her feminine rights- in the form of a duel. She accepts. Surprised by her boldness he begins to fall in love with her which he is forced to admit. Even then she is not willing to back down from the challenge. The argument that follows ends up in Smirnov kissing Popova passionately. The play ends with Luka and some workers armed with household weapons entering, intending to break up the duel.

2.1. Development of the Plot

- The conversation between Popova and Luka reveals that he is trying to convince her that she should enjoy life while her beauty lasts. He further highlights the futility of mourning for her dead husband for such a long time.
- Despite her late husband's unfaithfulness to her she, vows to prove her love by mourning for him till her death.
- She is irritated by Luka announcing the arrival of Smirnov to whom her dead husband owes 1200 roubles. He asks for cash to pay the interest on a mortgage. Popova's peace is disturbed.
- She is willing to pay Smirnov only after her steward comes back the day after tomorrow. But Smirnov reiterates that he needs the money desperately.
- The argument builds up to a climax as Smirnov highlights the infidelity of women and Popova reveals the same about men.

- Popova insults Smirnov calling him a bear. Smirnov is asked to go out. He refuses. Popova calls Luka to show Smirnov out.
- The insulting continues.
- Smirnov suggests Popova should pay for insulting him by engaging in a duel with him.
- Popova brings her late husband's pistols but asks Smirnov to teach her how to fire.
- In teaching her, he is captivated by the beauty of her eyes and is touched by her boldness.
- The climax heightens as Popova suggests going out for the duel. Smirnov is not interested in the duel anymore as he cannot resist falling in love with her.
- The anticlimax is when the servants see them kissing each other passionately

3.0. Characterization

There are 3 main characters in the play.

Their physical features are presented at a minimum. eg. Popova is a little widow with dimples on her cheeks. Smirnov is attracted by the beauty of her eyes.

Smirnov is middle-aged and Luka is an aged footman.

Chekov makes use of absurd behavior and dialogues to bring out character.

Popova

Despite the exaggerated behaviour the play demands, Popova's character reveals certain traits.

- i. She is very emotional
The play opens with Popova fixing her eyes on a photograph of her late husband. She weeps and talks to him about her love.
- ii. Has a strong determination
Even though it is impractical to mourn for the rest of her life, she vows to do it.
- iii. Bold and courageous
When Smirnov challenges her to a duel, she accepts it and does not give up even after he expresses his love for her.

Smirnov

- i. He is rude and ill-mannered. He enters the house without a show of courtesy and behaves rudely.
- ii. Irritable
When Popova refuses to pay him, he gets angry and shouts at her without any sympathy for a woman in mourning.
- iii. Chauvinistic
He highlights his male superiority over women.
- iv. Manipulative
He has lent money to many men and they have all evaded him. His intention is to get what Popova owes him at any cost.

Luka

- i. Loyal
He advises Popova to stop mourning as she should enjoy life. He tries to save her from Smirnov's insults.

4.0 Themes

- i. Money
The effect of money on human behavior.
- ii. Infidelity
Popova reveals about her late husband's relationship with other women.
- iii. Emancipation of women
Popova's behavior suggests the extent of action a woman is capable of. Smirnov is taken aback by Popova's boldness.
- iv. Inconsistency of human behavior
Popova's and Smirnov's attitudes towards each other change rapidly.
- v. Condition of the woman in Russian society

5.0 Setting

Pre-revolutionary Russia
The main characters belong to the land owning class.

6.0 Literary Techniques

- i. Humour
Absurd behavior and dialogues create humour
- ii. Metaphor
Popova says "You're a boor! A coarse bear!"
- iii. Incongruity and contrast
Violence and love are juxtaposed at the end of the play.
- iv. Suspense
The arguments between Popova and Smirnov bring about tense situation

7.0 Approaches to Teaching

- i. As this is a very short play, students may be encouraged to enact the three roles.
- ii. Students may be asked to find some more examples for the literary techniques

Reference

Murfin, R. & Ray S.M (2003) The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms, Second Edition Bedford/St Martin

NOVEL

TEACHING THE NOVEL

01. Definition

A lengthy fictional narrative in prose dealing with characters, incidents and settings that imitate those found in real life. Usually, the novel is concerned with the depiction of middle class and working class characters engaged in ordinary pursuits. The author, while obviously inventing people and situations, attempts to give the impression that he or she is reporting the facts as they occurred. Novels vary in type, form and subject matter so much that it is difficult to put the novel into a neat classification.

2.0 Elements of the novel

2.1 Setting

"The general locale, time in history or social milieu, where the action of a work of literature takes place. When the setting is used as a dominant influence on the lives of characters it is said to give local colour to the narrative. Local colour or regionalism can be noticed in the manners and customs of the characters as well as in creating a unique and picturesque background."

2.2 Plot

"The careful arrangement by an author of incident in a narrative to achieve a desired effect. Plot is more than simply the series of happenings in a literary work. It is the result of the writer's deliberate selecting of interrelated actions (what happens) and choice of arrangements (the order of happening) in presenting and resolving a conflict"

2.3 Character and Characterization

A person in a literary work is like a person in real life, a literary character's personal qualities and actions are limited by his/her function in the story whether the character seems designed to fit the plot or the plot is derived from the character. At the center of the plot is the hero, or protagonist. The hero is usually an admirable figure. An exception is the anti-hero, an inept or otherwise ridiculous character, who is presented sympathetically, The plot follows what happens to the hero and is determined by the hero's character in conflict with the antihero who is usually less admirable than the hero.

"The method by which an author creates the appearance and personality of imaginary persons and reveal their characters. Characterization is the ability to bring the people of his/her imagination to life for the reader. It is judged one of the most important attributes of a writer of fiction. Successful characterization is also crucial to the development of a narrative, since the events that move the story forward are strongly influenced by the natures of the persons involved.

2.3.1 Methods of Characterization

There is direct description of physical appearance and explanation of character traits and attributes. This description may occur either in an introduction or in statement distributed throughout the work. The author tells the reader what sort of person the character is. This method is also known as 'telling'.

In the presentation of character in action the author refrains from describing or commenting on the character. Instead he/she shows the character in action; what he does, how she/he reacts to others. The author even shows how others react to the character. Thus in this method of characterization, the author allows the reader to make judgments about the character.

Representation of the character's inner self: the author explains the thoughts and emotions in the character by external events.

2.4 Theme/s

The main idea or ideas that the writer expresses. Theme can also be defined as the underlying meaning of the story. The theme of a novel is more than its subject matter because an author's techniques can play as strong a role in developing a theme as the actions of the characters. A novel's theme cannot be interpreted in a specific narrow meaning. Because of its length and the range of characters it uncovers and the large number of conflicts and scenes it foregrounds, there can be a variety of interpretations of the main idea. In short the theme is the statement that the novel seems to be making about its subject matter.

2.5 Point of View

"The vantage point from which a narrative is told" (The Bedford Glossary of critical and literary terms). A narrative is typically told from a first person point of view or a third person's point of view.

In the first person point of view, the author tells the events through a character who refers to himself as 'I'. Such a narrator generally plays a major role in the action.

The events are recounted as he/she experiences them or remembers them or reflects about them. Sometimes a first person narration can have multiple narrators, each of whom recounts his/her own story.

Third person narratives are of two types. e.g. omniscient and limited. The first type of narrator, adopts the point of view of an all knowing narrator who is able to recount the action thoroughly and reliably as well as to enter the mind of the character in the work at any time in order to reveal his or her thoughts feelings and beliefs directly to the reader.

In the limited point of view, the story is revealed through the eyes of a single character. The reader has access to the inner thoughts and feelings of only one character and receives the story

as that character understands and experiences it, although not in the character's own voice. Such a narrator is generally an observer of the action or a participant in it.

Second person point of view is very rare. There the narrator would address a 'you.'

The Vendor of Sweets

R K Narayan

The general plot

The novel, as the title suggests, is based on the life of a vendor (and a maker!) of sweets named Jagan. He runs a successful shop of traditional sweets all of which he manufactures lovingly with natural ingredients. Jagan's bent towards naturalness is also reflected in his personal life: he wears simple clothes and lives a simple life. You might also notice that Jagan is well versed in Hindu religious literature and cultural practices and that rather than relegating such knowledge to texts alone he tries to live by them. However, Jagan's son Mali is a totally different personality. Mali is much more interested in exploring new frontiers which lie outside the traditional and the safe boundaries of Malgudi. He aspires to become a creative writer, a vocation that seems to be misunderstood by his father, as he equates writer to a 'clerk.' It is very obvious that the father and son have different world views and these differences burrow themselves deep into the novel as it runs towards its climax. Jagan being a duty-bound parent gives into Mali's desires. The father finances Mali's visit to America as a student of creative writing. Mali comes back to Malgudi with a foreign wife and a machine that would saturate India with creative writing. Of course, we later learn that Mali and his wife are not actually married and that Mali's creative writing efforts suffer pauses and jolts as he struggles to modernize the backward and traditional Malgudi village. Jagan's important roles as a father and a businessman seemed to suffer a total collapse when he finds out that his son is not actually married to Grace, his wife. This violation of a sacred tradition in India seemed to have sparked off a quest for spirituality in Jagan as we see him attracted to 'bearded man' who leads him into a blissful space of spirituality with the firm promise of an encounter with a miraculous appearance of a mythical divine being. In the end despite resistance from his own society Jagan opts for a renunciation of his worldly life to a one of spirituality. The novel leaves us with his son, Mali, embroiled in a legal battle after alcohol was found in his car.

Thematic concerns

The novel deals with the following primary themes:

- **The relationship between a father and a son:**

Jagan is a traditional father, often referring to religious scripts of Hinduism which have been a part of his traditional and cultural upbringing. Possibly his success as a vendor of sweets could be attributed to this routine and orthodox way of meeting his life. However, Mali is not affected by any of the cultural and religious narratives of his father. He wants to explore the modern, yet concealed world beyond Malgudi. In other words, he wanted to break free from tradition and explore the modern. These opposite stand points taken by the father and the son bring them into a course of collision. The questions we need to ask are:

- a) How did the father and the son respond to this collision?
- b) How did they manage this collision?
- c) Was there a mature understanding between them about tradition and modern?
- d) Did the ending of the novel suggest some kind of acceptance of their differences?

It is important that we explore this father and son relationship at in-depth level in the classroom particularly at a time when forces of globalization seem to be having a serious effect upon the younger generation while at the same time there are forces within Sri Lanka who seem to oppose this modernity.

- **Tradition vs. Modernity:**

The novel beautifully contrasts the characteristics of Jagan and Mali in an interesting manner by taking us, the readers, in a journey into these very same cultural practices that define the identities of both the father and son. Jagan is religious: he knows the scriptures; he adheres to them; even if he does not understand the full significance of some of the religious principles, he still talks about them; in the end it is his firm conviction in his own religion that gives him a way out of a difficult situation in life. Mali is his father's exact opposite. He represents someone whose vision is set in another mode of existence where strict rules of religion and cultural codes are absent. He explores with industrialization (eg: creative writing machine), living together as opposed to traditional marriage, and alcohol.

It is important to discuss the issues of tradition and modernity in detail. The possible questions that could be explored are:

- a) Whose life seemed to be successful, Jagan with his traditions or Mali with his modernity?
- b) What are the possible disadvantages in both types of lives?
- c) What are the advantages?
- d) What could both Jagan and Mali have done to improve their lot?

- **Conflict between the western and eastern cultures**
- **Marriage**

Characters

1. Jagan

Jagannath or Jagan plays the central role here. A sweets vendor by profession, Jagan is portrayed as an honest and hardworking resident of Malgudi. He is a faithful follower of Gandhi and a vegetarian. During India's freedom struggle, he had been arrested for hoisting the Indian flag. He leads a very simple life, cooking his own meals. He never uses sugar or salt since he believes that they are harmful to health. As recommended by Gandhi, he spins on his charka and weaves his clothes by himself. He never uses a tooth brush as he fears that its bristles are made of pig's tails. He reads 'The Bhagawad Gita' whenever he is free. Thus, Jagan has been portrayed as a model of a traditional Indian.

He is a widower and his son Mali is the only hope of his life. Though he loves his son very much the relationship is distant between his son and himself. Mali's mother died of brain tumor several years back. Jagan, being a believer of 'Nature Cure' treated her in his own way until her illness was diagnosed to be a brain tumour. Thus the estrangement between the father and the son came into being the day the mother died as Mali, felt that his father should be responsible for his mother's death. Their lack of communication makes Jagan seek the help of the cousin to intermediate between them to know what his son thinks and hopes to do in the future.

This lack of communication and distant relationship continues further even to the extent where Mali refuses further studying and goes to America. It seems that Jagan is not strong enough to deal with his teenage son as a real father. Though he is authoritative and commanding over his shop he is nervous and cowardly in dealing with his own son. He lacks the commanding personality to mould and guide his son although he loves him passionately. Their conflict comes to its height when Mali returns with a girl of mixed nationalities introducing her to him as his wife, yet later to discover that they are not actually married. Jagan, a traditional Indian man who believes in conventional values cannot imagine his son living immorally with a woman in his house. He believes that his house is defiled and hence he cannot live there.

The mental conflict and frustration of this traditional Indian is very well depicted in the novel. He is a true follower of Gandhi. He seeks relief in retreat, leaving everything in the hands of the cousin and he comes to a certain maturity in that he is not affected by hearing the news that Mali is arrested by the police for keeping liquor in his car. He distances himself from the bonds of paternal love. He thinks that a period in jail might be good for the young man.

Jagan is also shown as a hypocrite. Though he follows Gandhi and reads 'The Bhagawad Gita' every day, he is a shrewd businessman in that he maintains two accounts books: one for the tax officers and the other, the accurate one, for his reference. Though he gives up eating sugar, he earns money by selling sugar filled sweets to the others. While advocating a simple life with limited needs, he is "working and earning, taking all this trouble". It is highly ironic to see that

he hoards money on the loft of his home. Although he is a failure as a father, he takes advantage of the situation and boasts of his son saying that Mali is going to be a great writer, or he is doing well in America.

When the conflicts between his son and himself intensify, he acts in rather a passive way following the non-violent principles of Gandhi. Yet actually, he does not have much courage to speak against him.

2. Mali

Mali, the son of Jagan is the opposite of his father. He represents modern western values. He is a snobbish and spoiled young man who has no respect or regard for his father. His first conflict with Jagan comes after the death of his mother. He believes that his mother dies because of his father's negligence. Whenever he confronts his father he is not given proper guidance by Jagan.

1. His refusal of homemade lunch and preference of buying it from Ananda Bhavan Restaurant.
2. His refusal to study anymore.
3. His intention of going to America. He takes money from Jagan without informing him.
4. His return with a wife.
5. His demanding over two lakhs of rupees to set up a factory to manufacture story writing machines.
6. His declaration that he has not married Grace.

He acts as an insensitive, selfish and stone hearted man towards his father. His whole life is filled with materialism. He is so insensitive even to hurt the spiritual beliefs of his father.

“I’ve taken to eating beef; and I don’t think I’m any worse for it . . . Now I want to suggest why not you people start eating beef? It’ll solve the problem of useless cattle in our country and we won’t have to beg food from America. I sometimes feel ashamed when India asks for American aid. Instead of that, why not slaughter useless cows which wander in the streets and block the traffic?”

All his relationships depend on money. When Grace finishes with her money he no longer wants to keep her with him.

“He wants me to go back. He says he can’t afford to keep me here anymore. I used to work. I had two thousand Dollars when I came here. All that’s gone”

Even his idea of ‘a story writing machine’ is also ridiculous as art cannot be mechanical.

3. Grace

This American–Korean partner of Mali brings out a sharp contrast between the West and East. In India, marriage is considered a serious affair with approval sought from relatives and many arrangements made by the kin. But Grace comes with Mali in a very casual way announcing that they are married. She shows this contrast between the two cultures when Jagan questions her whereabouts.

“It is a custom in this country to inquire where one was born and bred and who is who generally, and then we go on to other things.”

“Only the passport and income-tax people ask for such details in other countries. However since I am also an Indian now, I might as well get used to things, and tell you something”

Grace, though a Westerner, tries to adapt herself to Indian culture. Hence she wears saree and does all the household work. She starts cleaning Jagan’s room and washes the vessels in his kitchen.

“She clutched the broom and raked every corner of the floor saying, “Father, you think I mind it? I don’t. I must not forget that I’m an Indian daughter-in-law”

Jagan sees her as a “good girl”, yet it is doubtful whether her behaviour is genuine. Ever since Jagan refuses to invest money in their business, she stops cleaning Jagan’s part of the house.

4. Cousin

The cousin in the novel is not given any name. He is called as cousin by everyone and is welcomed in every home in Malgudi. He carries the latest news about Mali everywhere in the town. He is a good listener and sometimes intermediates between the father and the son. Unlike Jagan, he is matured, and practical minded. Narayan also uses this character to arouse irony in the characters.

“And yet”, said the cousin, “I cannot understand why you go on working and earning, taking all this trouble?”

5. Ambika

She is the late wife of Jagan who does not appear in the novel yet she is often recalled by Jagan. Her death causes a great damage to the father and son relationship. Her character is contrasted with the character of Grace. Ambika represents the traditional Hindu daughter–in–law and the cultural nuances of traditional Indians.

The Prince and the Pauper

Mark Twain

0.1 Introduction

Mark Twain was the assumed name of Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910). He was born and grew up in the United States, in the State of Missouri, beside the river Mississippi. Samuel's father died when he was only twelve and he had to leave school to earn a living. His youthful years were full of adventure. He travelled around the States first as a journey man printer, then as a prospector in Nevada and set off to South America to seek his fortune, but turned back to become a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi. The American civil war put an end to steam boating and Clemens joined the confederate army, but soon left that too. He returned to newspaper reporting which he had tried earlier, but without success. Now, he became an extremely successful one. Clemens had started using the name Mark Twain, during the civil war and he used that name as a great travel and adventure writer. (the name was taken from a pilot's cry meaning that the river was two fathom's deep)

Twain/ Clemens had grown up in poverty and responded to prejudice and injustice. His famous works – The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, while providing tales about young children facing many vicissitudes of life are also infused with humour. The Prince and the Pauper was first published in 1881. It like the two earlier tales, is made a vehicle for conveying humour and social comment.

“The experiences of Prince Edward Tudor and young Tom Canty, when they change places, have alternately shocked and amused generations of readers and demonstrate the genius of Mark Twain at his wry and inventive best.”

Mark Twain is described as ‘the greatest humourist of his time.’ William Faulkner calls him the ‘Father of American Literature.’

0.2 The Prince and the Pauper

The novel was first published in 1881, in Canada. Set in the 16th Century, it is the tale of two boys who exchange their clothes one afternoon and consequently their roles and situations in life as well. Both have adventures and finally as tension mounts they establish their true identities- one as the heir to the throne, the other as a Pauper's son who has risen to be the King's ward. Each boy has strong misconceptions of what the other boy's life is like and a series of educational and entertaining adventures are played out as the boys grow more comfortable in both their real and assumed roles in life.

2.1 Plot

Tom Canty is a member of a family which belongs to the dregs of London Society, in Offal Court and aspires to a better life, encouraged by the local priest who has taught him to read and write. Loitering around the palace gate one day, he sees the prince (Prince Edward, Prince of Wales). Tom is nearly caught and beaten by the Royal Guards – Edward stops, them and invites Tom into his palace chamber. There the two boys come to know each other's life and their uncanny resemblance. They exchange their clothes presumably for a short time. But Edward leaves in a hurry before anyone sees the boys at this strange game. Edward snatches up an article of national importance and deposits it in a piece of decorative armour and rushes out to punish the guards who have hurt Tom Canty. The guards fling out the Prince, assuming him to be a pauper. Soon he is caught by Tom Canty's father and subjected to abuse and brutality, as the farmer thinks that the Prince is his son. Tom left in the palace is seen as Prince Edward and has to cope with court customs and manners. His fellow nobles and palace officials think 'the Prince' (Tom Canty) has developed a sickness which has resulted in a memory loss. They repeatedly ask him about the Great Seal but he knows nothing about it. However when Tom sits in judgment his natural common sense reassures the nobles and other officials. Edward thrown into London's streets in the meantime meets Miles Hendon, a soldier returning from war. Miles does not believe Edward's story but humours him and becomes his protector. Meanwhile Henry VIII, the king dies and Tom Canty is considered the next king. As Edward experiences the life of a pauper, he becomes aware of the stark class inequality in England. He realizes the harsh, punitive nature of the English judicial system where people are burnt at the stake, pilloried and flogged. He understands that most of the time the accused are convicted on flimsy evidence and vows to reign with mercy when he regains his throne. Edward unwisely declares that he is the king to a group of thieves, they think he is mad and hold a mock coronation. After a series of adventures Edward interrupts the coronation where Tom is about to be crowned king. Tom is eager to give up the throne but the nobles refuse to believe that the pauper is the real heir to the throne until he produced the great seal, that he hid before leaving the palace. Tom declares that if anyone described it he could have produced it as he had used it to crack nuts. He did not know what the Great seal was. The test of the Great Seal, proves beyond doubt that Edward is the real king and heir. Edward and Tom change back to their original places- consequently Miles Hendon is rewarded. His story forms a sub-plot. He is betrayed and dispossessed by his brother Hugh- with Miles, Edward has many adventures.

Once Edwards regains his rightful place, Miles is reinstated and marries the woman he loves. Tom Canty is appointed the King's Ward, and returns to his mother and sisters.

0.3 Characterization

The characters of Tom Canty and Edward VI are set against each other- physically similar, there are certain characteristics they have in common. They are both kind and humane and Tom specially returns what does not belong to him. Never for a moment does he try to claim the kingship, although he was in a position of advantage. He reveals the truth and goes out of his way to help the prince's claim to the throne- prompting him, teasing his memory. Edward in turn demonstrates royal qualities- generosity, justice and rectitude. Even at the threat of death, he does not show any servility or weakness. He rewards the good and punishes evil. His

encounter with ordinary civilians - a cross section of society - makes him stronger and more understanding.

3.1 Other characters

The novel presents a wide spread of character types from the top to the bottom. From the king, the aristocracy and members of the royal court, the characters spread down to ruffians, thieves, pimps, heretics, madmen, ex-soldiers and peasants. The Hendons Miles and Hugh are contrasted. Miles is the swashbuckling soldier – generous, brave and defending the poor. Hugh is evil – deceitful.

3.2 The main characters

The novel has two main characters, who complement each other – physically almost indistinguishable. They are deeply divided by social conditions. But they display many traits that are common to both. Both show intelligence in that they adapt to situations, which they are unfamiliar with. Tom Canty does not blunder seriously, in the palace as the prince, in a way that arouses suspicion. The mistakes he makes through ignorance seem to be comparatively mild as they are attributed to a minor lapse in memory - a mental disorder. Prince Edward however seems to find it more difficult to adapt to poor civilian life. It seems as if individuals like him are vulnerable in rough society. He is threatened, ill-treated, beaten-up and even imprisoned. He is nearly killed. Like Tom, he also shows resourcefulness in facing challenges and in facing life.

Both show humanity and concern for fellow human beings. Both are sincere and without guile. They speak the truth, although the world around them does not believe them. Tom Canty displays a nobility of character which cannot be expected from a person of his background. He willingly gives up the throne.

Twain brings back characters from the past like heretics and practices like burning at the stake.

4.0 Themes of the novel.

- (i) Differences in society – the gap between the rich and the poor.
- (ii) Value of truth – truth wins in the end.
- (iii) Weakness of the ruling classes.
- (iv) Humanity – people are human- whatever differences they have, they share certain feelings and values.
- (v) Education through experience.
- (vi) ‘Each one to his own’ – one should claim only what one has the right to.

5.0 Features that make the novel interesting

- (i) Suspense – confused identities due to a chance/ accidental situation. Both Tom and Edward face unforeseen situations and create excitement, anticipating revelation of the true identity.
- (ii) Variety of situations or experiences faced by Tom and Edward.
- (iii) The climax – the mystery of the Great Seal which is like a test of true identity.
- (iv) Humour – mistaken identity creates humour. The behaviour of highly placed palace officials is not in keeping with their status.
- (v) Maturation of the two boys. Both Cauty and Prince Edward, their experiences constitute learning experiences. They develop insight into each other's situations and grow up.

Bringing Tony Home

Tissa Abeysekera

0.1 Introduction

'Bringing Tony Home' is an intimate Sri Lankan novel. One of the first things that you might notice about this novel is its visually charged nature. Like a movie, the moments in the novel evoke powerful visuals – images of a bygone era, images of nature and images of colourful people. This might not be a surprise to you, considering the fact that the author is a well-known film director in Sri Lanka.

The novel is structured in three parts. As if to suggest the three different time periods of the narrator's life: his adult life as a film-maker, his teenage years as a restless stubborn and adventurous kid, and finally his life as a young adult. The fragmentation of the novel acts as a brilliant foil to the changes that take place in the beautiful environment of the narrator.

0.2 Themes

The central concern in the novel is the sincere affection between the narrator and his faithful dog Tony. This gentle peaceful relationship between the boy and his dog suffers a shocking spilt due to the adverse economic situation in the family. Neither the boy nor the dog knows how to end their seven-year strong relationship as the family leaves their home and moves into a much more moderate and restricted surroundings. This inability of both parties to come to terms with that separation triggers off the story.

Amidst this conflict of love between a human and animal the novel gives us a visually-charged insight into the gentle peaceful past era of Sri Lanka when people's lives were unsophisticated and slow paced: Salaka Poth or the Hal Poth were equivalent to the national identity cards; buses were not crowded and did not run in a hurry; suburban Sri Lanka was alive with awe-inspiring trees and waterways; people welcomed strangers to their houses.

The novel also explores relationship between children and parents. The mother is empathetic kind and sensitive. The father is distant and at times insensitive. The narrator knows that he needs to learn to live amidst such opposite tendencies. The dog Tony too seemed aware of the differences in human personalities and seemed to have created his own way of living amidst

such differences. The final running away of the dog might sound sad and ungrateful – but Tony, we could assume from the novel, knew what he was doing.

The novel also explores the deep nostalgia we human beings have for our own past. It suggests that possibly we might never have given up our past. Like an image from an old movie, or a passage from a novel or a verse from an old poem, the past is embedded deep in our psyche and all it takes is one visual, thought or a sound to unleash those memories.

The novel also makes us realize that as human beings we are still unable to deal with partings. The narrator in the novel avoids parting as much as possible. When the family gets into the bus to go to their new house, he avoids eye contact with Tony who is eager to get in to the bus himself. When he meets another dog like Tony many years later, he runs away after feeding the dog. Even Tony does not know how to part – he runs away from home when his best friend is fast asleep. The novel thus brings all of us into equal grounds – both animal and human.

Prototype Assessment Tool for School Based Assessments

Appreciation of English Literary Texts

Grades 10 & 11

1. Evaluation State :- Term 1 - Tool 1
2. Genre :- Poetry
3. Content Covered :- *The Eagle*
4. Nature of the tool :- Group Activity (R)
5. Objectives of the tool :-
 - Develop ability to work in groups
 - Develop writing skills
 - Develop skills of finding and organizing information under the given headings

6. Relevant skills involved :-

Language skills

- Reading - Infers meaning of unfamiliar words
- Extracts specific information from texts

- Writing - Uses English words accurately and appropriately
- Uses English words in their proper contexts
- Gives information appropriately

- Grammar - Describes literary techniques used in the poem and writes notes to express their implications using correct grammatical structures.

- Literary skills - Develops analytical skills

Develops critical thinking

7. Instructions to implement the tool :-

- Tr. tells the students that they are going to do a group assignment on the poem "*The Eagle*".
- Tr. divides the student in to groups.
- Tr. tells them that they should find the literary devices used in the poem.
- Tr. explains that they should write the effect of the literary devices and how skillful the writer is in using them.
- The group leader is asked to assign tasks to each member.
- The group leader is instructed to present the final assignment.
- Tells them about the time allotted.

8.	Evaluation / assessment criteria		
1.	Understands the aims of the task	-	4
2.	Works according to a plan and each pupil should fulfill the task assigned to him / her	-	4
3.	Takes responsibility, helps others, works actively And ends the task within the time	-	4
4.	Considers suitability, creativity and clear presentation	-	4
5.	Considers correctness, information relevant, task has been done	-	4