

Appreciation of English Literary Texts Grades 10 & 11

Teachers' Resource Book

Part 1

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2008

Foreword

This Teacher's Resource Book is intended to help teachers to teach prescribed texts for the G.C.E. O/L 'Appreciation of English Literary Texts'.

A term plan has been introduced and this Teacher's Resource Book is the first part and it includes guidance to the teacher on poetry, prose, short stories and drama which are mentioned in the teaching plan to be covered in the first year.

Literature as a discipline is strongly affected by subjectivity and individuality. The teaching approach should not by any means limit the students' originality, stifle their imaginative involvement or cramp their style of writing and turn literary study into a production of answers on the same basic model. Students should be encouraged to read for themselves, discover and write responses which will make them think for themselves rather than depend on someone else for a response.

I hope this Teacher's Resource Book would be of much help to the teachers especially as the syllabus has changed and that the teachers need some kind of assistance and guidance in teaching 'Appreciation of English Literary Texts'.

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Introduction

1.0 Aims of Teaching Literature

From time to time, educationists and policy makers in education have given expression to 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 as well as language. Responding to literature is a personal event and gives pleasure to the reader.

For a large number of students studying English literature at the G.C.E. (O/L) this may be their first formal encounter with “literature”. While expecting them to gain pleasure through reading, they will have tremendous opportunities for improving their 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 to the selection of texts – it is theme based. In this approach, other criteria have also been considered – 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 was 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 G.C.E. (O/L). An almost 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 two prescribed novels

will be studied and also used in School Based Assessment. It will be tested at the examination as well. Three other novels – abridged and simplified- may be read for enjoyment. Through this, it is expected to break the vicious stranglehold the examination has over students and to make reading, a fun and relaxing activity. It is a painful reality that English literature is 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 those 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

*Brumfit, C.J. (Ed.). (1991). Assessment in Literature teaching. review of English Language Teaching, Vol. 1, No.3, Modern English publications in association with the British Council.

**Spiro, J. (1991). Assessing Literature: four papers in Brumfit, C.J. (Ed.). (1991). Assessment in Literature teaching. review of English Language Teaching, Vol. 1, No.3, Modern English publications in association with the British Council.

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.

4.00 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 it. It is 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 G.C.E. (OL) examination. The issue of certification and learning is a critical one.

Teaching prose

Introduction:

The anthology “Appreciation of English Literary Texts” contains all the important literary genres. Prose is one of them. The two passages of prose are selected for their factual content as well as for the power of the language in which it is communicated. The content is of significant value in the modern world. One draws attention to the need for human freedom and the other the recognition of that same freedom for animals. In both excerpts one experiences the irresponsibility and insensitiveness of modern man.

Rationale of teaching prose

Teaching the prose passages is expected to be a bridging activity between the teaching of language and the teaching of literature. At grade ten students begin their first study of literature. They have to be inducted to the study of literature. Hitherto in their school career, they have not experienced such 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 character or the characters involved and the significance of the situation he/she/they underwent. Such situations can be generalized to the wider human context. It is this process of reading, comprehending and empathizing that 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 inferencing 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.

Prose Text I - Extract from Nelson Mandela's "Long Walk to Freedom" The Dark Years

Note on the author

Nelson Mandela was a former President of South Africa. He was also a former president of the African National Congress. He was born in a village near Umtata in the Transkei on 18th July 1918. His father was the principal councilor to the Acting Paramount Chief of Thembuland. After his father's death, he was being groomed for high office. But, influenced by the many cases that came before the Chief's court and the stories of his ancestors' valour during the wars of resistance in defence of his fatherland, he wished to become a lawyer and lead the struggle for freedom. Mandela had his primary education in a local mission school and his secondary education at Healdtown. He enrolled at the University of Fort Hare for his B.A, where he was elected to the students' representative council. He was suspended from the university for joining a protest boycott. He completed his B.A. by correspondence and commenced studying for his LLB. He entered politics in earnest while studying in Johannesburg by joining the African National Congress (ANC) in 1942.

At the height of the Second World War, Nelson Mandela together with a group of dedicated young men transformed the ANC into a mass movement, deriving its strength and motivation from the unlettered millions of working people in the towns and countryside, the peasants in the rural areas and the professionals in the cities. In September 1944, they came together to found the African National Congress Youth League. Mandela received attention by his discipline and commitment to the cause.

The ANC took on a radical stance and advocated the weapons of boycott, strike, civil disobedience and non-cooperation. In 1950, Mandela was elected to the National Executive Committee at the National conference. In 1952, the ANC launched its campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws and Mandela was elected Volunteer-in-Chief. The defiance campaign was launched as a mass civil disobedience movement. For his part in the defiance campaign Mandela was convicted of "contravening the suppression of Communism Act," prohibited from attending gatherings and confined to Johannesburg for six months. During this time, Mandela became a Deputy Chief of the ANC. Mandela and his co-worker Oliver Tambo also set up a legal practice to help African nationals ejected from their ancestral land and subjected to various discriminatory practices.

During the early fifties, Mandela played an important part in leading the resistance to the western areas. He played a key role in popularising the Freedom charter, adopted by the Congress of the People in 1955.

In the late fifties the ANC's attention was focussed on a number of key issues

- (a) Struggle against the exploitation of labour
- (b) The pass laws
- (c) Bantustan policy
- (d) Segregation in the Open universities.

For his participation and leadership in these activities, Mandela was banned, arrested and detained. But he continued his protest campaign to challenge apartheid* and minority white rule from the underground.

He left South Africa in 1962 to win international support for his movement. On his return, he was arrested and imprisoned for five years in Robben Island. Robben Island where he was imprisoned became a centre for learning and Mandela was a central figure in the organised political classes. Even in prison he never compromised his political principles and was a source of strength for the other prisoners. He was released on Sunday 11th February 1990 and he agreed to a suspension of armed struggle. On 10th May 1994, he was inaugurated as the first democratically elected president of South Africa.

B. Note on the extract

The extract dwells on three episodes from Nelson Mandela's life in prison: the death of his mother, the imprisonment of his wife Winnie and the death of his oldest son, Madiba Thembekile. In all these personal tragedies, Nelson Mandela was denied access to his loved ones. He was forced to bear his grief alone, by himself. His family was forced to face these tragedies by itself. The tragic events show the immense sacrifice Nelson made for his people. His soul-searching words 'Had I made the right choice in putting the people's welfare even before that of my family?' is the theme of the passage. Mandela's life was dedicated to his people. He put the welfare of the African people above his own. He could not look after his mother nor attend her funeral. He was helpless to stop the harassment of his wife. He could not attend the funeral of his eldest son. What we get here is the essence of a freedom fighter's life.

C. Learning Activities

C-1 comprehension

1. Read from the beginning of the passage "Time may seem to stand still" up to "or the pain of not being able to lay her to rest"
 - (i) Write the main events, in the order they occur in the passage.
 - (ii) When did Mandela's mother visit him? What was significant about this visit?
 - (iii) What changes had taken place in his family since his imprisonment?
 - (iv) What made Mandela anxious? Was his anxiety confirmed? In what way?¹

What is the saddest event in the section?

¹* A former policy of separate racial development in the Republic of South Africa supported traditionally by the Nationalist party. This is an African patriotic movement that resisted "white supremacy", where the white rulers in Africa marginalized the black natives through social and political segregation.

- (v) Do you think Mandela feels guilty about putting his people above his family? Justify your point of view.
- (vi) What kind of person is Mandela? What image do you get of Mandela from this passage?

2. Read from “In the early hours of the morning of 12th May” up to “hoping to glean some information that would assist their case against Winnie”.

Now answer the following questions.

- i. What happened in the early hours of 12th May 1969?
- ii Under which law was Winnie charged?
- iii How was Winnie treated by the police ?
- iv. Who were Zeni and Zindzi?
- v. When was Winnie charged? Who represented her legally?
- vi. Who were George Bizos and Arthur Chaskalson?
- vii. When was Winnie released? Were there any charges proved against her? What does this incident tell us about the legal system of South Africa at the time?
- viii. What incident made Nelson Mandela anxious? What sentence puts across this anxiety most powerfully?
- ix. What was the favour extended to Mandela? Was it genuine? Why?
- x. What does this section tell us about “apartheid” as was practised in South Africa?

3. Read from “ During this time I experienced” up to “ I shall look after the family while you are gone”

- i. List the main events in this section.
- ii. What tragic event does this section focus on?
- iii. What phrase expresses Mandela’s sorrow?
- iv. How did he react to the event?
- v. What is the significance of Walter’s behaviour? What do you feel about Walter’s response?
- vi. Mandela says “There is nothing one man can say to another at such a time.” Is this true?
- vii. Was Mandela given permission to attend his son’s funeral? How do you feel about this?
- viii. How do you feel about Mandela’s reminiscence of his son? Why do you think he remembers his son in this way? Is this the way people feel when someone near and dear dies?

4. Review

- i. Was it worthwhile sacrificing the lives of his family members for the sake of his people’s freedom? Do you feel that Mandela did the right thing?
- ii. How different would his life have been if he did not become a freedom fighter?
- iii. What impression do you get of Mandela as (a) a father? (b) a husband? (c) a political activist? (d) a human being?
- iv. The title of this extract is “The Dark Years”. What do you think of the title? Do you think the content justifies the title?
- v. What insight do you get into a freedom fighter’s life from this extract? Do you think it is worthwhile sacrificing one’s career, wealth and safety for such a fight?
- vi. Mandela asks himself “Had I made the right choice in putting the people’s welfare even before that of my own family?” What do you think of this decision? Do you think he should have thought of his family?

Prose Text 2- The Life and Death of Cholmondeley: Gerald Durrell

A. Note on the author

Gerald (Gerry) Malcolm Durrell was a naturalist, zookeeper, conservationist, and television presenter. He founded what is now called the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and the Jersey Zoo (now renamed Durrell Wildlife) on the Channel Island of Jersey in 1958.

Durrell was born in Jamshedpur in India on January 7, 1925. He attributes his life-long love of animals to an early visit to an Indian zoo, as a child. After the death of his father, the family moved to England. Durrell's love of animals was further nurtured when he went to live on the Greek Island of Corfu in 1935. The four years he spent there formed the basis of his books "My Family and other Animals", "Birds Beasts and Relatives" and "The Garden of the Gods". The Greek doctor, scientist and philosopher Theodore Stephanides and the French naturalist Jean Henry Fabre influenced him.

He is best remembered for writing a number of books based on his experiences as an animal collector and enthusiast. He was genuinely concerned about threatened species and considered zoos as places that should give them shelter and a new lease of life.

B. Note on the text

Like the extract from Nelson Mandela's autobiography, the story – "The Life and Death of Cholmondeley" is also a real one. It draws attention to the animal world. To most human beings animals are either monsters that threaten their well-being and in consequence justify being destroyed or they are sources of entertainment. Either way very few men regard animals as living beings who have the same right to live on the earth, and to share its space. Cholmondeley, tamed from the wild and trained in the ways of civilized western man, is at first made to trust his human captors and interact with them. He is even conditioned to accept the western style of life – to eat western man's food, to accept his technology etc. But when he behaves like the humans in western society – to beg a lift in a bus, to get into a car – he is rejected. Confused, he instinctively returns to his original ape behaviour and is killed in consequence. Gerald Durrell suggests that it is man who is responsible for Cholmondeley's death. Alienated from his natural environment, he is trained to 'ape' men. When he does that, he is punished. At a time when animal rights are being spoken of, "The Life and Death of Cholmondeley" questions man's exploitation of animals for amusement and entertainment.

C. Learning Activities

C-1 Comprehension

1. Read from – "Shortly before we left our hilltop hut at Bakebe..." to "I knew he was going to be all right"

Answer the following questions.

- (i) What was the writer's last camp?
- (i) From where did they set out?

- (i) Who was the “unusual guest”?
- (ii) Who was Chumley?
- (iii) Who was his owner?
- (iv) Why was Chumley being sent to the London zoo?
- (v) Why did the writer get a “rude shock”?
- (vi) How did Chumley arrive? What was special about his behaviour?
- (vii) Explain the expressions:
 - (a) Chumley stepped out with all ease and self – confidence of a film star.”
 - (b) “with exactly that bored expression that one sees on the faces of professional hand shakers”.
- (viii) It is apparent that Chumley had learnt much human behaviour – what actions of his make us think of such human behaviour?
- (ix) What actions make us aware that he is still an ape?
- (x) Why do you think Chumley fell ill?
- (xi) What was the writer’s attitude to Chumley?
- (xiv) How did his relationship with Chumley develop?
- (xii) What do you feel
 - (a) about Chumley?
 - (a) about the writer?
- (xiii) Can you think of what will happen to Chumley in London?

2. Read from “the day of our departure from Bakebe dawned———” up to “to avoid this risk, Chumley was sentenced to death and shot”, and answer the following questions.

- (i) Did Chumley enjoy travelling by motor vehicles? What words suggest this?
- (ii) Who was Sue? How was she different to Chumley?
- (iii) How is Sue similar to a human baby?
- (iv) How long did it take to the writer to visit Chumley? Where did he see him?
- (v) How did Chumley greet the narrator? What words suggest that Chumley was happy to see the narrator?
- (vi) How was Chumley used? Do you think he was clever? Give your reasons.
- (vii) Why did Chumley break out of his cage? How did he try to amuse himself?
- (viii) What was the reaction of the public? Do you think it was reasonable?
- (ix) What is the writer’s attitude to this reaction?
- (x) What was the result of this reaction?
- (xi) Do you think Chumley was dangerous? What words suggest that he was not?

C-2 Review

- (i) Whom do you blame for what happened, the humans or Chumley?
- (ii) Whom does the writer blame? Give words and phrases from the text to support your answer.
- (iii) The writer sees Chumley as “more human than animal”. Is this true? Find sentences from the story to support this view.
- (iv) Do you think it was fair to kill Chumley? Why? Give your reasons.
- (v) What do you think of using wild animals in this way? What punishment should be given to such perpetrators?
- (vi) Who is the “worthy citizen” referred to in the last paragraph? What effect is created by this phrase?
- (vii) Do you think the same reaction would have occurred if Chumley had attacked a native African?

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:*

(From An Essay on criticism)

* Briggs, J. & Monaco, R. (1990). *Metaphor: The logic of Poetry*. New York; Pace University Press.

1.0 Reading a poem

The above discussion should make it clear that reading a poem is different to reading prose or a story. James Britton puts this very clearly in the following passage.

“The meaning in a poem as a whole, arises from the way one meaning-bearing element in it interacts with – opposes, supports, modifies, complicates – meaning arising from another source, the guidance afforded by a poet takes primarily the form of a process of orchestration – the creation of a text that allows the contributory voices to speak in harmony.”

For the sensitive reading of poetry then, one must engage with all the meaning creating aspects, which means the poem in its entirety. As Briggs and Monaco (1990)* observe, “Reading poetry requires a trained attention, a special state of mind that our daily experiences with thought and language don’t demand”(p.xi). Therefore, in understanding how poets work and how poetry communicates, one understands the reading process as well.

Let us take a poem from the anthology. “She Dwelt among the Untrodden ways” by William Wordsworth. It is short and the language is simple, and compact with three verses of four rhyming lines. What are the meaning creating elements?

A list like the following can be made running the eye from top to bottom:

- (a) The title or topic:
She dwelt among the untrodden ways.
 What feelings are evoked in us? “Untrodden ways” seems to be a strange word here suggesting remoteness, distance from so-called civilization, freshness perhaps and an unspoilt, definitely rural context. She is female – a girl/woman in a village who had not encountered the touch of urban life.
- (b) The arrangement of the lines of the poem:
 Three verses of four lines each with alternative rhyme ab, ab
- (c) The context of the situation – a female human living far away from civilization, a seemingly simple but contented life, not affected by praise or blame. The sense of loss suffered by the poet – persona – indicates that she seems to be of special worth to him.
- (d) The speaker – poet- persona: His outlook and attitude. His esteem of “Lucy” suggests the value system he believed in. His grief seems to be a personal one. “and, Oh, the difference to me”. The chord of sympathy suggests a kinship and a bond which raises questions about the relationship. This cannot be a common sexual one; it suggests profundity- removed from physical desire.

* ibid

(e) Images used

(I) Untrodden ways
Suggesting distance, remoteness, also freshness and unspoilt nature.

(II) Springs of Dove

Dove is a river in England - “springs” could suggest its catchment area. Springs form the streams, which form rivers. A mountain terrain supports the idea of unspoilt nature.

(III) a violet by a mossy stone

This is a metaphor because it is a comparison between Lucy and the flower. A violet is a tiny blue/purple flower, fragile, dainty and small, which blooms among a clutch of leaves. It seems to be shy, avoiding attention. The poet intensifies this quality of shy withdrawal with the second image “by a mossy stone”. Violets are difficult to see because of the way the flowers are placed on the plant. It is still more difficult to see if it is by a mossy stone.

(IV) fair as a star

The girl is also like a star when only one is shining in the sky – like the evening star, which appears before other stars. It seems to suggest the uniqueness/worth of this girl.

f) The metrical patterns- rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, etc. The poem is carefully crafted. Look at the rhyme scheme.

(i) ways dove
 praise love

(ii) eye (iii) be
 sky me

Theme: Nature
Poem: The Sea
Poet: James Reeves

(A) Note on the poet

James Reeves was the pseudonym of John Morris (1990-1978), a British writer known for his poetry and contributions to children’s literature and the literature of collected traditional songs.

He was born in Middlesex and was educated at Stowe School and Jesus College, Cambridge. He taught until 1952, when he became a fulltime writer.

(B) Note on the poem

The poet sees the sea in its various aspects and moods – during the day and at night; at low tide and high tide, when it is calm, and when it is turbulent. He fancifully compares it to a dog displaying a variety of behaviours: when it is hungry and ravenous, when it is alert and hunting and when it is satiated and sleepy. In its rumbling, and tumbling and rolling, it is like a dog. The rise of the tide in the evenings is like the bounding of a dog sniffing and snuffing its prey. The sea could be ferocious and gentle as a dog could be. The image he creates is very fanciful. There is even a touch of humour in the transition from mischievous gnawing of bones to the mild hunting of the prey and the final seemingly innocent calm of sleep in the last verse.

The poet uses a number of techniques to make it a lively poem.

(i) Imagery

- Visual and auditory images - a dog gnawing bones, a dog bounding after its prey, a dog sleeping with its head between its paws
- The rolling and tumbling sea, the sea at high tide splashing on the shore, the calm sea lapping its waves gently on the shore.
- Different sounds made by the sea
- Sound effects are created using

(a) rhyme eg.
grey, day
jaws, gnaws, paws

(ii) Alliteration*

So quiet, so quiet he
Scarcely snores
snuffs and sniffs
howls and hollos

(iii) Assonance**

bones, bones, bones
rolls on the beach all day
rumbling, tumbling

(iv) onomatopoeia***

clashing teeth
howls and hollos
rumbling tumbling stones

C- Learning Activities

Aids – Pictures of the sea showing different aspects – when it is calm, when a storm is raging (Alternatively- a visit to the beach)

C-1 Comprehension

- i) How does the poet see the sea during the day?
- ii) How does he see the sea during the night?
- iii) What picture of the sea does he convey in the third verse?
- iv) What similarities does the poet see between the behaviour of a dog and the sea in verse 1?
- v) What words make this image strong?

*alliteration - The repetition of sounds in a sequence of words. Alliteration generally refers to the repeated consonant sounds (often initial consonant sounds or those at the beginning of **stressed** syllables).

“The voice of the sea is seductive; never ceasing”

assonance - The repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds, usually in **stressed syllables, followed by different consonant sounds in proximate words.

“What large, dark hands are those at the window”

***onomatopoeia- The creation or use of words that, however we explain it, sound like what they mean or, more accurately, seem to signify meaning through sound effects.

e.g. hiss, sizzle

Source “The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms”

- vi) How does the poet use the dog image to show the ferocity and threat of the sea at high tide?
- vii) How does he convey the sound of high tide?
- viii) What aspect of dog behaviour is shown in the third verse?
- ix) How does the poet indicate that the sea is calm?
- x) Explain the following words and phrases. What effects are created by them?
 - a. giant and grey
 - b. clashing teeth and shaggy jaws
 - c. the moon rocks in the stormy cloud
 - d. Shaking his wet side over the cliffs
 - e. Grass (on the dune) play no more their reedy tune
 - f. So quiet, so quiet, he scarcely snores

- ix) What words and phrases suggest that the sea is
 - calm
 - rough
 - clear and beautiful

- x) What words and phrases suggests the dog is
 - hungry
 - roused
 - satisfied (well fed and sleepy)

C-2 Empathizing

- i) How do you feel about the sea being compared to a dog?
- ii) Do you like dogs? Does the writer's description fit your observation of dog behaviour?
- iii) Do you like the sea?
- iv) Do you think you would like to see more of the sea after reading the poem?

C-3 Review

- i) Do you think the poet loves the sea? Why do you think so? Do you think he loves dogs? Why?
- ii) Do you think the poet's comparison of the sea to a dog is appropriate? Does he capture the variety of moods and aspects of the sea? Give examples.
- iii) Do you think the poem is funny or serious? Justify your answer.
- iv) Do you like this poem? What features in it (the idea, words and phrases, sound effects) appeal to you?

D. For the teacher

- Are the learning activities sufficient/inadequate? What more needs to be done?
- What words would be difficult for the students?
If your children have not seen the sea will they enjoy the poem? What will you have to do to motivate them to engage with the poem?

Theme: War and Violence**Song: Where Have all the Flowers Gone?****Composer: Pete Seeger****A: Note on the composer and singer**

Pete Seeger, born May 3rd, 1919 is a folk singer and a political activist. He was a major contributor to folk music and a pioneer of protest music in the 1950's and 1960's Pete Seeger is best known today as the author or co author of the songs "Where have all the flowers gone", "If I had a hammer," and "Turn, turn, turn" which have been recorded by many artists both in and outside the Folk Revival Movement and are still sung throughout the world. He comes from a family of musicians and composers.

Seeger is known for his ardent political beliefs and his involvement with leftist political organizations, including the communist party. In 1967 and 1968, Seeger took an anti-war stance. His song "Waist deep in the Big Muddy" was an allegory of the Vietnam War under the then president, Lyndon – B. Johnson.

B: Note on the song

Pete Seeger shows the vicious cycle of death and grief brought about by war in this song. Youth is the time of love and the flowers suggesting both youth and hope have been plucked by young girls and given to their loved ones who go to war. The young men die and their girls (wives and sweet hearts) plant/place flowers over their graves in remembrance and love. War has taken away youth, love and life.

C. Learning Activities**C-1 Comprehension**

- (i) What events in life are mentioned in the song?
- (ii) What is the order of those events?
- (iii) Explain the phrases
 - Gone for soldiers
 - Gone to grave yards
- (iv) Does the composer think of this cycle of love and war, life and death as an extraordinary /or a common occurrence in the world? How does he do this?
- (v) What purpose does the chorus serve?
 - Long time passing
 - Long time ago
- (v) What is the effect of the rhetorical question repeated as a chorus? Select from the ideas given below and give your justification. You may choose more than one idea.

- (a) war recurs time and again

- (a) war is a natural human event
- (b) Men do not learn from their mistakes

C-2 Empathizing

- (i) What do you feel about the anti war demonstrations in Sri Lanka?
- (ii) How do you react to the media propaganda for the war?

C-3 Review

- (i) Would it be correct to say that the song suggests that war kills the young and blights their hopes?
- (ii) Why does this state of affairs continue? Why cannot we stop the war?
- (iii) What arguments do those who are in favour of war give?
- (iv) What do those who oppose war say?

C. For the teacher

- (i) Do you think the students will know the difference between a song and a poem? How can you make them aware of it?
- (ii) How can you use the title of the poem to make the students aware of the theme of the song?
- (iii) What do the flowers symbolise?
- (iv) How can you get the students to empathise with the situation?
 - a) Are girls particularly drawn to young soldiers? Why?
 - b) Are young men attracted to become soldiers? Why?

Assessment – Collect articles from the newspapers for and against the war. Write a comment/ review on war using ideas from these articles.

Theme : Humour

Poem: The pigtail

Poet: William Makepeace Thackeray

A: Note on the poet

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811- 1863) is known more as a novelist, than as a poet. A contemporary of Charles Dickens, he was often compared with the former. But they were very different in terms of background, education, wealth and status. Thackeray was born in Calcutta, the son of an East India company official, and received his education at Charterhouse and Cambridge. He was not a brilliant student and left the university without getting a degree. Some of his experiences at Cambridge are represented obliquely in *Pendennis*. However, he made a number of important contacts, the most notable being Edward Fitzgerald.

After leaving Cambridge, Thackeray travelled widely in the continent and made the acquaintance of the great German poet Goethe.

On his return from Germany, Thackeray lived the life of a “propertied gentleman” – dissolute and extravagant. Forced to find a suitable occupation Thackeray invested his inheritance in a weekly paper – *The National Standard*. This established Thackeray in the London world of Journalism. He worked on *Frazer’s Magazine*, “*Morning Chronicle*”, and most successfully on *Punch* – the comic magazine. Thackeray worked as a free lance Journalist for about ten years, before the success of “*Vanity Fair*”. During this apprenticeship period, Thackeray produced his first books, collections of essays and observations of life published as travel books. *The Paris Sketchbook* as well as the *Irish sketchbook* provided informative as well as entertaining reading. He also did a comic series for *Punch* about a trip to the east. During this period, Thackeray combined hack writing with travel tales. His first great novel was “*Vanity Fair*” written between 1847 and 1848. *Pendennis* followed in 1849-50. In 1852, he published “*The History of Henry Esmond*”. “*The New Comes*”, written in 1853 -55 echoes “*Vanity Fair*” in its criticism of snobbery and mercenary marriages. “*The Adventures of Philip*” (1861-62) was his last complete novel. The incomplete “*Denis Duval*” appeared after his death. His novels demonstrate great diversity, interest and perception and his varied experiences of contemporary life. “*Vanity Fair*”, his first novel shows him best as a social satirist.

B: Note on the poem

This is an extremely funny poem where Thackeray laughingly presents the antics of a “ sage” – a man of wisdom who thinks according to his logic that the pigtail he wore should be in front rather than at the back. As readers we understand that it is not logical at all. Hair grows down, along the back of a person. It cannot be plaited in front. Even if it could, it will affect vision, hinder movement. But sages are not logical. Neither are they practical. Even locally we have a saying that a pundit cannot cross an “*edanda*”. When men are too learned or too wise they lose sight of reality. It is this lack of practical common sense that Thackeray laughs at, in this poem.

C. Learning activities

C-1 Comprehension

- (i) Make a list of all the words and phrases, which you think do not occur in modern English. Guess the meanings and write them down. Why do you think they are used in the poem?
- (ii) Describe the “Sage’s” actions. How long did he turn and twist and tack?
- (iii) Has he stopped doing all this? What lines suggest that he is still doing this?
- (iv) Can he be a modern “ Sage “? Why?
- (v) Trace the rhyming pattern of the poem from verse 1 to verse 6? What is the effect?
- (vi) What do you think of the rhythm?
 - (a) racy, quick moving
 - (b) slow, monotonous

C-2 Empathizing

- (i) Do you think this story is true? Give your reasons.
- (ii) What kind of people does the poet laugh at? What kind of weakness does he laugh at?

C-3 Review

- (i) What makes this an amusing poem?

D. For the teacher

Apparently the poet wants to create a humorous picture of a ‘sage’. It seems to exaggerate the behaviour of the man. How would you make the children aware that the comic or ludicrous is very often exaggerated action?

What parallels can you draw from the local scene? E.g. Mahadenamutta?

Theme: War and Violence

Poem: Charge of the Light Brigade

Poet: Alfred Lord Tennyson

A. Note on the poet

Alfred, Lord Tennyson was born in 1809 and died in 1892. He is one of the most outstanding of the Victorian poets. His skill is particularly noted with regard to his use of rhythm and rhyme. A good deal of the poems, which are enjoyed today, were written in his early and early middle periods – among the volumes of 1830, 1832, and 1842. Looking through these poems one notices the influence of Keats. “Mariana” is one such poem. Tennyson is also noted for his ability to create atmosphere and landscape- “The Dying Swan” invokes a unique world of the imagination.

Tennyson is also remembered for his historical poems set in medieval England. E.g. “Morte d’ Arthur” recreates the legend of King Arthur.

A. Note on the Poem

“Charge of the Light Brigade” is based on a real incident during the Crimean war of 1853 – 1856, when Britain together with France and Turkey fought against Russia. – The battle of Balaklava. It was fought on Russian territory and so the Russians were at an advantage. The Light Brigade, which was an English Infantry Brigade, suffered heavy losses. Tennyson has praise for the men who fought in this battle. He remarks on their unquestioned courage against heavy odds. The losses were heavy. Nearly half the soldiers who went to battle were killed or injured. Hence Tennyson’s attitude to this incident is ambivalent. He admires the courage of the men who fought in this battle. But he is critical of the command that foolishly and insensitively sent the soldiers to certain death. They had failed to recognize the advantage the familiar terrain provided the enemy. Worse, they had failed to provide the soldiers with the weapons, which could withstand the superior firepower of the enemy. The Light Infantry had only sabres. The war was clearly a waste of human lives.

Although the poem is set on a particular historical episode, it has relevance to many war situations, where power seeking or fame seeking politicians and officials barter human lives away. In a war it is the ordinary soldiers who pay the price. They are pawns in the “Power game of war”.

C. Learning Activities

C-1 Comprehension

- (i) What event or situation does the poet describe?
- (ii) How many soldiers were in the Brigade?
- (iii) What was the command given to them?
- (iv) Did all the soldiers obey the command?
- (v) What was the outcome of the battle?
- (vi) Understanding the meanings of various expressions and words in the poem.
 - (a) All in the valley of death rode the six hundred.
 - (b) Was there a man dismayed?
 - (c) Theirs but to do and die
 - (d) Cannon in front of them. Stormed at with shot and shell
 - (e) Flashed all their sabres bare, flashed as they turned in air.
 - (f) What literary devices are used in these expressions /phrases?
- (vii) What kind of terrain is suggested by the details provided in the poem?
- (viii) What evidence does the poem provide about the warring parties?
- (ix) What weapons did the Light Brigade have?
- (x) How was the enemy equipped?

C-2 Empathizing

Select the appropriate response to the following questions.

- (i) The soldiers of the Light Brigade were
 - (a) courageous (b) foolish (c) cowardly
- (ii) The commander of the Light Brigade was
 - (a) proud (b)stupid (c) callous
- (iii) War is (a) heroic (b) wasteful (c) competitive
- (iv) What impressions of the war does the writer communicate?
 - (a) bloody (b)inhuman (c)glorious
- (v) What is his attitude to the soldiers of the Light Brigade?

a) Sympathetic (b) critical (c) laudatory

(vi) How would you describe the battle?

(a) unequal (b) bloody (c) ferocious

Give your reasons illustrating with evidence from the text.

C-3 Review

(i) Why do you think the battle was fought? Who do you think won?

(ii) How many of the six hundred soldiers came back alive?

Why did this happen?

(iii) Do you think the writer approves of war?

(iv) What are your own feelings about war? Are they similar to Tennyson's?

Where would you disagree with him?

(v) How does the rhyme and rhythm contribute to the effect created by the poem?

D. For the teacher.

(i) What other questions than those given in the learning activities would you need to ask the students to ensure comprehension?

(ii) Look for more words and phrases, which students may find difficult to understand. Think of how you will get students to understand the meaning.

(iii) How will you get students to understand the general content?

(iv) Where and when will you give the information about the (a) place of the battle?
persons involved in the battle?

(v) What attitude do you think students should have towards war in general?

How will you use the context and the content of the poem to create this attitude?

(vi) How many of your own learning activities can be used for generating empathy towards the context and contents of this poem?

(vii) Do you think you can relate the events in the poem to the present situation in Sri Lanka? How can you do this?

Think of possibilities of using newspaper cuttings highlighting the war situation in Sri Lanka or in the world to identify the parallels in the context.

Theme: Nature

Poem: She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways

Poet: William Wordsworth

A. Note on the poet

William Wordsworth was born in Cockermouth in Cumbria in Northern England in 1770. The poets who were fashionable when he was a boy were mostly town poets who wrote elegant poetry but often used words that were not natural and ordinary. Wordsworth altered this, because he wrote his poems in plain words from everyday speech and in this way he made the scenes and feelings that he described seem real to his readers. Another feature of Wordsworth's poetry is the way he opened people's eyes to the beauty and grandeur of nature and of the joy of life surrounded by nature.

Wordsworth's greatest work, 'The Prelude' is a long poem telling the story of boyhood and early manhood. His poems make the reader feel the freedom of mountains and lakes, the freshness of the wind, the sunlight and the sky, and the wonders of life itself.

B. Note on the poem

This is a short piece from Wordsworth's poems described as Lucy poems. The theme of the poem relates to his views and perceptions in the preface to the "Lyrical Ballads" (1798). These are

- (a) To choose incidents and situations from common life
- (b) To describe them in a selection of language really used by men
- (c) To make these incidents and situations interesting by seeing in them primary laws of Nature

The subject of this poem, the girl Lucy, lived among untrodden ways ("untrodden" suggesting that the path was not used or trampled by men), hence she was far away in a rural landscape, away from the town. Her residence was in a particularly beautiful and unspoilt place besides the springs of 'Dove', a river in the north – west of England. The "springs" indicate the mouth of the river. This adds to the idea of remoteness and perhaps mountainous terrain as we know rivers start in the mountains. As the place where she lived was remote, she was alone and by herself. There was a perfect blend /balance between Nature and the human. Though she was alone, she was self- sufficient. She is not in need of pity or help. Like the mountain background where she lived she was unaffected by lack of praise or of love. She had equanimity. In the second verse the poet uses an image, simple, ordinary but totally appropriate to bring out the character of the girl:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!

A violet blooms within a bed of leaves. It is hidden but it is of the most exquisite blue/violet. This quality of hiddenness is heightened by the phrase "by a mossy stone". The violet is a delicate plant, which nestles close to the ground, away from strong sunlight or wind. The girl's simplicity and modesty are doubly heightened by this image. But this same quality of hidden- ness (simplicity /modesty) makes her stand out brightly.

Fair as a star, when only one
is shining in the sky

A single star in the sky would immediately draw attention to itself. It will be the brighter for its singleness. The writer seems to be contradicting himself here ‘Hiddenness and brightness. But we see that it is not contradictory at all. Among the cluster of green leaves the violet shines bluest of the blue, in the blue sky the star shines gold/silver. There is a parallel – which suggests the idea of uniqueness /rareness. Lucy is rare for all her simplicity.

With the third verse the writer restates what he said in the first.

She lived unknown

Even her death was not an event. The writer does not use the word “death”. He uses the word “ceases” emphasizing her relationship with the environment. The word “ceases” suggests a lack of struggle, a most natural state of not being, a slipping back into the uninhabited landscapes .

But the writer, who knew her real worth, is left bereft. The “Oh” is an emotional reaction. She was of no value to the rest of the world, but he valued her. The writer’s exclamation at the end also suggests a value system. Wordsworth endorsed the life patterns suggested by unspoiled nature – integrity, simplicity, and modesty. To him, Lucy symbolises innocence and truth. Lucy is Nature; Nature is Lucy. He sees in her the primary laws of nature. Change (even death and extinction) is part of nature’s process.

C. Learning Activities

C-1 Comprehension

Versification

Notice that there are three verses. How do they relate to each other? The first verse introduces the girl. It is a distant view you get. The most outstanding qualities of the girl are brought out here. What are they?

What is the rhyme scheme? What is the effect?

The second verse highlights two images. These obviously refer to the girl introduced in verse one. Once again think of the rhyming scheme/ what words rhyme? What effect is created? The third verse apparently talks of the death of Lucy. Once again think of the rhyme. What difference do you notice? The pattern is the same. But is there a difference in the tone? What is this difference? What is the overall effect of the poem on you? What meanings are created in the context and what effect do they have?

Wordsworth said that he wished to use a selection of language really used by “men”. (the language spoken by ordinary men and women) Notice the poetic diction – what words stand out?

untrodden, unknown, maid, ceased, mossy (stone), grave, half – hidden

What meanings are created in the context and what effect do they have?

Understanding the context

- (i) Who is the “she” the poet speaks of?
How many times is she mentioned?
- (ii) What words convey the idea that “she” is young?
- (iii) What qualities of Lucy are suggested by the poem? How are they suggested?
- (iv) What has happened to Lucy?
- (v) What is the writer’s attitude to Lucy?
Did he love /admire Lucy?
- (vi) For what qualities did he love /admire her?
- (vii) Give your own words for the following words used in the poem:
 - a. dwelt mossy grave
 - untrodden fair difference
 - ways unknown
 - maid ceased

Can the words you selected be used in the poem?
What effect would they have?
Why are the words in the poem better?

- (viii) Draw the pictures suggested by

- a violet by a mossy stone
- a star shining in the sky (only one)

Can you see any similarity between them?
What is the similarity?

C-2 Empathising

- (i) What kind of a girl was Lucy?
What would she have looked like?
- (ii) Why does the poet grieve over her death?
- (iii) Does the poet think he has not appreciated her enough?

C-3 Review

- i) What do you think of people living in remote villages?
- ii) How would they be different to people in Colombo?

Theme – Life

Poem: Leave Taking

Poet: Cecil Rajendra

A – Note on the poet

Cecil Rajendra is a Malaysian poet who writes on various social themes, which are common to Third World countries- oppression, injustice, exploitation, corruption, greed, want, hunger, poverty and ecological ruin. He is a lawyer by profession who actually fights for justice. His clientele comes from the poor and the oppressed- e.g. workers penalised by labour laws and youths affected by ill-considered tourism projects. He is supposed to be the most widely read Malaysian poet. Rajendra's inspiration has been international rather than local. His technique is influenced by the directness of the Japanese Haiku and his thinking by such men as Amilcar Cabral, Pablo Neruda, Franz Fanon, Martin Luther King Jr., Wilfred Owen and Dennis Brutus.

B. Note on the Poem

In this very moving poem, Cecil Rajendra shows the deep emotional bond that exists between grandparents and grandchildren. The grandson loves and appreciates the grandfather, while the children of the grandfather have no time for him. The little boy played, quarreled, embraced and watched television with the old man and infused joy to his life. The rest hardly communicated with him and left him alone. But a contrast was seen after the old man's death. Those who had no time for him and didn't even communicate with him displayed their grief openly and loudly (presumably for the benefit of the public) while the child took it casually. He did not understand the nature of death and did not realize that the grandfather would not be coming home. The poem shows not only the inevitability of death but also human hypocrisy. Those who had no use for the old man in life mourn him loudly in death. In contrast, it shows how genuine young children are.

C. Learning activities

C-1 Comprehension

- (i) How old was the grandfather? What clues do you get about his age?
- (ii) What activities did the grandfather and grandson do together?
- (iii) What words inform us that the old man's children did not communicate with him?
- (iv) Do you think the old man was lonely? What phrases suggest this?

- (i) How did the adults react to the old man's death? Explain the words "lachrymose blubber".
- (ii) What did the child do? How did he react to the grandfather's death?

C-2 Empathizing

- (a) What do you feel about the old man and the young child?

C- Review

- (i) Do you think the child knew that his grandfather had died? Why do you think so?
- (ii) What aspect of life does the poem focus on? Is it true to life?
- (iii) What does the poem say about the nature of young children?
- (iv) Is this poem an acceptable comment on modern society? In what way?
- (v) What do you think of old parents being sent to 'Homes for the Aged'?
- (vi) How is this poem different in form and diction to Wordsworth's poem you have read?

D. Teaching Activities

- (i) Is this poem simple enough to be read and understood by your students on their own?
- (ii) What words would be unfamiliar to them? How will you help them to understand their meanings?
- (iii) How will you make the students aware of the issue that is raised in the poem:
 - (a) The lack of concern for parents among the young.
 - (b) The tendency to think of the "old" as redundant?
- (iv) How will you show the contrast between hypocrisy (in the parents, aunts, uncles of the young boy) and genuineness (of the boy)?
- (v) How will you draw attention to the metaphors used in the poem and the effects created by them?

Straddled eight decades
fountain of endless chatter
Death rattled the gate
Trumpeted their grief

- (vi) How will you get students to empathize with the situation?
- (vii) What activities can be given to help students to personalize the situation and the theme of the poem?
- (viii) Think of a question on this poem for critical evaluation.

Theme: Humour
Poem –Matilda
Poet- Hillaire Belloc

A. Note on the Poet

Hillaire Belloc was born in St.Cloud near Paris in 1870. He was educated at the Oratory School in Birmingham and at Oxford, but did military service in the French Army. He was a poet, essayist and historian. He is noted particularly for his verses for children in The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts (1896) and Cautionary Tales (1907). They are supposedly for children but are more suitable for adults and are satirical. The poem ‘Henry King’ and a similar poem, which tells the story of Rebecca, who slammed doors for fun and perished miserably, are equally exciting as Matilda. The tale of Matilda (who told lies and was burnt to death) was adapted into a play ‘Matilda Liar’ by Debbie Issitt. Quentin Blake, the illustrator, described Belloc as at one and the same time the overbearing adult and mischievous child.

B.Note on the Poem

Hillaire Belloc is noted for writing humorous, entertaining poems and this poem is another example of such a poem. The little girl in the poem is noted for telling lies. She amuses herself by telling lies. First she deceived her aunt. The good lady tried her best to check Matilda. But she could not control her habit. One day, when her aunt was away Matilda telephoned the Fire Brigade that her house was on fire. The Fire Brigade believing her, rushed from all sides to quell the fire. They made desperate efforts to douse the fire and save the people. The aunt had to pay them off to leave because they would not believe her when she said there was not a fire.

A few weeks later, when the aunt was away at the theatre Matilda’s house actually caught fire. She shouted with all her might but nobody believed her, as they knew that she was an inveterate liar. The more she shouted ‘fire’, the more they shouted ‘liar’ at her. When the aunt returned, she found that both Matilda and the house had burnt down.

C- Learning Activities

C-1 Comprehension

- i. What is the ‘ infirmity’ referred to in line 8?
- ii. What was the difference between the aunt and Matilda?
- iii. Why do you think the effort to believe Matilda nearly killed her aunt?
- iv. Why did Matilda telephone the Fire Brigade?
- v. Did Matilda manage to create a “stir”? What words and phrases suggest this?

- vi. How did the aunt persuade the Firemen to go away?
- vii. What was the name of the play the aunt went to see?
- viii. Why did she not take Matilda to see the play?
- ix. What happened that night?
- x. What did Matilda do?
- xi. Did people believe her? Why didn't they?
- xii. What happened in the end?

C-2 Empathizing

- i. Do you think this poem is funny, or serious?
- ii. Do you think children should be punished like this?
- iii. Is Matilda's punishment justifiable?

C-3 Review

- i. Could you say that the poem teaches "a lesson"? To whom?
- ii. Can you take this poem seriously? Give your opinion.
- iii. Do children tell lies? When do they tell lies?
- vi. Have you ever told lies yourself? Why did you do so?

D. For the teacher.

- i. The poem reads like a moral poem. But is it?
- ii. What is the poet's intention? Is he endorsing traditional method of controlling children through instilling fear or criticizing it?
- iii. Where is the clue to the writer's attitude?
 - a) in the mismatch between deed and punishment (death by burning)
 - b) in the public reaction to lying (one whole town against a child)

Theme: Nature

Poem: The Lake Isle of Innisfree

Poet: W.B. Yeats

A. Note on the Poet

W.B. Yeats was one of the major English poets of the 20th century. Born in Ireland, he lived in both England and Ireland. He was involved in the Irish national and cultural revival and led the 'movement' with other committed patriots. At first he wrote drama. But he made his mark as a poet and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923. He was dissatisfied with the development and political turmoil of his times and yearned for the peace of the countryside. He was fascinated by the magic and occultism of the Celtic tradition and the knowledge of the East. His concern with magic and occult symbols is frequently found in his poetry.

B. Note on the poem

The poem expresses the poet's yearning for the peace and quiet of the countryside and the beauty of unspoilt nature.

Innisfree is a place far away from urban and modern civilization (roadway, pavement grey). It is an unspoilt world where nature is still abundant. The reference to the bee loud glade suggests that the land is fresh and clean without the pollution of the city (glade is a place where trees grow tightly together). It is a place on Lake Innisfree where the waves gently touch the shore (lapping low). Time seems insignificant there and one becomes conscious of night and day only by lights, which are especially attractive (glimmer and glow). They both have their enchantment. Morning and evening are marked by natural events-one by the cricket's cry and the other by the linnets' songs (One comes out of its shelter the other goes to its rest). The memory of Innisfree is a living force in the poets' heart. He carries it with him all the time. The life, he yearns to live there, is a simple one of contentment – small cabin of clay and wattles, nine bean rows, hive for the honeybee. He will live on simple, natural things and they will secure him. Yeats uses a number of poetic devices to make it appealing to the reader.

Versification – Three verses of four lines each (quatrains). How do they relate to each other? The first one puts forward the idea – expresses the determination, the second one offers a rationale and the third one emphasizes the wish which has become a need – In other words the first verse introduces Innisfree, the second one brings out its beauty and the third one the yearning.

Notice the rhyme scheme of the poem:

Verse 1	line	1	-	Innisfree	(a)
		2	-	made	(b)
		3	-	bee	(a)
		4	-	glade	(b)
Verse 2	line	1	-	slow	(c)
		2	-	sings	(d)
		3	-	glow	(c)
		4	-	wings	(d)
Verse 3	line	1	-	day	(e)
		2	-	shore	(f)
		3	-	grey	(e)
		4	-	core	(f)

The poem is lyrical, and musical, even – It has the effect of a chant. There is repetition, which heightens the effect of a chant.

arise and go	I will arise
go to	I will have there
peace there	
peace comes	

The end rhyme is echoed by an internal rhyme:

build there
have there

The beat /rhythm is very regular as well. “I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree”. See the effect of the rising rhythm falling on “go now”.

I will arise and go now

It creates a sense of immediacy. The poet expresses a strong wish to go to the place he loves.

Alliteration is also frequent e.g. –

go now and **go** to (g)
hive for the **h**oneybee (h)
lake water **l**apping. (i)

Assonance **live** alone **in** the bee loud glade (i)
midnight's, **g**limmer (i)
linnet's **w**ings. (i)

One can see Yeats's ability as a lyrical poet. There is a close link between the idea seeking happiness in nature –The idea of withdrawal, even escape, and the music of the poem. Thus the poem creates a sense of enchantment.

Yeats' language is very poetic. There are references and allusions to the Bible and Celtic occult practices. E.g. the first line may be a reference to the Bible. Nine bean rows may have arisen out of the occult beliefs.

C- Learning Activities

Motivation – A picture of rural Ireland
 A picture of a lake

C-1 Comprehension

- (i) Where does the poet/ persona want to go?
- (ii) What will he do there?
- (a) _____
- (b) _____
- (c) _____
- (ii) Out of what will he make the cottage?

- (ii) Why does the poet want to go to Innisfree?
- (iii) What are the special attractions of Innisfree?

Step 2

- (i) Give other words for “clay and wattles
- (ii) Explain the expression “peace comes dropping slow.”
- (iii) What is the difference between “glimmer” and “glow”?
- (iv) What is meant by “evening full of the linnet’s wings”?
- (v) Write in your own words the expression “deep heart’s core”?
- (vi) Do you like towns? If not what features of the town do you dislike?
- (vii) What kind of atmosphere is suggested by
 - (a) “lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore”
 - (b) “midnight’s all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow.”

C-2 Empathising

- (i) Would you like to go to Innisfree yourself?
Give your reasons.
- (ii) Why do you think the poet wants to live alone in Innisfree?
- (iii) What do you think is suggested by “roadway and pavement grey”?
- (iv) Comment on “nine bean rows”
“peace comes dropping slow”.
- (v) Does the poet use metaphors? What are their effects?

C-3 Review

- (i) What words and phrases show the poet’s love of Innisfree?
- (ii) When do people chant? Why do they chant? What is the effect?
- (iii) Do you think Innisfree is a place of enchantment? How is the effect created?

Theme: Nature

Poem: A Minor Bird

Poet: Robert Frost

A. Note on the poet

Robert Frost was born in 1874, in San Francisco, California and moved to rural New England in 1885 after his father's death. He tried his hands at many jobs – as journalist, teacher, farmer, etc. He is best known as a poet who represents the ideals and perceptions of rural New England. Frost's poems are noted for the rural background in which they are set and the simplicity of their diction. To Frost the sound was as important as the sense. Writing to John Bartlett, he talks of the importance of listening to poetry;

“ The ear does it. The ear is the only true writer and the only true reader.” He wrote for the ordinary public to entertain them and delight them with the sound of sense.

B. Note on the poem

“A minor bird” is one of the short poems written by Robert Frost. It has four rhyming couplets (two lines rhyming together). Like many other poems of Robert Frost, this poem too seems to be the poet's reaction to an event in nature. Instead of being pleased by the singing of a bird, the speaker is displeased, even annoyed. He claps his hands to shoo the bird away. At the same time in typical Frost fashion, the speaker reflects on his action. He feels that it is an inadequacy within him that made it impossible to enjoy the bird's song. The bird sings in its usual key. It is the man who is off key. He cannot respond to the natural song of the bird. The poem is simple and short and it raises issues about modern life. Why cannot the man respond to the bird song? Why does he react negatively? Is the man representative of men living restless lives and working hard in urban environments? Is he typical of men far removed from nature in location and experience and have become insensitive to natural events? The poet conveys the idea that the man in question is “wrong” (unnatural) since he wants to silence the bird's song. Song here suggests spontaneity, joy, and nature.

C. Learning Activities

C-1 Comprehension

- (i) Reflect on other poems by Robert Frost that you have read. What common features do you find between this poem and other poems?
- (ii) What is the setting? Is it natural or urban? Give your reasons for either.
- (iii) Did the bird sing for a long time? What makes you think so?
- (iv) What is the poet / persona's initial reaction to the bird's song?
What does he do later? Why?
- (v) What meanings are associated with the word 'key'? What does it mean in the poem?
- (vi) Why do you think the poet /persona says “ the fault must partly have been in me “?
Why does he blame himself?

C-2 Empathizing

- (i) In what key was the bird singing? What kind of a song do you think it was? Do you think you would like to listen to such a song?
- (ii) What kind of mood/ temperament do you need to enjoy a song? Would you enjoy a song if you were busy / restless / overburdened with work or worry?

C-3 Review

- (i) How do you think the title of the poem relates to the meaning of the poem? Why is the bird described as a 'minor' bird? Think of the different meanings of the word 'minor'. Which ones would you consider as relevant for the context?
- (ii) How does the self-reflection affect the meaning of the poem? What effect does it have on the tone?
- (iii) What is the effect of the rhyming couplets on the meaning of the poem?
- (iv) What "elements" stand out in Robert Frost's poetry?

D. For the teacher

- i) How would you motivate / create a background for students to read this poem?
(Take them outside if the school has a garden. Get them to listen to birds' songs if any. Ask them how they feel to be under the shade of trees, etc.)
- ii) What words would be unfamiliar to students? How would you deal with them? How is the meaning created in the particular context?
- iii) How would you make students aware of the different meanings of the word 'key'? What would be most relevant in this poem? How does the word 'minor' in the title connect with the word 'key'? How would you make children aware of this connection?
- iv) How would you make students aware of:
 - a) the writer's 'irritation' at the singing of the bird
 - b) why the writer is irritated (possible reasons)
 - c) why such a reaction may not be normal/usual
 - d) what the writer is trying to say through the reaction

v) How would you make students:

- a) feel for the minor bird
- b) sympathize with the writer
- c) reflect on the situation

vi) What kind of discussion will you need to have with students about

- a) what the poem might mean
- b) the present situation in the world, the relationship between man and the environment
- c) about man's situation in the world today

Theme: War and violence

Poem: Anthem for Doomed Youth

Poem: Wilfred Owen

A: Note on the poet:

Wilfred Owen was born on 18th March 1893 in Oswestry, Shropshire, in England. He was the son of Tom and Susan Owen. In 1897, the family moved to Birkenhead. His education began at the Birkenhead Institute and continued at the Technical School in Shrewsbury. Owen displayed a keen interest in the arts at a very young age and his earliest experiment in poetry began at the age of 17. He failed to enter the University of London and worked as lay assistant to the Rev. Herbert Wigan at Dunsden. Later he left for Bordeaux, France to teach at the Berlitz School of English. During the latter part of 1914 and early 1915 Owen became increasingly aware of the magnitude of the war, and joined the British Rifles in October 1915. He received his commission to the Manchester Regiment in June 1916.

In 1917 Owen was posted to France and was flung into the middle of the war. He had to fight under very stressful conditions. In March he was injured but returned to action in April. In May he was badly shell shocked and evacuated to England. He was treated at Craiglockhart War Hospital near Edinburgh.

It was in this hospital in the early part of 1918 that his literary energies increased. He met Siegfried Sassoon there who encouraged him to write and also brought him to the notice of such writers as Robert Graves and H.G.Wells. At Craiglockhart Owen wrote most of the poems he is remembered for today. In June 1918, he rejoined his regiment at Scarborough and in August he returned to France. He was awarded the Military Cross for bravery at Amiens. But he was killed on the 14th of November while attempting to lead his men across the Sambre.

B: Note on the poem

As in most of his poems, in this poem too, Wilfred Owen draws attention to the horror and the pity of war. According to him, war is a waste of human lives. It reduces human beings to the level of ‘cattle’ who are slaughtered by the thousands (or in pestilence and disease die in hundreds). War fails to recognize the humanity in humans. It does not recognize the intellect or the heart, which distinguishes man from beast. Owen uses parallelism to bring this idea across. Human life is dignified and noble and as such it is superior to animals. Animals are not given the privilege of formal funeral rites even if they are buried. But men are given – have to be given – decent burial. In Christianity and other monotheistic religions this burial is important, as the body has to await the Last Judgement or the coming of the Redeemer. Owen argues that the soldiers who died in the First World War, since there were so many – were not honoured by giving them a decent burial. The writer brings out this idea by contrasting the deaths of these soldiers, with the traditional burial customs of western Christian society. For example in such customs there will be the following practices:

- (a) Ringing of bells in the church to announce to the community that someone has died.
- (b) Saying of orisons – prayers
- (c) Choirs singing hymns
- (d) Lighting of candles by boys in attendance
- (e) Palls –cloth held over the coffin carried by pall-bearers.
- (f) Laying of flowers – as wreaths or sprays on the coffin as well as around it.
- (g) Drawing down of blinds – rolling down blinds, darkening the room.

But the soldiers dying in the battle field do not receive any of these attentions. Some of these rites are ironically performed by the guns, which mechanically destroy the young lives. Others are reflected in the agonies of the dying soldiers and in the behaviour of those who grieve over them. For example, the acute pain or the struggle of death make the dying men’s eyes light up like candles. Their sweethearts’ pale sad eye brows look like palls.

C. Learning Activities

C-1 Comprehension

- (i) How does the title of the poem convey its content? How do the words “Anthem” and “Doomed” relate to each other?
- (ii) The poem begins with a rhetorical question. What is its purpose?
- (iii) What has taken the place of bells in the poem? What do they announce?
- (iv) What do the rifles do? What does the poet compare them to?
- (v) Is there anyone mourning for the dying soldiers? How is the mourning done?
- (vi) Are there candles lit at their funerals? What has taken the place of candles?
- (vii) What are the “palls”? Who are the pall-bearers?
- (viii) Are there flowers to honour the dead? What has taken the place of flowers?
- (ix) What is compared to the drawing down of blinds? What is the effect of this comparison?

C-2 Empathizing

- (i) How do you feel about these soldiers dying in the battlefield?

C-3 Review

- (i) What is the writer’s attitude to war? Where (what words and phrases) is this seen?
- (ii) How does he perceive the soldiers? Underline the words and phrases that show this attitude.
- (iii) What line suggests that human actions whether negative or positive have no impact on the dead soldiers?

- (iv) What effect is created by comparing the various incidents in the battlefield to traditional funeral customs?
- (v) What is the effect of the expression “those who die as cattle”?
- (vi) Comment on the stanza form used- what argument is raised in the first stanza?
How is it carried forward in the second and third? What is the effect of the last two lines?

D. For the teacher

- (i) What questions given above would be relevant to your students? Why?
- (ii) What questions should be answered by you and given as information to your students? Why?
- (iii) This poem will be difficult for students who are not aware of Christian funeral rites. Why? What are those rites? How will you explain them?
- (iv) What effect is created by the suggestion that the soldiers are denied those rites?
- (v) How will you use the context of the poem
 - (a) to build sympathy for the soldiers fighting in a war?
 - (b) to show the ‘horror’ of war?
- (vi) Which poem – “The Charge of the Light Brigade” or “Anthem for Doomed Youth” – will make students feel the “horror of war”? How do you feel about the two poems? Which poem will engage your students? How will you bring out the difference?
- (vii) Which poet seems more sincere in his feelings? Look closely at the language of the two poems before you answer.
- (viii) Wilfred Owen actually fought in the First World War and died very young. How can you make students relate this information to their reading of the poem?
- (ix) Comment on the form of the poem and what effect it has on the message the poet wants to convey.

Assessment: Get students to write a poem entitled ‘War kills and wounds’.

Theme: Life

Poem: The Seven Ages of Man

Poet: William Shakespeare

A. Note on the poet

William Shakespeare is the world's greatest dramatist and playwright. He was born in 1564 in Stratford upon Avon in England. A son of a farmer, he is supposed to have run away to London for fear of being impeached by the squire, for poaching deer. In London, he joined a theatre company and was apparently employed in different jobs in the theatre until he became the foremost playwright and owner of the Globe Theatre. Shakespeare has written 36 plays – comedies, tragedies and histories. They are acted even today in the twenty first century and show remarkable power to capture audiences.

B. Note on the Poem

“The Seven Ages of Man” is an extract from one of Shakespeare’s popular comedies – As you Like It. These words are said by the character known as Jacques, while he and the banished dukes are awaiting supper in the forest of Arden. The duke who was benign and kind had been banished by his brother who was a scheming politician. The duke tries to make the best of his life in the forest, with scholarly debates on the nature of man and human life. Jacques is of a philosophical turn of mind and is melancholy. This poem shows his pessimistic view of life. It reveals a lot of insight into the human condition – the biological process of man’s birth, growth and decay. One sees a theatrical metaphor behind the entire process. Shakespeare being a dramatist views life as an enactment on the stage. A man performs many roles – as baby, as child, as young man, as adult, as middle aged man and finally in decrepit old age as one totally incapacitated. Each stage is associated with a set of characteristics, illustrated by action, which would have predominated in the Elizabethan era but are true of modern times as well.

C. Learning Activities

C-1 Comprehension

(i) Write down the words you think are related to drama/theatre:

How do you relate such words to human life? Draw lines to connect.

Entrance

Exit

Playing parts

Acts

Stages in life (ages)

roles

Birth

Death

(ii) Write down the 7 acts /ages described by Shakespear and the corresponding actions.

(iii) What simile/metaphor is used to bring out the key features of each stage given?

Infant	Justice
Schoolboy	Old man
Lover	Senility
Soldier	

C-2 Empathizing

(i) What feelings do you experience when you read each stage /act?

C-3 Review

- (i) Do you feel a sense of drama when you read the poem? Where is the climax? What is the final stage of life?
- (ii) Do you think Shakespear's conception of human life acceptable? Give your views on Shakespear's perception.
- (iii) Is there a shift in tone when you read the poem? Where and how does this take place?

D. For the teacher

- i. What words, phrases would your students find it difficult to understand? How do you think you can help them to overcome these difficulties?
- ii. Do you think they would understand the parallel between:
 - a) the passage of life from birth to death and
 - b) the seven dramatic acts enacted on a stage?
- iii. Have your students seen a stage where a play is enacted? Do they know what is meant by
entrance
exit
roles
acts
- iv. Do you think students would enjoy this extract if it were acted? How would you dress the students taking part?
- v. How would you want your students to respond to the poem?

Theme: Humour

Poem: Parrot

Poet: Alan Brownjohn

A: Note on the poet

Alan Brownjohn was born in London on 28th July 1931 and was educated at Merton College, Oxford. He worked as a schoolteacher between 1957 and 1965 and lectured at Battersea College of Education and South Bank Polytechnic until he left to become a full time freelance writer in 1979. A regular broadcaster, reviewer and contributor to journals including The “Times Literary Supplement”, “Encounter” and the “Sunday Times”. He was poetry critic for the “New Statesman” and was the chairman of the Poetry Society between 1982-1988. His first collection of poetry, “The Railings” was first published in 1961. Other poetry books include “Collected Poems” (1952) and the Observation Car (1990). He is also the author of three novels as well as two books for children and a critical work on the poet, Philip Larkin. He has won many awards. In his writings, he has advocated ‘rationalism, democracy and humanism’. He has a moral outlook on modern society, seeing the contradictions between desire and obligation. He uses a ‘mesmeric’, meditative pace and a dramatic mode suited to the classroom. In the poem ‘Parrot’ he combines the comic with the serious.

B: Note on the poem:

This is a humorous poem on a parrot: parrots can be trained to talk and sometimes their chatter can be a nuisance. It could also be embarrassing when a parrot imitates someone’s speech and speaks out of turn. Here the poet presents the parrot as a thinking bird. It is different to the general attitude in human society where the tendency is to think of the parrot as a mindless imitator. The parrot in the poem listens and takes in everything the humans say around him. But he does not say anything at the moment. He is biding his time. One day, he will “give it all back,” to the humans. It sounds funny to think that the parrot will give the ‘return’ to the humans. But it also introduces a serious element to the poem. It is man who is vicious and wicked – Birds (or nature) left on their own are not. The poem suggests that the humans use language in various ways and in various tones. The language used could be soft, well modulated or harsh. The parrot will internalise the good as well as the bad.

C. Learning Activities

C-1 Comprehension

- (i) What does the bird look like?
- (ii) Why is he sulky?
- (iii) What do the humans around him say when he does not respond?

- (iv) Why doesn't the parrot talk?
- (v) What is the parrot threatening to do?
- (vi) What do you think the "shocking things" are?
- (vii) What is meant by, 'I'll certainly not disguise them'?
- (viii) Give another word for 'ponder'. Why is 'ponder' especially significant here?

C-2 Empathising

- (i) Do you like parrots?
- (i) What do you like most about them?
- (ii) What is the parrot generally known for?
- (iii) What other birds can be trained to talk?

C-3 Review

- (a) Is the poem humorous? Why do you think it is humorous?
- (ii) What is funny about the (a) situation in the poem (b) language in the poem?
- (iii) Do you think the poem has a 'message' for human beings? If so what is the message?
- (iv) Could this message be relevant to children as well?

D. For the teacher

- (i) What characteristics of the parrot will you have to draw attention to, in order to make the poem meaningful to the students?
- (ii) How will you draw on the student's own experiences of parrots to a discussion of the poem?
- (iii) How will you get the students to understand the 'receptiveness' of the parrot?
- (iv) Can the students predict what the parrot might say? What would be the 'Shocking things'?
- (v) What particular phrases and lines create the humour in the poem? How will you make the students aware of them?

Teaching Short Stories

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 short story.

- (a) shortness - can usually be read in one sitting.
- (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.

(b) components

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

- (i) plot
- (ii) setting
- (iii) characters
- (iv) theme

(i) 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 the 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.

2.00 Reading a short story

The skills which are identified as essential for reading other genres - poetry, prose and drama are relevant to the short story, as well. The students must be able to comprehend the text and get its basic meaning. They must be aware of the special meanings of words and phrases used in a particular context (or how the context gives special meaning to words and phrases used in the story). They must be able to respond with their feelings to situations, characters and themes. This could only take place if they can analyse the text. Finally they must be able to enjoy the story personally. It must be a genuine experience, not a 'received' one. To do this a certain evaluation is needed of setting, plot, characters and themes, which have been identified as core elements of the short story.

3.0 Reading the short story - The Gift of the Magi by O Henry.

3.1 Note on the Author

O. Henry's real name was William Sydney Porter (1862 - 1910). He was the son of a doctor and grew up in Greenboro, North Carolina. When he was twenty, he moved to Texas for reasons of health. He settled in Austin, where he worked as a clerk, housekeeper and bank teller.

Life was not easy for him. He faced many difficulties in life before he was recognized as a writer. He was even sent to prison for embezzling money but he was proved innocent. He continued to write after his release in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Subsequently he settled down in New York, where he established himself as a writer. He has written 65 short stories and is recognized as one of the most famous American short story writers.

3.2 Note on the short story

In a very moving manner, the short story *The Gift of the Magi* brings out the meaning of Christmas and the spirit of generosity and sacrifice that goes with Christmas. To the general majority, Christmas is about eating, drinking and merry making and of course giving lavish gifts. But O Henry shows the real spirit of Christmas in this story. Jim and Della in the short story give up what is most precious to each of them in order to buy a gift for the other. Underlying the 'sacrifice' is the love that motivates their actions. They become much more aware of each other and their love, as a result of what they give up. O Henry seems to be saying that Christmas is about loving and giving, the giving that comes from selfless love. He shows that certain social practices, like buying presents, are not meaningful. Both Della and Jim buy presents which are of no use to them. But what they give up to buy them is the most meaningful - Della's hair and Jim's gold watch. They have sentimental, even aesthetic values. By giving up their dearest possessions they show how much they love each other.

4.00 Reading the text/Engagement with the text.

Read the short story "The Gift of the Magi" from the beginning to "She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present."

Answer the following questions:

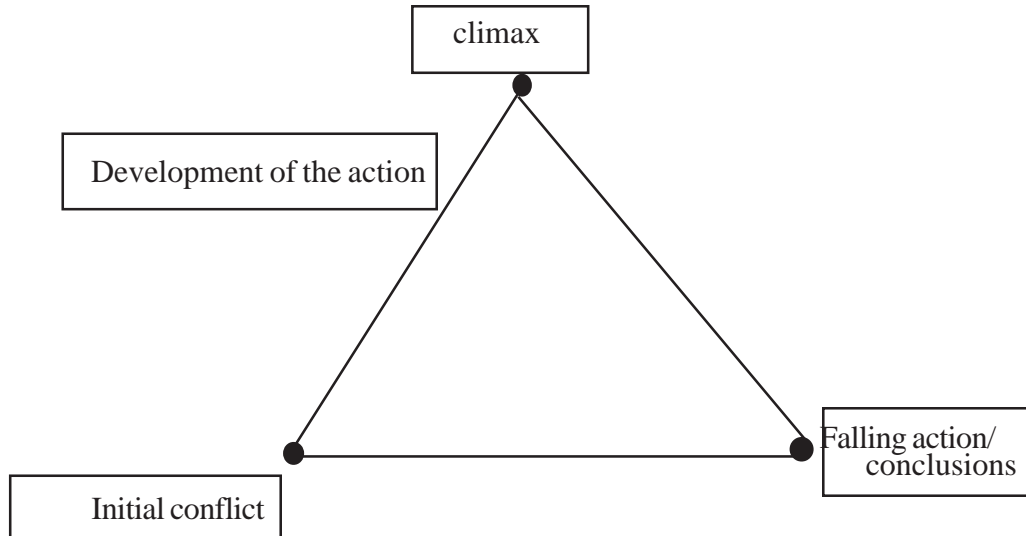
- (1) How many characters are introduced ? Whom do you actually see?
- (2) Do the characters have a ‘ problem’ (conflict) ? What is the problem?
- (3) How is the problem (conflict) caused /created?
- (4) How and when does the character get to think of overcoming the difficulty (resolving the problem)?
Write down the lines which show the moment of understanding.
- (5) What does the character do after this moment of understanding?
- (6) What was your impression of Della at the beginning? How is it affected by the new development - the selling of her long beautiful hair to buy a gift for her husband?
- (7) The setting of the story:
 - (a) Which country ?
 - (b) What period in history ?
 - (c) What time of the year is it?
 - (d) What is the social background of the characters?
 - (e) Are they rich? What evidence do you find in the text to the contrary ?
 - (f) Do you think they were rich at one time? What evidence is there to suggest this?
- (8) How old is Jim ? Is Della’s age given ? How old do you think she is ?
- (9) What words in the text suggest that Jim was too young to be burdened by marriage? Why do you think they married?
- (10) What words /phrases suggest that life was difficult for the characters at present?
- (11) What aggravates these difficulties?
- (12) Do you think Della loves Jim very much? Give evidence from the text to support this.
- (13) What is the logic of reading the story up to this point and discussing it? What will happen next?
Now read from “ She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else”

- (1) What do you expect to happen in this part?
 - (i) What does Della do with the money she got by selling her hair? How does the writer suggest that she was very selective in her choice ?
 - (ii) What does the choice of gift suggest about Della’s character ? What comment does the writer make about her choice?
 - (iii) What does this choice suggest about the receiver of the gift - Jim ? What words does the writer use to describe him?
 - (iv) What did Della do when she went home? Why did she do this?
 - (v) Why does she say “ Please God, make him think I am still pretty?”
 - (vi) What was Jim’s reaction to Della’s hair being cut?
 - (vii) Della makes ‘ light’ of her sacrifice . Why does she do this? What does it tell us about her love for Jim ? About her character ?
 - (viii) What evidence is there that Jim loves Della equally ? What had he done?
 - (ix) Where is the climax of the story?
Explain the significance of “a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.”
 - (x) What incident/incidents would you describe as the falling action in the story?
 - (xi) How does the writer integrate the original story of Christmas into this story ? What is the reference? How does it relate to the theme of the story?
 - (xii) What is the writer’s attitude to the two young people?
What is his attitude to the social practice of giving material gifts at Christmas? What ‘ message’ to society does he give through the events and characters presented in the story?

5.0 Understanding the genre

(A) Plot of the story

- (a) What questions in part 4 focus on the plot of the short story?
- (b) In the triangle below are shown the initial conflict, the development of the action, heightened tension, climax, falling action and conclusion.



Initial conflict

- (a) Della and Jim associate Christmas with the giving of 'material' gifts.
- (b) They are poor.
- (c) They love each other very much.
- (d) Della wants to give Jim a nice gift.
- (e) They had two 'prized' possessions
she - her hair , he - a gold watch

Development of the action

- (a) Della laments over her lack of money to buy a nice gift.
- (b) She sees the reflection of her hair in the pier- glass.
- (c) She sees the solution to her problem in her hair.
- (d) She sells her hair.
- (e) She buys a platinum fob chain.

Climax

- (a) Della has sold her hair to buy a gift for Jim.
- (b) Jim has sold his watch to buy a gift for Della.

Falling Action/Conclusion

- (a) Jim shows the combs to Della.
- (b) Della shows the watch chain to Jim.
- (c) Both adjust themselves to the situation.
- (d) They realize that their love is true.

(B) What questions in section 4 relate to the setting of the story?

Mark with a tick () the correct phrases and find evidence from the text to support your choices.

- (i) Set in America
- (ii) Small town
- (iii) Characters are rich
- (iv) Very young couple
- (v) Married for love
- (vi) Coping with difficulty
- (vii) Very small flat
- (viii) Furnished luxuriously
- (ix) Della does not work
- (x) Jim's salary has been cut
- (xi) Della is beautiful
- (xii) Both are from a good family backgrounds

What is the atmosphere of the story at the beginning ?

How does it change at the end?

(c) Characters

- (a) What questions in section 4 relate to characterisation?
(b) Fill in the second circle with appropriate words. the first is completed

Della

Jim

Young and spirited
Warm and intense
Sincere, impulsive

(c) What do the following phrases and sentences tell us about Jim and Della?

- (a) ‘One’s cheeks burned with the silent imbutation of parsimony’.
(b) ‘Nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little coach and howl’.
(c) ‘Her Jim’.
(d) ‘Something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honour of being owned by him’.
(e) ‘She fluttered out the door’.
(f) ‘Down rippled the brown cascade’.
(g) ‘She was ransacking the stores for Jim’s present’.
(h) ‘Quietness and value’.
(i) ‘He looked at it on the sly on acccount of the old leather strap’.
(j) ‘Jim was never late’.
(k) ‘She had a habit of saying a little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things’.
(l) ‘He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.’
(m) ‘Stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face’.
(n) ‘Maybe the hairs on my head were numbered, but nobody could ever count my love for you’.
(o) ‘He enfolded his Della for ten seconds’.
(p) ‘Ecstatic scream of joy, and a quick feminine change to hysterical tears’.
(q) ‘They are too nice to use just at present’
(r) ‘O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest’.

(D) Theme

- (a) Order the following statements in the manner most meaningful to you.

The short story The Gift of the Magi suggests that

- (1) Christmas is about giving presents.
(2) At whatever cost Christmas presents must be bought.
(3) When you are poor, it is difficult to celebrate Christmas.
(4) Christmas is about loving and giving ; a total commitment to one another.

- (b) In the short story both Jim and Della have an “ understanding “ of life. What is this understanding? Write a paragraph on what they understand.

- (c) Does this short story question any prevailing attitudes or beliefs in society ? What attitudes / beliefs does it question ? What values does it endorse?

(E) Atmosphere and Tone

In explaining setting, it was said that it includes atmosphere and tone as well. How do the following expressions in the story contribute to the creation of atmosphere and tone? Identify also the figure of speech used.

- ‘Looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard.’
- ‘Futtered out the door and down the stairs to the street.’
- ‘Next two hours tripped by on rosy wings.’
- ‘Ransacking the stones’
- ‘Preclaiming its value by substance alone’
- ‘Meretricious ornamentation.’
- ‘Made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy.’
- ‘Coney Island chorus girl.’
- ‘Setter at the scent of quail.’
- ‘Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered, but nobody could ever count my love for you.’
- ‘In the way of a haircut, or a shave or a shampoo.’
- ‘And then an ecstatic scream of joy, and then alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails.’
- ‘Leaped up like a little singed cat.’
- ‘The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.’
- ‘Uneventful chronicle of two foolish children.’

(f) Literary techniques

The writer uses various techniques to make the writing interesting and to convey the meaning.

Some of these are given below.

Allusions : An allusion is an indirect reference to Literature, History, Art, Music or the like, which a writer expects readers to recognize. Biblical allusions are used by the writer in the Gift of the Magi.

In expressing his theme O Henry compares Della’s and Jim’s gifts with the gifts of the Magi. He expects his readers to know the story of the three wise men who made the journey to Bethlehem to pay homage to the Christ child. According to tradition the Magi were three kings named Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar. The gifts they brought were gold, frankincense and myrrh. Understanding the story’s theme depends to some extent on recognizing this allusion to the Biblical story.

This allusion is drawn from the well-known story of the three wise men from the East who paid their homage to the infant Jesus. They underwent a number of hardships in their journey. As the story goes, they went on their journey because of the star that rose over Bethlehem at the birth of Jesus.

O Henry also makes an allusion to the Biblical story of Solomon and Sheba. The Queen of Sheba is a queen from Southern Arabia, famous for her wealth and beauty. When she heard of King Solomon’s reputation for wisdom, she came to test him with challenging questions.

Irony of the Situation

What is ironic about the outcome of ‘ the Gift of the Magi ‘ ? An ironic situation is one in which the characters’ actions bring about an unexpected result. Often an ironic situation tends to be little characters to make them seem foolish or contemptible. Is this the case with Della and Jim ? ‘ Why or why not? We come across situational irony in this story where both husband and wife give up their most prized possessions in order to give something to complement the other’s most prized possession. In other words, both Della and Jim wanted to show that they love each other by giving up their most valuable possession. Although the immediate expectation is not realized , this act brings about a deeper understanding of each other.

(g) Review

The activities below are for studying the short story, Some can also be used for teaching. What activities are useful in the class room?

- * It was said in 1-0 above that the reader needs to bring her/his experience to read it. What experiences would be demanded by this story ? Underline the relevant statements and reflect on them.
- The beliefs and rituals associated with Christmas.
- The Biblical story of the three Magi.
- The nature of ‘ true love’.
- The impulsiveness of youth.

Drama

1.0 Introduction to drama

The word 'drama' derives from a 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**.

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 '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's 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 character 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 behaviour or patterns of action during play (Eg. 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) Dramatic personae or the cast of characters

In a play a list of all the characters generally precedes the dialogues. 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 given within parentheses in the body of the text.

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.

Approach to Teaching Drama

Everyman.

Author : Unknown (Anonymous)

1.0 Introduction

The Morality play is a popular type of religious drama, which was staged from the 14th century onwards. The church and the civil authorities encouraged this medieval literary genre because they were lessons on social and moral values conveyed through amusing dramatic actions. The characters were very often allegorical.

Everyman is an English morality play with an anonymous authorship. It was popular from the late 15th century and is supposed to be translated from Dutch. The characters are Everyman (representing humanity), God, Death, and Friendship etc.

1.0 Synopsis of the play

God sends Death to summon Everyman to account for his actions since God is displeased with Everyman for forgetting Him while seeking riches and pleasure. Everyman offers bribes to Death to delay the journey. Death cannot be bribed and advises Everyman to find somebody to accompany him. Friendship, Kindred and Worldly Goods promise to accompany him but when they hear of the dangerous journey they turn away. Everyman is disappointed and asks Good Deeds to accompany him. Good Deeds had been neglected by Everyman and is too weak to help and asks him to get the help of Knowledge. Knowledge takes Everyman to the river of Confession where he is redeemed. As a result, Good Deeds recovers from sickness and sorrow and promises to go to God to declare the good deeds of Everyman. Knowledge advises Everyman to take three mighty persons, Discretion, Strength and Beauty on his journey. Five senses too have to be taken as counsellors. However, all of them leave Everyman at the end. Only Good Deeds remain with him to plead his cause before God.

2.0 Approach to teaching the play

A preliminary discussion on the word ‘moral’ would be appropriate.

According to Collins’ English Dictionary:

Moral (adjective) – concerned with or relating to human behaviour, especially the distinction between good and bad or right and wrong behaviour.

Everyman is not divided into acts and scenes as drama generally is, but we can identify internal divisions. Read according to the divisions suggested and answer the questions given after each part.

Read up to where Death says; ‘See if any are so daring as to accompany you on this journey’

1. What role does the Messenger play here?
2. Why is God displeased with Everyman?
3. What does Death observe of Everyman?
4. Why does Everyman offer a bribe to Death?
5. Explain this expression of Death. “I stop not for gold, riches, Pope nor Emperor.”
6. How will Everyman be more prepared to meet Death?
7. What is Adam’s sin?
8. How would you describe the feelings of Everyman when he realizes he cannot avoid going to God?
9. What do you feel for Everyman?
10. How can this be a point of division?

Now read up to where Goods says, “That is your damnation... in this trouble and sorrow.”

1. How would you describe the feelings of Everyman when he realizes he cannot avoid going to God? What do you feel for Everyman?
2. Friendship seems to show the qualities of a true friend. What are they?
3. What reasons does Friendship give for not accompanying Everyman?
4. To whom does Everyman go next and why does he prefer going to him?
5. How do Kindred and Cousin respond to Everyman’s request?
6. What does this mean? “Blood is thicker than Water”
7. What reasons does Everyman give for seeking the help of Goods?

1. How does Goods analyze his own behaviour? What does he mean by “I sing another song”?
2. How had Goods influenced Everyman and how had Everyman responded to him?
3. How can you justify the division at this point?

Now read up to where Knowledge says, “When priests are good for being such a sinful example.”

1. When you read this long passage of Everyman what do you feel for him? Do you feel sorry for his desperate situation?
2. What quality of humans can this refer to? “You deceived me and caught me in your trap.”
3. Why is Good Deeds weak?
4. At the river of Confession Everyman appears to be very humble. How can you account for it? Is it because Knowledge accompanies him?
5. List the stages of the redemption of Everyman.
6. Comment on how Discretion, Strength, Beauty and Five Senses show a stronger loyalty to Everyman. Give examples.
7. What comments does knowledge make on Priesthood?

In this part Everyman is more successful in his search for companions.

Now read up to the end.

1. Is Everyman a changed person when he is about to die? What good qualities does he show?
2. All except Good Deeds leave Everyman at the end. Relate this to real life situations.
3. What words of wisdom does Everyman speak?
4. What role does the Doctor play here? How do you justify this division?

1.0 The dramatic quality in Everyman

A parable is a story that uses familiar incidents to illustrate a religious or ethical situation. Everyman can be considered a dramatized parable which invariably stimulates our emotions and imaginations to give a fuller and more complete experience. Action and characters have been used to give the theme credibility and dramatic force. The theme, of course, is clear from the beginning and ending of the play and also through the speech of God at the beginning. Studying the characterization and structure can assess the dramatic quality of Everyman.

2.0 Characterization

As we are aware, the characters and the events in Everyman are abstract. But what is noteworthy is that the characters are not mere abstractions but seem to be three-dimensional beings that possess a degree of personality. For example, Death in the play not only has a duty to perform but also has been given a personality. He has to summon Everyman and we notice a brisk and businesslike manner in his behaviour. He even seems to be enjoying the surprise he instils in Everyman when he is least prepared for such an encounter. Quite interestingly Death is not malicious as he is supposed to be and also he has no personal grudge against his victim Everyman.

Note also how Friendship is represented as an amiable person who is ever ready to help a friend in need, who swears not to forsake him. “Even if you were to go to hell, I would stay with you.” He finally leaves his friend behind, in a quite humanlike fashion, seeing the danger of the journey and expressing his true feelings of fear and pain and also his love for life. “I would not go on that journey even for my father.”

In the same way, Kindred with the Cousin rises above being abstractions to appear as typical kinsmen. He seems to feel genuinely in Everyman's sorrow extending his help, though up to a point, but flatly refuses on hearing the nature of the journey.

The play reveals that neither kinsmen nor friends would sacrifice their lives for another. But the general point that the play makes is the illusion of life-how real people experience concrete events.

3.0 Structure

Apart from characterization, the dramatist shows his deliberate development of structure (the arrangement of episodes and the details of action within episodes) to make this play more than a mere sermon. He employs several climaxes, bringing about changes in tension and mood, and uses irony and different means of suspense. All these cause the audience/reader to be emotionally moved.

We also note that the dramatist is not satisfied with presenting the theme directly by making Everyman accept Christian values and achieve eternal life. But Everyman is presented as someone who is blind to virtues, and who hangs on to false values. Later we find him failing to distinguish between values that are of earthly significance and those which lead directly to eternal salvation. Finally however, he does distinguish between them. Hence we find a neat structure in the play.

The play does not have any demarcations of acts and scenes. But as we have observed in studying the play, it allows divisions into four parts, which are related to one another.

- Part I - Everyman confronts Death and is defeated in the struggle to avoid the journey.
- Part II - Everyman desperately looks for a companion but is unsuccessful.
- Part III - Everyman succeeds in his search for companions and he is overjoyed.
- Part IV - Everyman is disappointed to find his meeting with Death unavoidable. He reconciles himself to the final journey.

Part I – The dramatist develops the encounter of Everyman with Death by showing Everyman as trying to chase away a real, true to life personal enemy. Everyman is portrayed as an individual desperate to avoid an imminent danger; first, the disbelief in the situation, next, desire for a postponement, an attempt to win over Death by bribing, the desire for company, and lastly pleading for mercy.

We see the dramatist is involved in a psychological analysis of Everyman.

Part II – This part is linked with the earlier one by the continuation of Everyman's search for a companion.

Here, Everyman is experiences hope and despair alternatively when he is either accepted or rejected by his companions. One would expect monotony in the presentation of similar encounters. But we find the dramatist using variety in each of them. For example, first Everyman, like any human being, seeks the help of friends and relatives. Next, he looks for help in a completely different direction – Goods. There is a very deep sense of irony in Everyman's choice because we are aware that Goods would never comply with his request.

Each encounter proves to be ironic in that it fails Everyman. For example, a very positive relationship is exhibited between Friendship and Everyman based on the helpfulness of Friendship and the lavishness of his gratitude to Everyman. The refusal by Friendship is a return to reality.

It is a comic revelation when Cousin refuses Everyman by saying, "I have a cramp in my toe". We are reminded of human beings who give silly excuses to avoid similar situations.

Because of this fine structure in making Everyman more human we feel sympathy for him as we sense the depression he experiences.

Part III – In this part too we see irony at play. Everyman finally seeks help from Good Deeds, who is the most trustworthy, when he has been refused by everybody. Here is an instance when values are misunderstood as humans do most of the time. At this point we would expect Good Deeds to save Everyman out of his trouble immediately. But the irony is continued when Good Deeds proves too weak to help, the cause being none

other than Everyman's neglect of him. Everyman is sent to Knowledge by Good Deeds for advice allowing further delay.

The episode with Penance and Confession where Everyman undergoes salvation is to be noted as having less dramatic force than the preceding episodes. But what is significant here is the change of mood of Everyman. He is relieved to find trustworthy friends. A link is established between this part and the first two parts as Everyman's fear of being left alone is resolved. His sense of security is heightened with the presence of Strength, Discretion, Five Senses and Beauty. This seems to be a climax.

Part IV – Here we come across a further complication. When Everyman approaches the grave all that had promised to stand by his side forsakes him. The suspense, which has been relaxed, comes into play again. Tension is relieved only when Everyman dies resolved and confident.

1.0 The didactic element of the play

Apart from the fact that this play is a parable, here are some direct statements mentioned that are worth noting. For example, 'Life is transitory'. 'Love of money goes against eternal love'

What the Doctor says at the end of the play sums up the theme, Man's accountability to God or to oneself. Any religion teaches us to do good and banish evil. Everyman represents the erring humanity and his self realization creates awareness in any individual.

The allegorical characters highlight the vices in man. How jealousy is uncharitable to fellowmen and what wealth does to man are very clearly presented. Man is preoccupied with oneself and with his material possessions that he doesn't do any good deeds.

Eg. Goods says, "If you had loved me more moderately and shared some of me with the poor, you would not be in this trouble and sorrow."

Sharing one's wealth with those in need is suggested by all religions.

2.0 Some suggested activities for teaching the play.

1. Rearranging a jumbled set of events.
2. Drawing character sketches. A list of adjectives maybe provided.
Is there a development in the character of Everyman? (At the beginning of the play Everyman is terrified and lacks experience of life. At the end he achieves realization, is well aware of the illusions in life and is morally strong.)
3. List the vices and virtues of humans as revealed in the play.
4. Identify the realities of life brought to light in the play. Eg. Death waits for no man.
5. Pick out the figures of speech used by the writer.
6. Conduct an open discussion on the appropriacy of the title.

Play : Villa for sale

Author : Sacha Guitry

1.0 Approach to teaching

It is assumed that the teacher is very familiar with the text before he/she endeavours to teach it.

1.1 Synopsis of the play

This is a one-act play. The cast consists of 5 characters. The setting is France. The action takes place during an evening. The story is woven around the sale of a villa. Juliette, the owner of the villa, is anxious to get it sold. An unnamed maid seems to be her only companion at home. Jeanne, interested in buying the house, walks in with her husband Gaston.

From the moment he enters, Gaston shows his displeasure about the house itself and even about the idea of buying a house. While he waits for the wife who has gone upstairs with Juliette to see the rooms, the next customer, Mrs. Al Smith, an American, arrives. Her haste to buy the villa is exploited by Gaston which provides the most entertaining material for the drama. The ingenuity of Gaston transforms his role of 'most unwilling customer' to that of 'the skillful seller' of the villa. The situation paves the way for Gaston to get 100,000 francs and a painting of Corot for nothing at all.

This is a comparatively short play. When teaching it would be practical to divide into meaningful sections. Let the students find answers to the questions given at the end of each section.

Read through the name of the characters. Do they suggest their nationality? Find where the action takes place. (a salon is a room in a large house in which guests are received)

Read up to where Juliette says, "What time did those agency people say the lady would call?"

1. What do Juliette and the maid talk about?
2. When was the sign 'for sale' put up?
3. How did Juliette feel when the sign was put up?
4. Why did she put up the sign during the night?
5. How does she feel now?
6. How did the neighbourhood react to the 'for sale' sign?
7. Is the response what Juliette expected?
8. How much had the villa cost her?
9. How much does she expect by selling it?
10. Why does Juliette say, "I begin to feel as though it no longer belongs to me"?
11. Do you feel sorry for Juliette? If so, why?

A discussion of the answers would give a clear understanding of the situation at the beginning of the play.

Now read up to where the maid says, "Because really madame, you look too comical."

1. Why does Juliette want to sell the villa?
2. What does Juliette mean by, "For fifteen years everybody has had money at the same time and has wanted to sell. Now nobody has any money and nobody wants to buy."?
3. According to Juliette what could increase the demand for the villa?
4. What does the maid say to prove she quite suitable for the role she's going to play?
5. What sort of relationship could exist between Juliette and the maid? Justify your answer.
6. What do you learn about the characters of Juliette and the maid? You may use some of these – carefree, proud, mercenary, desperate, comical, insolent.
7. Identify the expressions/situations that create humour in this section.
8. Comment on the location of the villa and the behaviour of the people in the neighbourhood.

Decide in groups what gestures and facial expressions would be employed by Juliette and the maid. This section could then be acted out. Each group could comment on the appropriacy and effectiveness of the gestures and facial expressions of the other groups.

Now read up to where Gaston says, “I have never cared such a damned little about anybody’s opinion. Come along.”

1. Does Juliette have any important task to attend to upstairs? If not, why does she go there?
2. Who is Greta Garbo and why does the maid mention her name?
3. What tone of voice do you see in Gaston’s speech in this section? (sarcastic, domineering, chauvinistic)
1. What does Gaston mean when he says, “that the garden is a myth and that the salon is impossible”?
2. Jeanne says they could convert the salon into a modern study. But has she got a clear notion of what a modern study is? What do we learn about her character? (inexperienced, naïve, foolish, idealistic)
3. Gaston comments on female behaviour. Is he fair by Jeanne or is he exhibiting male chauvinism?
4. What reasons does Gaston give for not wanting to buy the villa?
5. Comment on the characters of Jeanne and Gaston in this section.

Now read up to where Gaston says, “Go and examine the bathroom and come back quickly.”

1. According to Juliette what advantages does the villa have to please a customer?
2. What does Juliette mean by “The choice of a frame is not so easy when you have such a delightful pastel to place in it”? do you note any pretence in what she says?
3. Juliette says Gaston is very witty. Do you agree? Discuss the humour evoked by Gaston’s utterances.
4. Does the flattery of Juliette affect Gaston and Jeanne equally? Give examples to justify.
5. What do you learn of Juliette’s aesthetic appreciation with regard to the painting by Corot? (Jean Baptiste Camille Corot is a French landscape painter)
6. Gaston feels the villa is worth only 60,000 francs. Is he really in earnest or is he trying to discourage his wife from buying?
7. Compare Juliette’s attitude to selling the villa at the beginning of the drama and now.
8. What reasons does Gaston give for not wanting to go upstairs?
9. What is Gaston’s intention in calling the villa ‘a shanty’? At this point can you ever believe that Gaston would say anything in favour of the villa? Isn’t this a climax where we are made to believe that Gaston and Jeanne would leave having given up the idea of buying?

Now read up to where Gaston says, “It’s a very good thing in business when everyone is delighted”?

1. According to Mrs. Al Smith how do the French differ from the Americans? List the differences.
2. How is Gaston able to avoid Mrs. Al Smith recognizing his true identity?
3. When Mrs. Al Smith says, “You ought to learn how to do business,” Gaston says, “we are learning now. We are practising”. What does Gaston mean?
4. Explain these expressions:
 - a. Gaston – “Since you are dear bought - I will love you dear”
 - b. Al Smith – “You’re coming on.”
5. What do you learn of Mrs. Al Smith’s character here? Justify your response.

Now read to the end of the drama.

1. How does Gaston make his behaviour credible?
2. When the date was the 24th why does Gaston tell Juliette it was the 23rd?
3. Why do you think Gaston is keen on taking the painting by Corot?
4. Do you think Gaston is very clever? Do you approve of his conduct?
5. Would Jeanne be happy to hear about Gaston’s “fortune”?

Now you have come to the end of the play and an activity to arrange a set of jumbled events would refresh your memory.

- Before leaving, Jeanne wants to see the upper floor.
- Juliette enters and gives a long description of the villa adding that she intends to keep to herself a painting by Corot.
- After almost a month, Juliette gets a call saying a lady would come to buy it.
- Gaston's ingenuity is to be discovered by Jeanne later on.
- Mrs. Al Smith buys it for 300,000 francs.
- After much bargaining, Juliette reduces the price from 250,000 francs to 200,000 francs.
- Juliette puts up her villa for sale.
- While waiting for the owner of the villa, Gaston indicates he has no intention of buying a villa.
- Gaston doesn't agree and he is about to leave with his wife without looking round the villa.
- Gaston refuses to join them.
- Juliette agrees and the villa is sold to Gaston for 200,000 francs unaware that Gaston has already sold it to Mrs. Al Smith.
- Some customers were willing to buy it but they didn't buy.
- A French couple, Gaston and Jeanne come to take a look around the villa.
- An American lady, Mrs. Al Smith arrives as informed earlier.
- When Jeanne returns after looking around the upper floor indicating that she has given up the idea of buying, quite unexpectedly, Gaston shows his desire to buy it for 200,000 francs.
- Mrs. Al Smith mistakes Gaston to be the owner of the villa.
- Gaston takes away the painting as a souvenir.

Is Villa for sale an interesting play?

Here are some features that make it interesting.

- a. The farcical element
 - Mrs Al Smith arrives at a moment when the owner of the villa goes upstairs to show Jeanne the upper floor.
 - Mrs. Al Smith cannot spare more than five minutes for a transaction that would cost her as much as 300,000 francs.
 - Mrs. Al Smith is never suspicious of Gaston even though it's a serious business transaction.
 - Mrs. Al Smith's lawyer happens to be Mr. Who.
- b. Humour evoked by the characters
 - All the female characters except Jeanne are frivolous. They attach a lot of importance to film acting. Even Gaston is surprised to hear Mrs. Al Smith is 'a big star'. Film acting seems to be a lucrative business and all show a great interest in it.
E.g. "Film acting is rather looked up to here."
 - "The villa is situated at a stones throw from Joinville, the French Hollywood"
- c. Humour through ironical situations and expressions
E.g. Even though Gaston is not interested in film acting he turns out to be the most successful actor who deceives Al Smith, Jeanne and Juliette.
Gaston says, "Life is full of surprises" and "We are learning now. We are practising to do business"
- d. Humour through dialogues
Even though the maid says very little in the play, what she says is quite interesting.
"Yesterday the butcher didn't open the shop, he was being shot all morning"
Gaston says, "Oh! There's a bath in the bathroom, is there?"

e. Suspense created at various points.

E.g. When Gaston pretends to be the owner of the villa while the real owner is upstairs.

The social and moral issues discussed in the drama

a. Buying and selling

Buying and selling, a purely selfish affair, is portrayed comprehensively in the drama. In the process a number of human weaknesses are disclosed.

E.g. Gaston has no compunction about grabbing the opportunity that comes his way. A reference to his shrewdness is made by Jeanne earlier on with regard to her dowry.

“But since then you have made a fortune.”

There is always flattery involved in selling. We find Juliette flattering Jeanne and Gaston flattering Mrs. Al Smith in trying to persuade each to buy the Villa.

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|-------------------|
| b. Human weaknesses | - | Craving for money |
| | - | callousness |
| | - | deceitfulness |
| | - | male chauvinism |
| | - | hypocrisy |

Human weaknesses that indicate what is moral or immoral are exhibited by each character in different degrees.

E.g. Gaston’s chauvinistic attitude towards his wife and towards women in general is obvious.

“You women are so curious ... you can’t resist the pleasure of sticking your noses into another woman’s bathroom ... better than the one you use yourself.”

“I have never cared such a damn little about anybody’s opinion”

“Stop worrying me about this shanty.”

c. Class discrimination – Ethnicity (French / American)

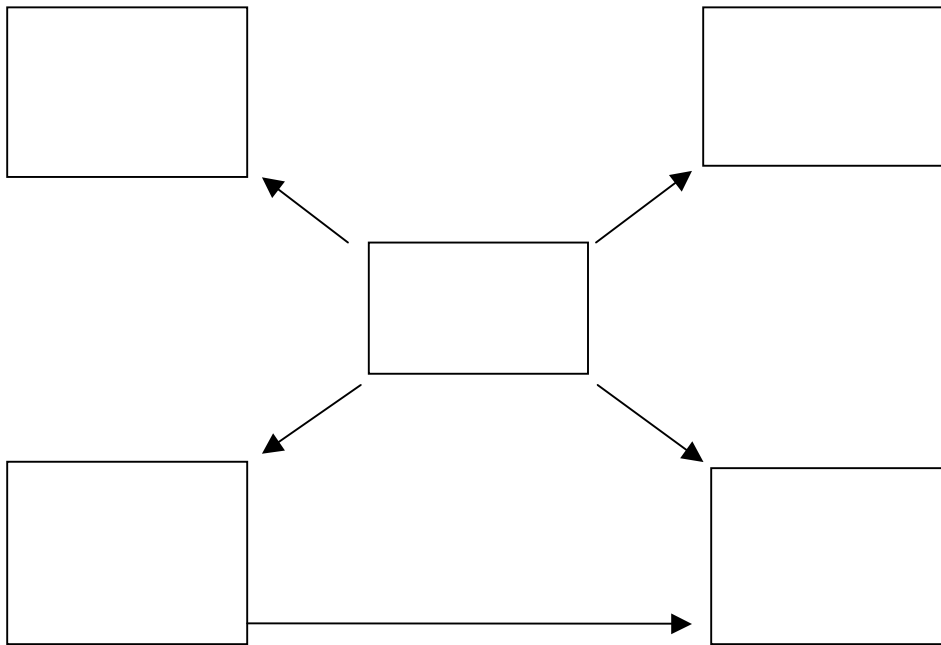
Gaston is also able to outsmart all the women through his ingenuity. Even though Mrs. Al Smith is proud of her Americanness she cannot detect any pretence in Gaston’s behaviour. Her complacency about being American does not seem to be benefitting her in any way. Money seems to be a decisive factor in her behaviour. Mrs. Al Smith is keen on drawing a distinction between the French and the American. It is necessary to interpret the attitude of the writer towards this distinction of class and ethnicity.

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|----------------|
| d. Human relationships | - | husband / wife |
| | - | mistress /maid |
| | - | buyer / seller |

When you evaluate the human relationships you would see which ones are healthy and harmonious and which ones are not. You may pick out the relevant situations. What view does the writer hold about the nature of these relationships?

Analyzing Characters

A diagram like the one given below would help to summarize the behaviour of the characters.



Write the name of the most important character in the middle cage and the other names in the other cages. The behaviour towards each other could be shown through arrows. Write appropriate adjectives to describe each character. Justify your choices. Initiate discussion among students. Here are some adjectives you may choose from,

Adventurous, naïve, selfish, polite, jovial, desperate, haughty, innocent, compunctious, rude, mercenary, domineering, shrewd, friendly, supercilious

- Relate the characters and the events in the drama to familiar situations around you.
- Are they universal?

Prototype Paper

G.C.E. (O/L) Appreciation of English Literary Texts

Answer parts I and II of question 1, and four other questions selecting one from each section, poetry, drama, prose and fiction.

Question I

Part I

Context Question 1

Read the following extracts and answer the questions given below each extract:

- (i) 'Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns' he said
- (a) From where are these lines taken? Who wrote them?
(b) Who speaks these words? What is the situation?
(c) What is the speaker's attitude to the people he speaks.
(5 marks)
- (ii) 'You French people have a cute way of doing business. You go and tell your boss that if he doesn't come right away, I'm going!'
- (a) From where are these lines taken? Who wrote them?
(b) Who speaks these words? To whom are they spoken?
(c) What impression of the speaker do you set from her words?
(5 marks)
- (iii) "You must seek to liberate yourself from bondage. My son, always remember this, remember how fortunate you are to be born a man"
- (a) From which text are these lines taken? Who wrote it?
(b) Who speaks these words? To whom are they spoken?
(c) What is the "bondage" that the speaker is referring to in the text? (5marks)
- (iv) " I'll give you whatever you want if you'll be kind to me- a thousand dollars if you'll leave me alone and come back on another day"
- (a) From which text is this extract taken? Who is the author?
(b) Who speaks these words? To whom does he speak them?
(c) What does "be kind to me" mean here?
(5 marks)

- (i) One evening before I went to take Chumley for his walk I opened a tin of Ryvita biscuits and concealed a dozen or so in my pockets. When we had walked some distance, Chumley sat down and I sat beside him. As we both examined the view I took a biscuit from my pocket and started to eat it. He watched me. I think he was rather surprised that I did not offer him any, as I usually did, but finished it up and smacked my lips appreciatively. He moved nearer, and started to go through my pockets, which was in itself a good sign. He had not done that since the first day he had been taken ill. He found a biscuit, got it out, sniffed it and then to my delight, ate it up. I knew he was going to be all right.

- (a) From which text are these lines taken? Who wrote it?
(b) What is the situation described in these lines?
(c) Who is Chumley?

(5 marks)

- (ii) “ In fair round belly with good capon lin’d,
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances”
(d) From which text are these lines taken? Who wrote it?
(e) Who is described in these lines? How does this person look like?
(f) How do you feel about this person?

(5 marks)

Question I

Context question II

Answer only one question from ‘a’ or ‘b’

- (a) Their horns painted pink and crimson, the milk – white bullocks thundered over the sand, the wooden carts lumbering after them, the drivers in their bright new turbans shouting themselves hoarse as they waved their whips in the air and urged them along. ‘Biju’s cart – Biju’s bullocks – Biju’s won!’ A shout went up at the far end of the beach and was passed back through the crowds on the dunes. Biju standing amongst them in a new, dazzling white dhoti, beamed, looking larger and broader than ever with his wife and daughter beside him in their new Diwali finery. People shouted and congratulated him – they seemed to have forgiven Biju at last for his boasting and arrogance – after all, he had helped to rescue the drowning fishermen. That great storm had brought all the fisherman closer together, they had realized how much they depended on each other and needed each other, and they seemed to be celebrating this closeness today.

- (i) What is the situation described here? What are the main events?
(2 marks)
- (ii) Who is Biju? What is his relationship to the people around him?
(2 marks)
- (iii) Explain the following words: turbans, dhoti, Diwali, whips
(2 marks)
- (iv) What would you say is the key sentence in this passage? Why?
(4 marks)
- (b) The house was three storeys high: a large manor built of stone, with a grey balcony round the top, which gave it a picturesque look. There were rooks in the trees behind the house, and they flew over the lawns and grounds to alight in the large meadow, where I could see some tall thorn trees as large as oaks, from which the place must have got its name of Thornfield. Further off, there were hills, not so high as those round Lowood; and a little village clustered on the side of one of the hills, with its roof-tops half hidden by more trees. The tower of a church could be seen not far away from the gates that shut off the Thornfield land from the road.
1. What gave the house a picturesque look? (02 marks)
 2. What is the house called? What assumption is made about its name? (02 marks)
 3. The house is described as a manor. How does this make it stand out from other houses? (02 marks)
 4. The narrator thinks everything seemed “very stately and grand”, but then I was so little used to grandeur”. What features of her character are revealed by this observation? (04 marks)

Part II Poetry

2. What are the seven Ages of Man described by William Shakespeare in his poem – “The seven Ages of Man”? Do you think they are true of human life even today?
3. Would you describe Robert Frost’s “Minor Bird” as a nature poem? Why?
4. How does Wilfred Owen bring out the (a) violence (b) the wastefulness of war in Anthem for Doomed Youth?

5. Is Hillaire Beloc's poem Matilda altogether funny? Justify your answer with examples from the poem.

Part iii Drama

6. "Everyman is weak and undecided at the beginning but strong and decided at the end" "Do you agree with this statement?"
7. "The Villa for Sale" leaves all the main characters happy in the end." Trace the action of the play to show how this happens.

Part IV Prose

8. "In the Monkeys, Punyakante Wijenaikie makes one aware of the human situation rather than the spiritual" "Do you agree?"
9. "Christmas is not about celebrating. It is about sharing and commitment" "Do you think this is a sensitive way of reading "The Gift of the Magi"?"
10. "In 'The Dark Years' the reader finds Mandela's true self as a son and a father." Is this a proper statement to introduce "The Dark Years"?

Part V Fiction

11. "The village by the sea is a children's story because it shows how children cope with the difficulties of life." Give your views on this statement.
12. Describe the character of Jane Eyre? What features in her character appealed to you most? Why?