

IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENT ENGLISH POEMS AT THE SECONDARY-LEVEL WBBSE CURRICULUM: AN OVERVIEW

¹Prithwish Sarkar
M.Ed Student (2016-2018)
Dept. of Teacher Education
WBUTTEPA, India

²Prof. Palash Das
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Teacher Education
WBUTTEPA, India

Abstract: This work deals with the importance of English poems at the secondary level WBBSE curriculum. It can cross boundaries that little else can. As for as the learning is concern poetry can give a full of knowledge to the secondary-level learners. The main objective of this study are to identify the literary, educational and psychological importance of WBBSE secondary-level English poems. To identify those three issues, this study focuses on the literary, educational and psychological elements in the class- IX & X English textbooks. After critically analysis the eight poems in the class IX & X textbooks, the researcher find the various literary like simile, metaphor, personification, allusion, alliteration etc. and educational like moral values, importance of environment, social values etc. and psychological like abstract thinking, emotional development, self-respect etc. component those are include in those texts. In this study, all the components are critically evaluated and discussed.

Keyword: English poems, WBBSE curriculum, literary importance, educational importance, psychological importance.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Cuddon defines poems in 'Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory' as 'it's different from any other kind of composition is a species of magic, the secret to which lies in the way the words lean upon each other, are linked and interlocked in sense and rhyme.' Poetry encompasses all forms of human experience, from the simplest to the most intimate and complex. It focuses to the intellectual and the ordinary man.

West Bengal Board of Secondary Education is very clear about the poems to be read in school. In secondary schools, pupils should read poetry from the English literary heritage, poetry written for young people and poetry for different culture and tradition.

In English literature poets have used language to express their thoughts, feelings, ideas and perspective. Poets also used various rhyme, meter and literary devices to address the nature of love and various complex social issues. By studying those poetry, secondary school students can gain a huge understanding not only about language and literature but also the society and themselves.

By studying poetry in WBBSE curriculum, the secondary level students feel the beauty of language. Studying poetry can help students to expand their vocabularies. Reading also help students to become more aware of the ways in which language used in the poetry and the images, rhyme and rhetorical meaning that can be created.

According to a study by California Poets in School (2002) "students who study poetry in the classroom increase their skills of critical analysis." By identifying the various technique used by the poets and thinking about their function in the poems, secondary level students can upgrade their critical thinking skills. In those poems that reads must analyze carefully to understand.

In many poems, poet describes many information about our world and information about a particular important incident. By studying those poetry they learn those information and they learn various social and moral values.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The objective of the present study are –

1. To identify the literary importance of WBBSE Secondary level English poems.
2. To explain the educational significance of WBBSE Secondary level English poems.
3. To know the psychological importance of WBBSE Secondary level English poems.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study is based on secondary data have been collected from the English textbooks for class – IX & X published by West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE), research papers, websites, books and various others journals for this study.

4. NAME OF THE TEXTS:

Figure 1: Name of the poems in Secondary-Level textbooks.

CLASS	NAME OF THE POEM	WRITER
IX	Autumn	John Clare
	Mild the Mist Upon the Hill	Emily Jane Bronte
	The North ship	Philip Larkin
	Hunting Snake	Judith Wright
X	Fable	Ralph Waldo Emerson

	My Own True Family	Edward James
	Sea Fever	John Edward Masefield
	The Snail	William Cowper

5. LITERARY IMPORTANCE OF WBBSE SECONDARY LEVEL ENGLISH POEMS:

In class- IX & X WBBSE English textbook, students learn various literary information. Those information are elevates their knowledge about English language. Those are –

- ✓ **Alliteration** – A figure of speech in which in which a sequence of words begin with same letter especially consonant or word.
 - “Surrounded by a staring tribe and me tied to a stake.” (My Own True Family)
 - “We scarcely thought; still as we stood” (Hunting Snake)
- ✓ **Allusion** – An allusion is a figure of speech that makes a reference to a place, person or event. This can be real or imaginary and may refer to anything including fiction, folklore, historical events or religious manuscripts.
 - “He quested through the parting grass.” (Hunting Snake) This is a biblical allusion.
- ✓ **Elegy** – Elegy is a poem of mourning for a person or a tragic event. Many poems in English literature have been written in lamenting the death.
 - “The faded leaves away.” (Autumn)
 - “Mild and Mist upon the Hill”.

Those are not Elegy in true sense but in those two poem student can able to learn elegiac tone partly.
- ✓ **Exaggeration** – A figure of speech which contains on exaggeration telling something in a big way for emphasis. Its means to make something more important better or worse than it really is.
 - “.....and I come twice awake.” (My Own True Family)
 - “Sun glazed his curves of diamond scale.” (Hunting Snake)
- ✓ **Inversion** – According to Cambridge dictionary it is “a situation in which something is changed so that it is opposite of what it was before or in which something is turned opposite down.”
 - “Neither can you crack a nut.” (Fable)
- ✓ **Simile** – It is a figure of speech in which something is compare to another explicitly by using words ‘like’, ‘as’ etc.
 - “Where the wind is like a whetted knife.” (Sea Fever)
 - “On dull November days like these.” (Autumn)
- ✓ **Metaphor** – It is a figure of speech in which a comparison between two things is implied but not clearly.
 - “I met an old women there-all nobly stick and rag.” (My Own True Family)
 - “Telling not of storms to-morrow; /No/; the day has wept its fill, / Spent its store of silent sorrow. (Mild and Mist upon the Hill)
- ✓ **Personification** – The Attribution of a Personal nature or human characteristics to something non-human, or the representative of an abstract quality in human form.
 - In “Autumn” personifies wind as a living being.
 - In “Mild the Mist upon the Hill” personifies rainy days as a living beings.
 - They said, “We are oak trees...” (My Own True Family)
 - In “Fable” poet personifies the squirrel and the mountain.

6. EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANT OF SECONDARY LEVEL ENGLISH POEMS:

In class- IX & X WBBSE English textbook, students learn various educational significance. Those information are uplift their social and educational knowledge. Those are –

Poems of class – IX

In class IX WBCHSE English textbook, Bliss, the first poem is “Autumn” by English poet John Clare. In this poem, poet is simply viewing an Autumnal landscape, but not form a specific spot or place. This poem presents a pen-picture of the mellow beauty of the autumn in the country side. In this poem, poet describes the season in England. Through this description students are easily understand the difference and similarities between the two countries. They much more aware about the environmental changes of this season. It can be says that, the poem encouraged students about environmental education. They learn about mossy, elm-tree, sparrow, pigeon, cock and their importance in our ecology.

In the poem “Mild the Mist upon the Hill” written by Emily Jane Bronte describes the blue mist that surrounds the distant mountains reminds the poet of the happy days of youth and childhood that she has left behind. The natural ambience transports the poet into a dreamy world of sweet memories of bygone years. In this poem students can able to relate their memories with the poet. Students also able to relate their childhood days with the nature. By correlate with nature learners can learn various natural values, love towards their family and enjoy their childhood days fully.

The poem ‘The North Ship’ is written by a renowned English poet and novelist Philip Arthur Larkin. In this poem poet describes the Journey of Three Ships sailing by over the swelling sea that head to different dimension. While two ships return back, one put forward to continue its long journey like a symbol to aspiration that outcomes all obstacles. This poem is based on a life centric philosophical thoughts. This poem is about the journey of life. The poem is based on our life, as the ship faces various obstacle in the sea, we also focus various problematic situation in our life. The wind is luck that helps our activities. In this poem students can able to learn the philosophy

about the life and they able to interpret those obstacles in life through this philosophy. They learn how to overcome the hardest situation to reach the ultimate goal. As Swami Vivekananda says “Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached”. They able to co-relate the philosophy of Vivekananda with this poem and learn the philosophy of ultimate success.

Judith Wright, the writer of the “Hunting Snake”, was as Australian poet and environmentalist. The poem describes the poet’s experience of watching a black snake as it makes its way across an area of grassland. The poet looks on, fascinates as the snake hunts for food and finally disappear. Alike the ‘tyger’ of Blake, from philosophical ideology the snake can be the fierce experience on nature. In this poem student can learn the value of natural beauty students are always habituated with the fearful image of black snake. So, they always characterize a snake as a dangerous creature. But in the poem, writer describe the beauty of a snake and its importance in our environment and learners learn that everything has a beauty.

Poems of class- X

Fable written by Ralph Waldo Emerson, has a huge educational value for the students of class – X. This poem teaches them that each person has his/her individual talents and every living things has its purpose, no one is superior or inferior in this world. The squirrel in this poem stated that the almighty has put all the creatures in its proper place and all of the carry different talents. Therefore, we should not underestimate any creature on the basis of their size. We get a sense that mountain is feeling superior to the little squirrel. Little animal recognize that “talents differ” and concludes with the thought that the mountain can’t do a basic task that squirrel do: crack a nut. So the poem ‘Fable’ is a short poem with animal character and a moral. A fable usually has talking animals and a moral at the end. Thus poem also centers round a squirrel and a mountain and gives a moral lesson that in the world every being, living or non-living, big or small, have their individual reasons for existence.

The poem “My Own True Family” written by Ted Hughes is not only speaks on the importance of environmental conservation but also reflects the Hughesian philosophy. That tales about intrinsic bond between mankind and nature. On the surface level the poem aware the learners against deforestation because the child in the poem dreams that he is tied to a stake and must promise to plant trees in order to be set free. But beneath the surface, students also learn its philosophy which is connected with mankind and our society. It is a confirmation that humanity must connect with the natural world in order to achieve its full potential. In the poem oak tree itself becomes a symbol of poets awareness of nature and the old woman somehow brings into the mind the image of Mother Nature. In this poem students also feel the between the mankind and the nature and they are able to much more aware about the deforestation.

After reading the poem Sea Fever written by John Edward Masefield, the learners will be able to know more and more about the sea. They will automatically gain a kind of thrust to the sea. They also learn about the essential things needed for the sea voyage. They come to know about the life and journey of the sailors in the endless sea. They will gather some fresh knowledge about the sea birds, which help and guide the sailors in the midst of the sea. They will motivate themselves after reading such toilsome and dangerous journey of the sailors. At last, they will gather a kind of longing to go to the sea and to explore the sea.

The poem ‘The Snail’ is written by William Cowper is based on the natural habit of a snail. The snail leads a life like the studious and hermetic thinker who retires from the world. He is live in society but not within the society. He always cocooned within its house. He has no other wealth that his oneself and he is content without. In this poem student can learn various positive and negative aspect. As his self-centered in a negative aspect for the development of the society. But the self-respect and self-satisfaction is a positive component of our society. Students through this poem learns how to satisfy these ability and respect themself.

7. PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF WBBSE SECONDARY LEVEL ENGLISH POEMS:

Generally, the age of secondary students are 13 – 15 years. Psychologically this age is called adolescence period. It is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to legal adulthood. According to Darwin’s evolutionary theory and Freud’s ‘psychodynamic theory’, ‘adolescence was a representative of our human ancestors, a phylogenetic shift from being primitive to being civilized.’ Their textbooks and content should be according to their psychological development. In this area the researcher will critically evaluate the psychological aptness of those poems and the English textbooks.

Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget, a Swiss biologist, theorize as ‘Formal Operational Stage’. According to Piaget learners learn to deal with abstraction by logical thinking. Students are able to thinking like – i) Abstract thinking, ii) Metacognition & iii) Moral reasoning in this phrase. The poem like “Sea Fever”, “Autumn”, “Hunting Snake” are for their abstract thinking and “Fable”, “The North Ship” nurture their metacognition power. “The Snail”, “Mild and Mist upon the Hill” & “My Own True Family shaping their moral reasoning.

According to Lev Vygotsky ‘language & culture is the determinant of cognitive development’. So, in this phrase students have to learn language and culture more prominently for their cognitive development. The poems in the WBBSE syllabus for the secondary level student are rich in language and filled with literary devices like simile, metaphor, personification etc. (as discussed in the earlier part of this paper.)

Emotional development

In the adolescence period students are much more aware of their emotions. They are able to control their emotions and can feel to the others. In the “Mild the Mist upon the Hill” students can able to feel the emotions of Emily Jane Bronte.

Social Development

Erik Erickson, in his psycho-social development identify this stage as ‘the period of identity vs role confusion’. This stage beginning with the advent of puberty, is marked with the crisis of identity vs role confusion. Equipped with the sense of trust, autonomy, imitative & industry, adolescence begin to search for their own personal identity. In the secondary level WBBSE English textbook, the poem “Fable” & “The Snail” talked about the inferiority complex, self-satisfaction & self-respect. After reading those poem learners able to mingled much more in the socialization process.

Moral Development

Moral development of adolescence is properly theorized by the psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg. According to him it is the ‘stage of conforming to the democratically accepted law and more of community welfare’ & the ‘stage of conforming the universal ethical principles and the call of one’s conscience’. In the poem “Fable”, “The Snail” & “My Own True Family” are critically evaluate various ethical and social principals which framed the moral justification of the students.

Psychological aptness of the English textbooks.

The WBBSE published English textbooks for secondary students should be psychologically well framed. The main psychological area should be maintained in textbook are –

1. The content of a textbook should be organized by proper psychological order i.e. easy to hard. In those text books first use the easy poem like “Autumn”, which describes the natural beauty and “Hunting Snake”, as a philosophical and complex poem, at the end. The poems of class – ix are mainly focus on natural beauty but for the class – X, the poems are focused on philosophical thoughts, moral, ethical and social values.
2. In those textbooks WBBSE uses many textual and grammatical exercise. According to Thorndike’s theory of Connectionism, learners learn more clearly by practicing those exercise. So, it is psychologically justified.
3. In the WBBSE textbooks the poems like “The North Ship” & “Sea Fever” has an adventurous tone, are acted as a Stimulus and reinforces the students for their English lesson.

8. CONCLUSION:

According to William Butler Yeats said about poetry “it is blood, imagination, intellect running together...It bids us to touch and taste and hear and see the world, and shrink from all that is one of the brain only.” So the poem talk about the difficult and unexplainable thinks in life. Poem talk about the moral, ethical values and describes death and suffering in a certain way that transforms our thought. Through the analysis of the poem, it is found that the poems of class – IX & X are full of literary, educational and psychological elements. Those are elevates the minds of the little saplings. Teacher also scaffolding the students to extract those ideas from the text and elevates themselves.

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