Salvaging Poetic Lessons in a Globalized World: Innovative Teaching Tools to the Rescue

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Literature-in-English is an interesting subject and its pedagogies should be treated as such in the classroom but this position seems unrealised in Literature lessons. This paper attempts to bring to the fore what is expected of poetry lessons in the 21st century and how these expectations seem to stand in marked contrast to the present classroom realities. This paper also reiterates the need for all-round development of Literature students not being limited to the aspects of formal analysis of literary texts and linguistic development, but also affective engagement and aesthetic experience.

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Keywords: literature-in-english, poetry, learner-centred strategies, brainstorming, youtube.

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the alluring subjects offered in schools is Literature-in-English. Its inherent features: universality; non-triviality; personal relevance; variety; emotion stimulant; naturally intrinsically appealing; creativity; critical thinking; motivating effect; applicability to life situations; evocative meaning and multifarious interpretations foster its relevance in daily living (Maley, 2001). Literature-in-English equips English as Second Language (ESL) learners with the use of language in different contexts, promotes healthy psycho-social and affective factors of students, exposes them to literary experience and develops their linguistic repertoire/elucidation. Drama, prose and poetry are the genres of Literature-in-English.

Poetry is a piece of writing in verse form, expressing deep feeling or noble thought in beautiful language, composed with the desire to communicate an experience (Olatoye, 2000). Consequently, Poetry lessons should be a holistic blend of literary appreciation: affective engagement, aesthetic experience, formal analysis of literary text and linguistic development. Of all these, affective engagement and aesthetic experience captivate students' attention and interest to Literature. Shen (2010) notes that:

Aesthetic experience serves as the entry point to the text and further leads readers to reflection and analysis. After this has been done, then students can begin to acquire knowledge of literary conventions with less difficulty. The acquisition of literary conventions is best accomplished through students' affective engagement in appreciating poetry. The literary conventions should not be taught as discrete knowledge separated from poetry reading (pp.23-25).

II. PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

Shen (2010) affirms that the basic objective of literature instruction in schools is "to develop fluent, independent readers who turn to books for enjoyment and information" (Sloan, 2002: 28). Independent readers are developed when Literature lessons are interesting, participatory and experiential while teaching strategies employed are learner-centred, fun-filled,

pragmatic and exploratory. However, observation has shown that there is a far cry between poetry lessons and expectations from poetry lessons.

Observation has shown that Literature instruction is currently characterised by teacher-centred or text-centered activities which do not give room for active students' participation. Literature lessons are also cognitive-oriented, examination-centred and targeted at language awareness and rote learning for literary analysis with little attention given to the affective and psychomotor domains. Without affective domain, Literature lessons become boring, abstract, theoretical, and product-centered (Jimola, 2019). This has caused some students to have unwholesome attitude towards Literature. Experience has shown that ineffective teaching methods employed in the classroom have contributed to this menace. For instance, some poetry teachers, who wish to make the class participatory, urge students to construct meanings from poems but their students go through agonizing and frustrating time trying to unravel the hidden meanings in such poems because the teachers are unable to guide them effectively. This problem could be traced to lack of knowledge of the application of the Reader Response Theory, propounded by Rosenblatt, a literary theorist.

Also the teaching methodology adopted by Literature teachers appears to be uninviting and rigid. Bassey (2020) attests that all over Nigeria there is a habitual way of handling poetry lessons in the classroom. The teacher begins the class by:

writing the title of the poem and the poet's name on the board, reciting the poem to the students or getting one student to do so aloud. Thereafter, the teacher asks the students questions from the poem. The lesson ends with the students being instructed to identify the literary devices (p.33).

Students' encounter with poems needs to be transactional and interactive but many teachers force their students to adopt their own-constructed meaning instead of giving them the opportunity to derive their own meanings from the text. Mohammad and Amir Hossein (2012) affirm the need to encourage students to give their own interpretations and construct meanings through their experiential knowledge to the literary text rather than being prevailed upon to accept the teacher's interpretation. The focus of most Literature teachers is to develop students' formal literary skills, literary appreciation, linguistic development, facts and information to the detriment of students' affectionate engagement, lived-through personal and aesthetic experience. Consequently, learners grapple with the problem of being dependent-meaning makers who lack the creative and critical thinking potentials to respond to the text and express their own ideas and feelings freely. This situation has caused lack of self-belong, disinterestedness, inconsequential participants in the reading tasks and classroom activities.

When learners are allowed to have lived-through experiences through personal connection; activation of previous knowledge, background information from past experience; negotiation of meaning with the poem; and develop empathy for the poem's speaker, they develop affectionate evocation and are motivated with sustained interest; they actively become enthusiastic and passionate readers of poems (Shen, 2010).

After the development and sustenance of affectionate evocation, students' exposure to various conventions and elements of poetry such as the use of musical devices, imagery, rhyme, rhythm, setting, characterisation, tone, allusion and figurative uses will make them to have successful literary transaction, appropriate appreciation of Literature thereby enabling them to critically reflect on the poem rather than concentrate on abstract theory for which poetry lessons are currently stereotyped. To salvage this situation, there is a need for Literature teachers to employ teaching and learning activities that foster students' affectionate engagement, lived-through personal and aesthetic experience.

III. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Several studies have been carried out on the need to adopt effective teaching strategies in Literature classrooms: advance organizer for poetic literature (Ayanniyi, 2009); stylistic and thematic

approaches for poetic literature (Kolade-Ojo, 2012); language and reader-response based approaches for poetic literature (Akele, 2015); scaffolding and cooperative learning strategies for prose literature (Oluwadare, 2018); peer conferencing strategy for poetic literature (Bassey, 2020). Findings from these studies indicate the effectiveness of different strategies but there is no evidence to prove that Nigerian Literature teachers are aware of these strategies, even if they are aware, they seem not to employ them in the teaching/learning process.

To improve on this situation, there is a need to overhaul the "chalk and talk" and "sit-down-and-listen" traditional method of teaching to incorporate innovative teaching strategies that would holistically help students relate Literature-in-English to their own lives, culture and society. Such strategies should cater for students' affective engagement; aesthetic experience; formal analysis of literary text; and linguistic development. Examples of teaching strategies through which effective teaching/learning can be achieved are the use of brainstorming and YouTube. Brainstorming is a strategy that provokes creative and critical thinking to solve problems while YouTube is a strategy that attracts students' attention by providing extra visual support. The integration of brainstorming and YouTube has the potentialities to open up a new paradigm of learner-friendly teaching techniques which could foster students' behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagements.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Brainstorming

Brainstorming is one of the strategies embedded in the discussion method; its target is to air divergent viewpoints and opinions, enhance learners' communication skills, foster critical thinking and decision-making skills and to find a solution to a specific problem within the specified time frame given in the classroom. The teacher is required to adequately plan for the lesson, use questioning technique to achieve the stated objectives and act as a facilitator rather than a sage when students interact in response to questions. Brainstorming technique involves oral and pre-writing exercises for helping the learner and for expressing ideas by the teacher (Bilal, 2012).

During brainstorming sessions, some rules are considered: no criticism, evaluation or defence of ideas; this opens up possibilities and breaks down incorrect assumptions about the problem's limits; building on members' suggestions is allowed; strange and wild ideas are accepted; and quantitative idea is encouraged than qualitative ideas (AlMutairi, 2015; Alberta Learning, 2002; Hashempour, Rostampour & Behjat, 2015). Mogahed (2011) posits that there are numbers of ways to organize brainstorming: individual brainstorming, individual to whole class, group brainstorming, and small group to whole class (pyramid). Every stage has two phases; a divergent phase and a convergent phase (Treffinger & Firestien, 1989 cited in Wu, 1993).

Some studies have been carried out on brainstorming strategy: brainstorming strategy and learners' writing skill (Maghsoudi & Haririan, 2013); effect of using brainstorming strategy in developing creative problem solving skills (AlMutairi, 2015); brainstorming strategy and English students' writing performance (Amoush, 2015); and brainstorming as a way to approach student-centered learning (Norseha & Polin, 2016). Findings from these studies reveal that brainstorming helps the L2 learners gain more independence and success in writing; develop creative thinking skills; has positive effect on English students' writing; and contribute to the increase in students' motivation, confidence and participation.

4.2 YouTube

One of the online educational tools that demand little technological expertise is YouTube (Younger, Duncan, & Hart, 2013). Yuen (2015) notes that YouTube, among web 2.0 tools, has recorded increased growth in its educational use due to its educational potentials such as catering for students' individual learning needs with a focus on Gagner's multiple intelligences; verbal/

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linguistic, visual/spatial, musical/rhythmic, and emotional intelligences (Berk, 2009). YouTube, launched in 2005, is a repository for user-generated content. Content on YouTube includes music videos, TV clips and personal videos uploaded by users, who are mainly members of the public. Videos can be viewed by anyone with an internet connection; however, in order to upload videos, a free user account is required (Burke, Snyder, & Rager, 2009) cited in Roodt and Peier (2013: 475).

YouTube is a viable option for modeling strategies, providing additional context on education trends and assessing student learning through student-created videos (Younger, Duncan & Hart, 2013). It could make class situation better and develop students' language skills by improving their fluency in speaking and pronunciation, competence in grammar and vocabulary, and make students understand the contents taught. A number of different potential learning outcomes to consider when utilizing videos in the classroom were given by Burke (2009) to include: serve as supplemental audio-visual materials, grab students' attention, give students a focus and concentration, generate interest in the class, draw on students' imagination, improve learners' attitude towards content and learning, and make learning fun.

Jalaluddin (2016) notes the merits and demerits of YouTube in the classroom: it is a learner-centered veritable tool that can be employed outside and inside of the classroom to make videos, share and also find more similar videos related to the content learnt. Embedded videos provide irresistible, motivational, fascinating and inspirational potency in language classroom; cater for different learning styles, breed independence and critical and reflective thinking; and provide useful online resource for learning and teaching process. YouTube however has some demerits which include: distractions capable of getting students off the topic could prop up; possibility of copyright issues and privacy invasion; language use could sometimes render students puzzled.

Some studies have been carried out on the use of YouTube for teaching purposes: YouTube and websites in the content and language integrated learning (CLIL) Classroom (Oddone, 2011); YouTube and students' content learning (Alwehaibi, 2015); YouTube and speaking skill (Jalaluddin, 2016). Findings from these studies indicate that students' motivation and participation can be enhanced in CLIL contexts; students can be highly motivated to watch, read, write, discuss, interact and take part in the various activities throughout the learning process; and that YouTube is a valuable tool through which multiple language skills can be taught. Buzzetto-More (2015: 56) gives a list of some impactful educative YouTube videos websites which can be leveraged by teachers and learners:

- YouTube EDU (http://www.youtube.com/edu): is a service for educators which contains short lessons from teachers, full university courses, professional development materials, and inspirational videos from global leaders;
- YouTube Teachers: It was created to help K-12 teachers use educational videos to educate, engage and inspire students with content aligned to common core standards;
- YouTube for Schools (https://www.youtube.com/schools): is an opt-in programme that allows schools to access thousands of educational videos from vetted YouTube channels like PBS, TED, and Khan in a secure environment.
- TED Talks Videos (https://www.ted.com/) (Jalaluddin, 2016)

V. EXPOSING LITERATURE TEACHERS TO INNOVATIVE TOOLS OF BRAINSTORMING AND YOUTUBE USING THE POEM "THE SCHOOL BOY"

5.1 Using Brainstorming Technique to Teach the Poem "The School Boy"

Akele (2015) explains the utilization processes of brain-storming session in classroom:

1. Identifying the problem: In preparation for a brainstorming session, the teacher needs to:

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i) select a specific, not a broad problem about the poem to be read.

ii) allow students to read aloud the title of the poem.

iii) create awareness about the text by asking students to predict what the focus of the text could be by brainstorming or inferring from the topic of the text or content similar to the topic that could help them understand the text better. Example, lesson on the poem "The School Boy" could be triggered off by a related question like: Can you remember your first day at school? How did you feel, bored or enthusiastic?

2. Preparing the group: teacher divides the class into groups of three or four depending on the class size. Students in each group read the poem silently to get the gist of the poem noting key words and difficult words.

3. Strict adherence to four basic rules of brainstorming must be followed:

i. No room for criticism

ii. "Freewheeling" is allowed

iii. Ideas should not be weeded until the brainstorming is completed.

iv. Quantity is needed, students write every idea down.

4. Display of related questions on a flip chart, blackboard, overheads or other available tools. The questions are not limited to the following:

i. What is the poem about?

ii. What does each stanza address?

iii. Identification of themes

iv. Identification of the figures of speech used in the poem

v. What feelings does the poem arouse? What sense does it appeal to and how does the language used create some effect on the reader?

5. Teacher sets a realistic time-limit needed for students to generate their ideas on the question raised above.

6. Leading the ideation session: Ideas are generated in relation to the set time.

7. Utilizing after thought group ideas to the whole class: At the expiration of the set time,

in conjunction with the students, each group discusses the relevance and relatedness of the ideas written down to the whole class. At this point, some ideas will be eliminated to give room for the most cogent ideas which will be selected for consideration and deliberations.

8. Processing ideas: Teacher explains the stanzas of poem. The selected cogent ideas from students are discussed and deliberated upon thoroughly. The teacher corrects misconceptions and clears knotty issues.

9. Poetry lessons should be a holistic blend of literary appreciation: affective engagement, aesthetic experience, formal analysis of literary text and linguistic development. To achieve these, the teacher alongside the students engage in the following:

i. explain the plot of the poem

ii. explain themes

iii. identify and explain the figures of speech used in the poem

iv. relate the poem to personal experiences and experiences of life in general

v. discuss the moral lesson of the poem and the impact on the society.

vi. reason empathetically (through imagery, symbolism and repetition) so as to have a vivid experience of the speaker's idea, mood, feeling, voice and tone

vii. discuss the language used in the poem, explain the effects the diction creates on the reader and simplify the difficult words in relation to the poem.

5.2 Using YouTube Technique to Teach the Poem "The School Boy"

Alwehaibi (2015) explains the utilization processes of YouTube videos in classroom:

1. Before the class begins, teacher would have searched for YouTube of poems/short videos which focus on the poems;

2. When an appropriate YouTube video had been selected, the URL of the poem would be sent to the students in the class/by email two days before the time of the class requesting them to watch it;

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3. Then, the whole class would watch the YouTube video on the accessible and available means in front of them nonstop;

4. Subsequently, the teacher alongside the students read out the poem;

5. Then the video clip would be shown again with frequent stops for further discussion and reflection on affective engagement, aesthetic experience, formal analysis of literary text and linguistic development respectively using the following:

i. explain the plot of the poem
ii. explain themes
iii. identify and explain the figures of speech used in the poem
iv. relate the poem to personal experiences and experiences of life in general
v. discuss the moral lesson of the poem and the impact on the society.
vi. reason empathetically (through imagery, symbolism and repetition) so as to have a vivid experience of the speaker's idea, mood, feeling, voice and tone.
vii. discuss the language used in the poem, explain the effects the diction creates on the reader and simplify the difficult words in relation to the poem.

VI. ANALYSIS OF THE POEM; "THE SCHOOL BOY"

The poem "The School Boy" was written by William Blake. "The School Boy" is a romantic poem which appreciates nature, parades its beauty as source of inspiration and admiration, displays love for it, demonstrates the tranquility that nature incorporates, and frowns at every societal or human effort to trample on nature. It is a poem that centres on the glorification of nature which was very common during the Romantic era. The title of the poem, "The School Boy" captures the focal point of the poet's intention.
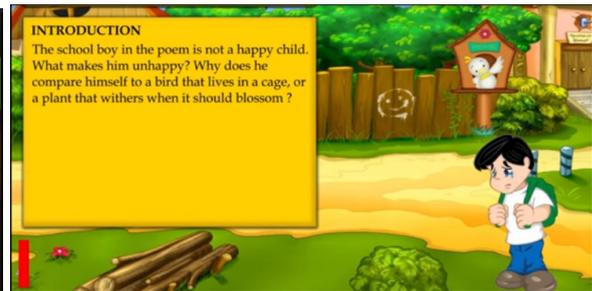
URL of the of YouTube Pictures: (1) m.youtube.com/watch?v=yXg_FRwS5Ko
(2) m.youtube.com/watch?v=k_p1FqA-idg

Stanza 1: The poem expresses the feeling of a young school boy who is attached to his natural world of trees, birds, melodious sounds of hunter's horn, and summer morning. The boy enjoys his every early morning blissful plays, freedom, inspiration and movement amidst the beauty of nature "when the birds sing on every tree" *(l. 2)*
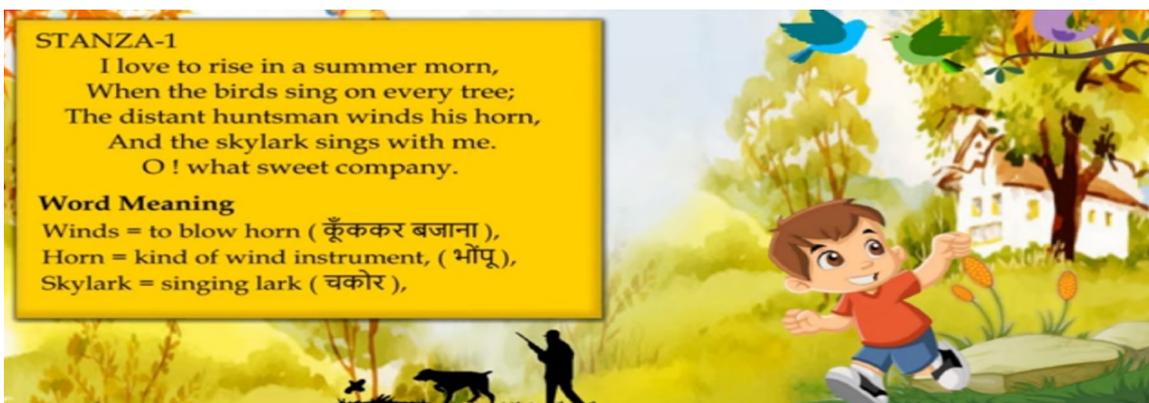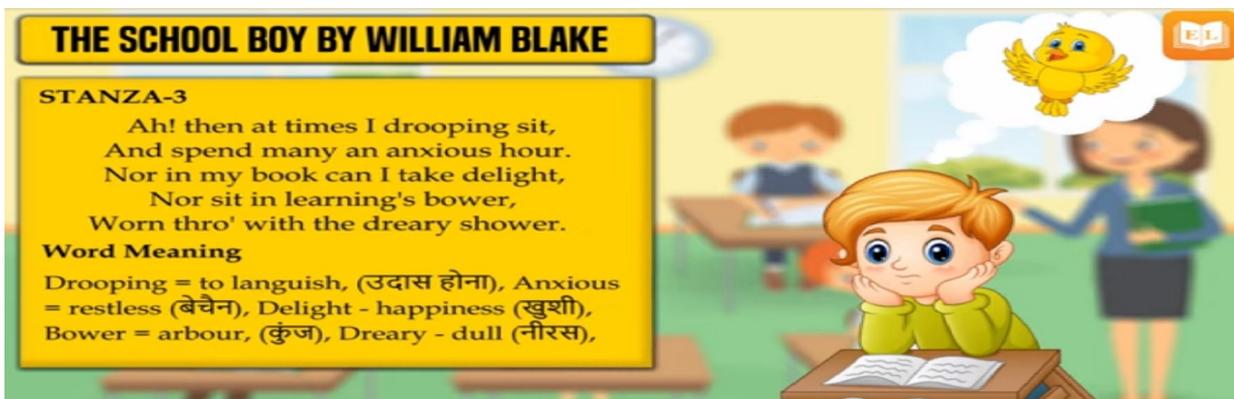
Stanza 2: However, his attachment to his physical environment is severed as he is expected to "go to school in a summer morn" *(l.6)*. His freedom is not only curtailed because he has to leave for school but also the fright of spending "the day in sighing and dismay" *(ll. 9-10)* "under a cruel eye outworn" *(l. 8)*.

THE SCHOOL BOY BY WILLIAM BLAKE

STANZA-2

But to go to the school in a summer morn,
O! it drives all joy away;
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day,
In sighing and dismay.

Word Meaning

Morn = morning (सुबह), Drives = disappears (गायब कर देना), Cruel = unkind (पैनी दृष्टि डालना) Sighing = to breathe in grief (आहें भरना)

Stanza 3: The school boy is not at ease with his new found environment. To the boy, the new environment is laced with restrictions, disillusionment, boredom and frustration which he exudes in his word: "Ah! Then at times I dropping sit" *(l. 11)* reveals his state of depression, suppression and mental torture which has caused him to hang his head down due to lack of excitement and interest in his book and class activities.

THE SCHOOL BOY BY WILLIAM BLAKE

STANZA-3

Ah! then at times I drooping sit,
And spend many an anxious hour.
Nor in my book can I take delight,
Nor sit in learning's bower,
Worn thro' with the dreary shower.

Word Meaning

Drooping = to languish, (उदास होना), Anxious = restless (बेचैन), Delight - happiness (खुशी), Bower = arbour, (कुंज), Dreary - dull (नीरस),

Stanza 4: The boy reveals in his vituperation his predicament, despair and annoyance about confinement and modern day classroom imprisonment occasioned by formal education. The poet persona shows the impossibility of developing optimal and hitch-free talents and potentialities in an unsupportive place and wrong time: "How can the bird that is born for joy sit in a cage and sing" *(ll. 20-21)*. How is he expected to "drop his tender wing and forget his youthful spring" *(ll. 19-20)* and put up pretentious acts and abilities in his formative age of development and progress? How reasonable and progressive is this?

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Stanza 5: Appeal is made to the poet persona's parents about his plight. He passionately presents his plea by drawing their attention to what fate awaits buds if they are nipped "And blossoms blown away" *(l. 21).*

Stanza 6: The poet persona's entreaty in stanza five continues. Several rhetorical questions pervade this stanza on the need for his parents to see through his lenses and reflective thinking that it is unworkable for him to achieve his dream if he is detached from his fount of happiness and contentment. He explicates that if his fun, pleasure and happiness meant to be enjoyed in childhood are expurgated and curtailed due to his parents' imposition and desire for formal education, it is unimaginable how his later life would be presumably, shattered, worthless or unprofitable "Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy? ... "When the blasts of winter appear *(ll. 28 & 30).*

6.1 Poetic Devices Used to Achieve Literary Effects.

The poem is structured into six stanzas of five lines each. End rhyme of *ababb* permeates each stanza. The diction is simple and understandable. The use of diverse figurative expressions add meaning to the poem:

(i) Personification: Birds cannot sing and plants cannot be joyous as these are human attributes has shown in the lines below:

"When the birds sing on every tree   Line 2

And the skylark sings with me   Line 4

And if the tender plants are strip'd Line 23

Of their joy in the springing day"   Line 24

(ii) Metaphor: The lines below are used metaphorically which means   the act of denying the boy his happiness

"The bird" in line 16 is used metaphorically in reference to the boy in the poem.

"If buds are nip'd" line 21 means hampering the boy's development.

"The tender plants are strip'd" line23.

(iii)   Rhetorical Questions: The pitiable predicament of the poet persona is vividly portrayed through the use of rhetorical questions such as:

How can the bird that is born for joy, Line 16

Sit in a cage and sing? Line 17

Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy,

Or bless the mellowing year,

When the blast of winter appear?

(iv) Use of contrast: Admiration for nature, its beauties and tranquility in stanza one "I love to rise in a simmer morn/When the birds sing on every tree *(ll. 1-2)* is contrasted with other stanzas especially stanza two "But to go to school in a summer morn/ O! It drives all joy away!" *(ll. 6-7)*

which explicates repugnance and hatred which the poet persona has for school.

(v) The use of uncommon repetition of rhymes *ababb* in each stanza enhances the musical and echoing effect in the poem.

(vi) Alliteration:

Consonant sound: /h/ alliterates in "huntsman", "his" and "horn" in Line 3

Consonant sound /s/ alliterates in "skylark" and "sings" Line 4

Consonant sounds /w/ and /g/ in "we", "gather" "what" and "griefs" Line 28

(vii) Symbolism:

"The cage" symbolizes school which constraints children's freedom.

"A cruel eye" symbolizes hostile watchful eye of teachers in the classroom.

"The summer morn" symbolizes serene environment which is a gift of nature.

(viii) The themes in the poem are: love for the beauty of nature; insatiable quest enshrined in nature; education is not only tied to formal education; all-round education is better acquired in a natural setting where happiness, freedom and fulfillment are domiciled unlike formal education in a classroom where enslavement, sadness and artificiality are the order of the day.

After the teaching session, students are allowed to reminisce about the lessons gained. Students are paired up or sat in small groups to do some tasks related to the poem for further clarifications, questions and deliberations on the themes for moral implications, its relevance and applicability to their lives. For instance, students must be made to know that life is not a bed of roses and they cannot not always get what they want at all times, so when faced with an unwanted situation, students must learn how to brace up, face the challenges, adapt, persist and never throw in the towel in as much as the challenge is a worthwhile cause.

At the end of the class, as a home assignment, students could be requested to go home and reflect on the poem in relation to its relevance to their society and also paraphrase/summarise the poem in one paragraph.

VI.   CONCLUSION

Brainstorming and YouTube are strategies which foster critical thinking; enhance analytical descriptions; appeal to sense of sight; and are insightful and pivotal in teaching and learning of Literature-in-English to endear the students to literature. These strategies could make students have positive dispositions to Literature-in-English since these teaching strategies are inviting, exploratory and participatory.

VII.   RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made to create an interactive Literature-in-English classroom:

1. Teachers' should utilise student-centred strategies which are participatory rather than the current teacher-centred strategies.
2. Attention should be focused on transactional and interactive theories   rather than on the information theory alone which is text-centred or author-centred.
3. Innovative strategies such as brainstorming and YouTube should be tried out through the provision of conducive environment and logistics.

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