Teaching students to explore salient factors that contribute to the themes in English poems

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Abstract
The prime objective of this article is to teach students to explore some salient factors that contribute to the themes in English poems. A theme is a message, a point of view or a central idea of the poem. A poem may have one or more themes. The article writer has employed diverse poems and verse lines of poems composed by various poets. The underlying themes of poems are exposed through presentation followed by explanation. This article is important for those who are interested in studying and teaching English poetry.

Keywords: factor, form, poetry, teaching, theme

1. Introduction
Poetry has been taught to the students of school, campus and university levels. Most of the students find poetry difficult and occult, because they do not know what poetry means to state or show. They are frequently asked to write the themes of the poems in their examinations. They do not frequently write the answers of such questions, because they consider poems as vague and ambiguous forms of literary writings. I opine that a poem should not be seen as an ambiguous writing. It is true that it can be interpreted in different ways. Such open endedness of a poem encourages the students to be critical and creative. It should be taken as a great virtue of a poem. English literature is enriched by abundant varieties of poetry. Some poems employ figurative language and they can be understood by careful consideration of literary devices, while some poems are so plain and so explicit that they can be understood in the plain sense of the words. It is the complexity in poetry that some poems can be understood by both in the symbolic senses and the plain senses of the words exploited in the poems.

One of the great weaknesses of us as the poetry teachers is that we are not teaching our students the contents and contexts by highlighting that poetry is not different from life. The aim in teaching poetry should be to make it a part of the students' intimate and actual life and instruct them that poetry does not only provide them pleasure, but also deals with human matters. Poetry develops literary experiences in them so that they can evaluate the literary writings and formulate their own likes and dislikes. Poetry is didactic too. Such things can be taught to our students by determining themes in poems. They will enjoy poems if they are taught to explore salient factors that contribute to the themes in poems.

The students have to go through different forms and varieties of poetry. Some poems are the subjective expressions and some are the objective expressions, while other poems are the blended expressions of the poets. This article writer has attempted to borrow some stanzas and poems composed by different poets to explore factors contributing to the themes in poems. This article involves presentation and explanation of the factors as analysis.

Although the article is written for English teachers and students, it may be useful to those who like to study English poems.

2. Review of Literature
Review of literature in this article involves definition of teaching, lecture and discussion method, definition of poetry, major forms of poetry, themes, and salient factors contributing to the themes in poetry.

2.1 Teaching
Most of the persons do not like to be teachers. Teaching requires sound knowledge of the subject matter and an appropriate teaching skill. Teaching is a complex process. Centra (1993) [10] opines teaching as an intellectual process that "produces beneficial and purposeful student learning through the use of appropriate procedures" (p.42). The process of teaching involves the transmission of knowledge, theory or information. Jarvis (2002) [22] asserts that teaching is an "instrumentally rational activity" (p.40).

2.2 Lecture and Discussion Teaching Methods
There are several methods of teaching. Lecture and discussion are two common methods of teaching. Some researchers view that the lecture method is a very useful method for teaching. Berry (2008) highlights the lecture method and mentions that this method is often used to deliver a large amount of information to the students in a short period. Gehlen-Bauum and Weinberger (2014) pinpoint the merit of lecture method and state that lectures are designed to deliver new information to a large group of students. Successful teachers handle the situation and try their best to teach the students effectively. Braskamp and Ory (1994) [7] deal with the nature of effective teaching and enunciate that effective teaching is the creation of situations in which appropriate learning occurs, "shaping those situations is what successful teachers have learned to do effectively" (p.40).

Discussion is a composite form of teaching in which students give and receive information. Steward, *et al* (2010); and Whetten and

Clark (1996) [44] assert that discussion is the typical method and influencing factor of active teaching learning. Marbach-Ad, Seal and Sokolove (2001) [30]; and Jungst, Licklider and Wiersema (2003) [24] pinpoint that many educators consider that the traditional lecture approach to teaching is ineffective compared to active learning methods in spite of the most faculty members' and teachers' preference for the lecture method. A classroom discussion is an active teaching technique because it enables students to explore issues of interest, opinions, and ideas. Moreover, it also leads to deeper levels of learning because in order to build on each other's ideas, the students must first listen and understand the contributions of others students in order to respond or add to it. My teaching experience of English poetry to the students of different levels encourages me to teach the students through discussion method. It has turned to be more effective than the lecture method.

2.3 Poetry
Poetry is one of the mostly read genres of literature. Poetry is widely read because of its moderate lengths, varieties, thematic aspects, use of laconic language and musical quality. Johnson (1965) [23] defines poetry as the art of "uniting pleasure with truth by recalling imagination to the help of reason" (p.57). Hudson (2002) [20] considers poetry as an "interpretation of life through imagination and feelings" (P.80). Carlyle (1956) [9] views poetry as "a musical" (p.317). Poetry is a type of literature in which sounds and meanings of language are combined to create ideas and feelings. For Wordsworth (1800) [48], poetry is the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility" (p.213). Eliot (1951) [14] states that poetry is not an "assertion of truth, but the making of that truth more fully real to us" (p.22). Robert Frost (1957) [16] assumes that poetry provides the one "permissible way of saying one thing and meaning another" (p. v). Poetry does not normally follow a traditional way of grammar. It accepts new forms and styles.. Widdowson (1984) [46] views poetry to be characterized as "deviating from the norms of language." (p.146). It has been Lazar (1993) who argues that poetry frequently breaks the rules of language, but by doing so, it "communicates with us in a fresh, original way" (p.99).

Views expressed by the above mentioned literary personalities indicate that poetry is created with imagination, feeling, musicality, spontaneity, implicitness, language deviation and freshness.

2.4 Different Forms of Poetry
English poetry is flexible in its forms and modes of expression and the subject matters resulting in various themes. Some common forms of poetry are as follows:

2.4.1 Lyric
The lyric is short poem about a feeling, an emotion or a single idea. The lyric which belongs to the category of subjective poetry is a musical poem - word music being an important element in its effect. The basic quality of the lyric is the feeling rather than a thought. It appeals more to the heart than to the intellect.
The lyric can deal with different subjects such as love, hatred, hope, joy, beauty of nature, fear, grief, separation, death and so on. Some lyrics also deal with patriotism and love of liberty. The lyric may deal with love between a male and a female; between man and God and so on. English literature is rich in lyrical poems. Some popular English lyrics are "The Daffodils ''by words worth, " The cloud ''by Shelley, "She walks in Beauty ''by Byron, "Bright star ''by Keats, "Crossing the Bar '' by Tennyson "The Tyger ''by Blake and " The scholar Gypsy ''by Arnold.

2.4.2 Sonnet
The word "sonnet '' is derived from the Italian word "sonneto" which means a little sound or strain. It is a lyrical poem composed of fourteen lines mostly written in iambic pentameter. It has a special arrangement of rhymes. Like a lyric, it is the concentrated expression of a single thought or feeling or situation. The sonnet originated in Italy in the 13th century Dante is considered to be the father of sonnets. It was brought to perfection by the Italian poet Petrarch (1304-1374) who established both its form and spirit to express his love for Laura di Novi. The popular theme of the sonnet is love, but William Shakespeare deals with other themes such as life, death, immortality, poetic love, fame and so on.

2.4.3 Ballad (a dancing song)
The ballad, which is a story in verse originally intended to be sung to the audience, is one of the oldest forms of folk literature. It is a narrative poem in short stanzas narrating a popular story. It is a narrative about a single event which is presented in a straight forward manner with attention to action. The story in the ballad is presented simply and chronologically with each stanza frequently repeating the previous one and adding another new piece to the narrative strand. The subject of a ballad may deal with a moral issue but very little moralizing occurs. The subject may be an emotional one, but we find little expression of the narrator's feeling about the event.

2.4.4 Elegy
The word" elegy '' comes from the Greek word "elegos '' which means "mournful poem ''. It has found its way into the English language in the 16th century. The elegy which belongs to the category of serious meditative poetry is a formal poem composed on the death of an individual or upon death itself The elegy is distinguished from other forms of poetry by its special meter called "elegiac meter '' – a dactylic hexameter followed by a dactylic pentameter. But what counts in a modern elegy is its subject matter- mournfulness, but not its meter. Sadness, pessimism, separation etc can be major themes of elegy. There are several elegies in English literature. "The scholar Gypsy '' by Arnold, "Break, Break, Break" by Tennyson, "Elegy written in a country churchyard '' by Gray, "Lycidas '' by Milton etc. are popular elegies in English literature.

2.4.5 Ode
The ode, which is of Greek origin, means a poem written to be recited to the accompaniment of music. It is a serious and dignified composition almost always in rhyme. It is longer than the lyric proper. It is often in the form of an address. It is a long lyric serious in subject, elevated in style and elaborate in stanzaic structure. Edmund Gosse defines the ode as any strain of enthusiastic or exalted lyrical verse, directed to a fixed purpose dealing progressively with a definite theme.

2.4.6 Dramatic Monologue

Dramatic monologue is a kind of poetry which has the following features; a single speaker speaking out in a specific situation, presence of at least one silent interlocutor (addressee), conversational style of speech, speech more prominent than action, plot developed by monologue, psycho - analytical dimension etc.

2.5 Theme

A theme is a message or abstract idea that emerges from a literary work's treatment of its subject matter. It can be defined as a main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work and it may be stated directly or indirectly. The theme of literary work deals with an abstract idea or concept, while the subject deals with the concrete actions that bring us that idea. Subject is a topic that acts as a foundation for a literary work, while a theme is an opinion expressed on the subject. Usually, it is up to the readers to explore the theme of a literary work by analyzing characters, plot, and other literary devices. Cuddon (1999) [11] affirms that " the theme of a work is not its subject, but rather its central idea, which may be stated directly or indirectly" (p.913).

Wales (2001) [43] affirms that "theme is the point of a literary work, its central idea, which we infer from our interpretation of the plot, imagery, symbolism etc." (p. 393). Harmon (2009) [19] views theme as "the abstract concept that is made concrete through representation in person, action, and image" (p.521). Prince (1988a) mentions the role of theme and states "theme does not promote an answer but helps to raise questions" (p.97). He relates theme to frame, suggesting that "a theme has a framing function in a literary work" (P.111). Kirszner and Mandell (2000) [27] consider the theme as a dominating idea and claim "the theme of a work of literature is its central or dominant idea. It is conveyed through the selection and arrangement of details; through the emphasis of certain words, events, or images; and through the actions and reactions of characters" (p.3). These definitions share a common thing about the theme that is a central and dominating idea in a literary writing.

2.6 Salient Factors Contributing to Themes

Literature is flexible in its nature and texture. Poetry is more flexible than other genres of literature. How to find out the factors contributing to the themes in poetry is a research problem that drove me to write this article. This article writer has attempted to explore some factors by going through some poems and some stanzas of the long poems. The salient factors that contribute to the themes are: title of the poem, the speaker of the poem, tone of the speaker, use of figurative devices, leitwortsil, motif, ironical statements, cultural aspect, prominent symbols and motifs, forms of poetry, the subject matter of the poem, conversations of protagonist and antagonist, allusion, imagery, context, religion etc.

3. Presentation and Explanation

This article involves the following factors that contribute to the themes in English poetry:

3.1 Title

The title is the first thing a reader sees in the beginning, so it's important to get to it in a right way. With some poems, the title functions as the first line of the poem; but it is not so with others. A good title can add depth to the poem. It helps illuminate the meanings for the reader. A title can be explicit, implicit, satiric or suggestive. This small element deserves more thought of the reader than it usually gets. Poems can retain a thematic title, an explanatory title, a contextual title, a lead-in title, a refrain title, a sensory title, a symbolic title and so on.

Presentation: 1
The Sick Rose
"O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy".
(William Blake: The Sick Rose)

Explanation
"The Sick Rose" is a symbolic title which presents suggestive meanings. In this poem, "Rose" symbolizes beauty, innocence, feminine quality; virginity etc. "Worm" symbolizes ugliness, experience, and masculine quality. We can also assert that the poet has personified "Rose" as an innocent beautiful lady who is destroyed by an experienced man. One of the themes of this poem is "Destruction".

Presentation: 2
The Unknown Citizen
(To JS/07 M 378 This Marble Monument Is Erected by the State)
He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
……………………………… Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd: Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard. (W.H. Auden: The Unknown Citizen)

Explanation
"The unknown citizen", which is a modern poem, focuses on the unknown citizen who is addressed as "To JS/07/M/378" with a sentence. This monument is erected by the state. The title of the poem shows a portrayal of the dead citizen described by the state without his name and identity. Although the state considers him a perfect modern man, it is rather ironic or satirical because we don't know his real feelings and attitude towards his life and action. Therefore we can say that a major theme of the poem is the loss of individuality and identity. In "The Unknown Citizen", the state seems to evaluate their citizens with statistics and it has formulaic standard for virtuous living to achieve through materialistic belongings rather than the contents of humanity. "Materialistic Advancement" is also another theme of the poem.

3.2 Speaker

A speaker is a person who is speaking and his/ her voice is the voice of the poem. There may be one or more speakers in a poem. They express their emotions, feelings, opinions, situations, problems and so on. The readers come to know his/ her characters

through his speech. Sometimes the readers may know the other characters, their conditions and so on from his/ her speech as in dramatic monologues.

Presentation: 3
"The hot night makes us keep our bedroom windows open.
Our magnolia blossoms. Life begins to happen.
My hopped up husband drops his home disputes,
And hits the streets to cruise for prostitutes,
Free-lancing out along the razor's edge.
This screwball might kill his wife, then take the pledge.
Oh the monotonous meanness of his lust...
It's the injustice... he is so unjust—
Whiskey-blind, swaggering home at five.
My only thought is how to keep alive.
What makes him tick? Each night now I tie
Ten dollars and his car key to my thigh....
Gored by the climacteric of his want,
He stalls above me like an elephant."
(Robert Lowell: To Speak of Woe that is in Marriage)

Explanation
The speaker of the poem is a wife. She laments because her husband runs away from her for having sexual relationship with prostitutes. This makes us think that one of the themes of the poem is "Dishonest Husband". She tries to stop him from going out for prostitutes. She ties ten dollars and his car key to her thigh. It indicates her attempt to maintain marital happy life. Other themes of the poem may be "Sexual Violence", "Unsuccessful Marriage", "Injustice to the Married Woman", "Sexually Corrupt Husband Creating Sorrow in his Wife" etc.

3.3 Tone
Tone is the author's implicit attitude toward the reader, subject, and/or the people, places, and events in a work as revealed by the elements of the author's style. Tone may be characterized as serious or ironic, sad or happy, private or public, angry or affectionate, bitter or nostalgic, or any other attitudes and feelings that human beings experience.

Presentation 4
And the stately ships go on to their haven under the hill; But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand, And the sound of a voice that is still! Break, break, break at the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead will never come back to me. (Lines: 9-16) (Alfred Lord Tennyson: Break, Break, Break)

Explanation
"Break, Break, Break" is an elegiac poem with a mournful, longing tone. The speaker mourns and longs for his close friend Arthur Henry Hallam, whose sudden death at the age of twenty-two was a great shock from which Tennyson never fully recovered. He mentions "the touch of a vanished hand" and for "the sound of a voice that is still." In the final stanza, the tone of the poem is also reflective and despondent. The speaker concludes with the acknowledgement that his loved one "Will never come back" to him. The speaker recognizes the finality of his loss, which he refers to metaphorically as "the tender grace of a day that is dead." The major theme of the poem according the tone of the speaker is "Nostalgia".

3.4 Use of Figurative Language
Figurative language involves figures of speech. Such figures of speech make a poem deep, implicit and literary. They contribute to the themes in the poem. Common figures of speech are metaphor, simile, symbol etc. Metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another. Barber (1985) defines that metaphor is "one of the powerful tools that poets use, but it is but no means confined to poetry: it also occurs in prose and speech" (p.42). Wales (2001) [43] views simile as "a figure of speech whereby two concepts are imaginatively and descriptively compared" (p.358). Simile is a figure of speech in which a comparison is made between two dissimilar things by using the syntactic words "like", "as….as" or "so". Cuddon (1999) [11] assumes symbol as "an object, animate or inanimate, which represents or stands for something else" (p. 885).

Presentation: 5
What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
Like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?
(Langston Hughes: Harlem)

Explanation
The poem 'Harlem' composed by Langston Hughes employs symbol, simile and metaphor as the metaphorical language. The speaker of the poem is an African-American literary figure who raises varied rhetorical questions to depict the would –be condition of a dream if it is deferred.

The word "dream" employed in this poem is highly symbolic. It symbolizes a hope, a wish, a goal or an inspiration. The fulfillment of the dream is essential to reach a certain level of self-actualization. The poem is rich in the use of simile. "A deferred dream " is compared with " a raisin in the sun", " a "sore", "rotten meat", " syrupy sweet with crust" and " a heavy load" by using "like." The speaker employs metaphor of an explosion to compare a deferred dream with a bomb. "does it explode?" As a bomb explodes, it causes a great destruction of lives and properties.

All these items reflect the negative and derogatory aspects that can be observed in life unless the dreams are fulfilled. Dry, fester, run, stink, crust, sags and explode are the major verbs which connote bad and bitter feelings African-American are experiencing in their life. The last poetic line "or does it explode?" poses one of the major themes of this poem that a deferred dream can lead to destruction " A Deferred Dream Leading to Destruction".

Hughes focuses on the dreams which are driving forces in life in American society. A dream in a hope, a wish, an inspiration and a goal. Dreams are what keep people moving in life. It is essential for the fulfillment of dream to reach a certain level of self-actualization. This makes us realize that "Importance of Dreams" is an appropriate theme of the poem. The civil war had liberated

the blacks from slavery and federal laws had granted them the right to vote, the right to own property and so on. However, prejudice against blacks persisted and the laws passed since the civil war relegated to the second class citizenship. They had to attend poorly segregated schools and settle for menial jobs as porters, ditch diggers, servants, shoeshine boys and so on. In many states, blacks could not use the same public facilities. All these things grew frustration in blacks. This makes the theme of the poem to be "Frustration of the Blacks".

3.5 Imagery
Abrams (1993) mentions imagery as "images taken collectively" (p.86). It is used to signify as the objects and qualities of some perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature."

Presentation: 6
I have eaten
The plums
That were in
The icebox
And which
You were probably
Saving
for breakfast
Forgive me
They were delicious
So sweet
And so cold.
(William Carlos Williams: This is Just to Say)

Explanation
This unique modern poem shows that simple and ordinary experiences can be the subject matter of a poem. The poem takes as its subject a very ordinary event of daily and family life: the speaker confesses to his mother, or may be his wife, that he couldn't help eating plums kept in the kitchen.
The poet uses two visual images "plums" and "the icebox"; a tactile image "cold" and gustatory images "delicious" and "sweet". Imagery is very concrete, vivid and sensuous. The plums were delicious and sweet, but also cold. The word "cold" reflects the realization of his guilty. The major themes of this poem are "Realization of Guilt" and "Confession".
The previous poem entitled "Harlem" is also rich in imagery. The use of "dry up like a raisin in the sun?" poses a visual image that suggests the loss of beauty and natural life. "Fester like a sore" consists of the visual and tactile images which imply the unpleasant condition to see and feel. " stink like rotten meat" retains visual, olfactory and gustatory images that suggest ugly form, foul smell and disgusting taste respectively." sags like a load" poses the visual and tactile images that imply the condition of domination and bitter feeling. The "explode" has an auditory image that expresses the explosive nature of a deferred dream. All these images reflect the fact that a deferred dream is depressive, destructive and explosive.

3.6 Leitwortstil
Leitwortstil is the purposeful repetition of words or phrases that express an important theme. The constant repetition of the word or phrase emphasizes the poem's primary themes. A theme is a universal idea, lesson, or message explored throughout a work of literature. One key characteristic of literary themes is their universality, which is to say that themes are ideas that not only apply to the specific characters and events of a book or play, but also express broader truths about human experience that readers can apply to their own lives. Harmon (2009) [19] considers repetition as the "reiteration of a word, sound, phrase, or idea" (p.442). Repetition can be used to appeal to our emotions, create mood, and to emphasize important ideas. It means repetition is the purposeful re-use of words, phrases, clauses and sometimes sentences for a special effect.

Presentation 7
"O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up — for you the flag is flung — for you the bugle trills"
(Lines: 9-10)
(Walt Whitman: O Captain! My Captain)

Explanation
The poet uses leitwortsil throughout this poem to emphasize the mournful theme. The repetition of the words "captain," "rise up," and "for you" in these two lines is purposive. This theme continues throughout the poem. Such a repetition provokes emotive mood in the readers. The major theme that runs throughout the poem is the "Death" of Abraham Lincoln at the end of the Civil War, which deprived the United States of the great president.

3.7 Motif
A motif is an element or idea that recurs throughout a work of literature. Motifs, which are often collections of symbols, help reinforce the central themes of a work. Cuddon (1999) [11] asserts that a motif is "one of the dominant ideas in a work of literature; a part of the main theme" (p.522).

Presentation 8
Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more." (Lines: 1-6)……………………………………………………………. And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door; And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming, And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor; And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor Shall be lifted—nevermore! (Lines: 103-108)
(Edgar Allan Poe: The Raven)

Explanation
"The Raven" is a narrative poem written by American writer Edgar Allan Poe. He uses the words "Nevermore" and "nothing more" in the stanzas. Both words "Nevermore" and "nothing more" create a sad tone to the poem. Both words have a negative inference, showing the reader the sadness of the narrator. The use of nevermore by the raven answering the narrator's questions also tells the narrator that he will have no hope as well. The most plausible theme in "The Raven" is that feelings of loss of beloved

"Lenore" will never go away. The main theme of the poem is "Depression", "Grief" and "Negativity".

3.8 Irony

Irony is a language device either in a spoken or written form in which the real meaning is concealed or contradicted by the literal meanings of the words. It is a tricky use of language which expresses a gap between appearance and reality, speech and meaning, purpose and result, expectation and fate, showing and being etc. Understatement and overstatement are two of the most frequently used kinds of verbal irony.

Presentation: 9

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black were grow on her head; (Lines: 1-4)
…………………………………………………… And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare, As any she belied with false compare. (Lines: 13-14)
(William Shakespeare: Sonnet No. 130)

Explanation

There is an irony in the disparity between the disparagement of the lady in the opening lines of the sonnet and the praise in the end. We can observe a kind of understatement in the beginning but overstatement in the couplet. The couplet works to convince us of her beauty more effectively than a conventionally exaggerated simile of "false compare". The major theme of this sonnet is "Beauty".

3.9 Art, Culture and Literature

Art, culture and literature of one nation may affect the literary writings of another nation. English literature is highly influenced by Greek art, culture and literature; similarly Hindi literature and Nepali literature are influenced by ancient culture and literature.

Presentation 10

"Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea-shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?
(John Keats: Ode on a Grecian Urn)

Explanation

Keats' poetry is a mixture of various allusions to the art, culture and literature of Greek. In this regard, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is a perfect instance. The pictures which are engraved on the Grecian Urn show Keats's love for the Greek art, culture, and ideals. The theme of this poem is "Immortality of Art".

3.10. Religious Books

Religious texts are texts related to a religious tradition. They deal with beliefs, mythologies, ritual practices, commandments or laws, ethical conduct, spiritual aspirations and by creating or fostering a religious community. The relative authority of religious texts develops over time and is derived from the ratification, enforcement, and its use across generations. There are several religions and religious books that influence literature of the world.

Baha'i (The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys), Buddhism (Tripitaka), Christianity (The Holy Bible), Hinduism (The Vedas and The Upanishads), Islam (The Quran and The Hadiths), Jainism (The Agamas), Judaism (The Tanakh and The Talmud), Shintoism (Kojiki), Sikhism (Guru Granth Sahib), Taoism (Dao De Jing), Wicca (The Book of Shadows) and Zoroastrianism (The Book of Shadows).

Presentation: 11

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide,
"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies: "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts: who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait."
(John Milton: On His Blindness)

"On His Blindness" is an autobiographical sonnet. The poet loses his sight at an early and productive age, so he feels vulnerable to accomplish his mission of his life. He meditates that his god gifted talent that is poetic talent will remain useless and if it remains useless, God shall be angry with him. He compares his inability to use his talent to the physical, mental and spiritual death. He raises a question if the God still expects some work from him after seizing his eyesight. The poet suspects his own capability that if God is still expecting some service from him, can he be able to accomplish it? Suddenly he realizes his own foolishness to suspect God. God does not require the service of man nor does He take back the gift, one bestowed by Him on man. He is almighty and supreme. It is therefore a folly on his part to think that God requires his services. This idea is based on Matthew of the Holy Bible. The major themes of this poem are "Greatness of God" and "Sorrow of Man".

3.11 Forms of Poetry

Although there is no clear cut association between the form of poetry and the theme, sometimes we can have a general idea of the theme of the poem by considering its form. Generally, lyrics and sonnets deal with the theme of love, beauty, nature, kindness, loneliness etc. Odes deal with life, art, admiration, immortality etc. Ballads and dramatic monologues deal with war, fight, murder, separation, violence, cruelty, selfishness etc. Elegies deal with the themes of death, painful separation, destruction of life and property, Sorrow etc. Epics deal with the themes of adventures, wars, journeys, bravery etc.

Presentation 12

The theme of the sonnet "My Mistress' are Nothing like the Sun" by Shakespeare is love; the theme of the ballad "The Demon

Lover" by an anonymous poet is violence; the theme of the elegy "Elegy written in a country churchyard" by Thomas Gray is reminiscence for dead rustic people; the theme of the lyric "The Daffodils" by William Wordsworth is the beauty of nature; similarly the theme of the ode "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by John Keats is immortality of art.

Explanation
The teacher and the student of poetry are advised to first determine the forms of poetry and notice how they contribute to the theme in general.

3.12 Conversation of Characters
The gist of the conversation of characters leads to the conclusion. This conclusion reflects the central idea. This central idea becomes the theme of the poem.

Presentation: 13
The Ramayan by Valmiki.
Explanation
"The Ramayan" is a very popular epic. It deals with the war between Ram and Rawan. Ram expresses his honesty, simplicity, modesty, cooperation, gentleness and wisdom through his speech, whereas Rawan reflects his arrogance, pomposity, disagreement, power, selfishness, cruelty and foolishness through his speech. At the end of the war, Rawan gets killed by Ram. The readers come to realize that evilness gets punishment at last. The major themes of this epic are "Defeat of the Evil" and "Victory of the Virtue".

3.13 Juxtaposition
Juxtaposition is a literary technique in which two or more ideas, places, characters and their actions are placed side by side in a poem for the purpose of developing comparisons and contrasts. Such comparisons and contrasts lead us to the main points of the poem.

Presentation: 14 Paradise Lost by John Milton
Explanation
John Milton's "Paradise Lost" is one of the narrative poems that can be used as an example of juxtaposition. This well-crafted literary piece is clearly based on the juxtaposition of two characters: God and Satan. Frequently in the poem, the bad qualities of Satan and the good qualities of God are placed side-by-side, and the comparison made brings to the surface the contrast between the two characters. The juxtaposition in this poem helps us to reach the conclusion that Satan deserved his expulsion from the paradise because of his unwillingness to submit to God's will. One of the major themes of this epic is "Expulsion of the Evil".

3.14 Setting
Setting is an environment or surrounding in which an event or story takes place. It may provide particular information about placement and timing. Social conditions, historical time, geographical locations, weather, immediate surroundings, and timing are all different aspects of setting. The setting can help to establish the mood of a poem, the feeling which the text is meant to inspire in the reader. We need to figure out whether the poem

is taking place in a real, physical location or not. This will help us to actually understand the meaning and content of the poem itself.

Presentation: 15
Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.
(Robert Frost: Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening)

Explanation
The poem is set in New England in the winter. Although the particular location is not named, Frost owned and lived on a farm in Franconia, New Hampshire, which serves as the inspiration and physical setting of many of his poems. The poem itself describes the narrator riding a horse through some woods owned by a man who lives in the village nearby. There is no farmhouse or other habitation in sight at the place where the narrator stops. The narrator describes the location as being "Between the woods and frozen lake." Thus, we can describe the setting as a path or road through a forest in New Hampshire, near a lake, during a snowy winter day. The phrase "The darkest evening of the year" implies that the precise date is the Winter Solstice (21 or 22 December), which is the day with the shortest amount of sunlight of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. The poet is highly charmed by the beauty of nature and the snowy evening time. One of the major themes of this poem is "Pleasure of Nature:.

3.15 Context
Context is a broad term. It refers to the circumstances under which a poem was created, including its purpose, time, the creator, and the recipient. Context means circumstances forming a background of an event, idea or statement, in such a way as to enable readers to understand the narrative or a literary piece. Context helps readers understand the cultural, social, philosophical, and political ideas and movements prevalent in society at the time of the writing. The readers can draw certain themes from the poem by considering its context.

Presentation: 16
O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.
(William Blake: The Sick Rose)

Explanation
This poem was composed in the age of romanticism. It was the most melancholic age. All the of rights were neglected that time. The governing system was damaged by the officials who were corrupt. When we consider the social and historical context of the poem, the men infected with syphilis were advised by the doctor to sleep with the prostitutes to satisfy themselves rather than infecting their wives. In this case, "Rose" stands for prostitutes and "Worm" for the men infected with syphilis. "The Sick Rose" a comment on the society of his time. He was hostile to the establishment of the Church of England. The spirit and the purity of the church were destroyed by the priests who believed in formal marriage, but not in love. The readers can take different themes from this poem. The major themes of the poem is "Destruction of Innocence by Experience", " Destruction of Spiritual Life by Materialism" "Destruction of Beauty by Mysterious Evil Force", "Destruction of Imagination by Reason" Destruction of Femininity by Masculinity", "Destruction of the Governing System by Corrupt Officials", "Destruction of the Church by the Priest" and so on.

3.16 Plot
Plot is a literary term used to describe the events that make up a story, or the main part of a narrative poem. These events relate to each other in a pattern or a sequence. The structure of a poem depends on the organization of events in the plot of the poem. The plot reveals the entire events, giving the reader a sense of completion and conclusion. The readers need to associate all the events for drawing a central idea that is the theme of the poem.

Presentation: 17
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free. (Lines: 14-17)

O the moon shone bright on Mrs Porter
And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water. (Lines: 99-101)

Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference. (Lines: 239-242)

Trams and dusty trees.
Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew
Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees
Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe. (Lines: 292-295)
(T.S. Eliot: The Waste Land)

Explanation
"The Waste Land" is a highly complex poem organized on the principle of a five part symphony. Its structure is circular. All the above mentioned lines reflect the events of sexual intercourse. Marie, a German Princess, remembers her love experience and sexual pleasure during the winter season. We get Mrs Porter and her daughter who are bathing in soda water, rather than a lovely river. Both mother and daughter make them look fairer to attract more customers. The guy goes ahead and "assaults at once" knowing the fact that the girl doesn't care one way or the other, as long as he gets what he wants. Eliot really satirizes the fantasy of heroic masculinity that the young man has made for himself. He did not wait for any response and had a sex with her. The London streets close to the banks of the river have trams and dusty trees. The trams run there with smoke and ugly noises. The first of the three girls says that she was ruined in the river side holiday picnic spots called Richmond and Kew. She was forced to lie flat there and raise her feet. She was raped there in a narrow boat. All these events reflect sexual perversion in different situations. The major theme of these lines is "Sexual Perversion".

3.17 Allegory
Allegory is a figure of speech in which abstract ideas and principles are described in terms of characters, figures, and events. It can be employed in prose and poetry to tell a story, with a purpose of teaching or explaining an idea or a principle. An allegory is a literary device that uses symbolism and metaphor to convey a greater meaning. Writers use allegory to convey complex ideas in similar and sometimes simpler forms. Generally, an allegory is a type of extended metaphor that represents a greater idea or concept.

Presentation: 18 Faerie Queen by Edmund Spenser
Explanation
"Faerie Queen", a masterpiece of Edmund Spenser, is a moral and religious allegory. The good characters of book stand for the various virtues, while the bad characters represent vices. "The Red-Cross Knight" represents holiness, and "Lady Una" represents truth, wisdom, and goodness. Her parents symbolize the human race. The "Dragon," which has imprisoned them, stands for evil. The mission of holiness is to help the truth fight evil, and thus regain its rightful place in the hearts of human beings. "The Red-Cross Knight" in this poem also represents the reformed Church of England, fighting against the "Dragon," which stands for the Papacy or the Catholic Church. The major themes of this epic are "Love", "Morality", 'Responsibility", "Religion" etc.

3.18 Allusion
Allusion is a brief and indirect reference to a person, place, thing or idea of historical, cultural, literary or political significance. It does not describe in detail the person or thing to which it refers. It is just a passing comment and the writer expects the reader to possess enough knowledge to spot the allusion and grasp its importance in a text. An allusion is a literary device used to reference another object outside of the work of literature. The object can be a real or fictional person, event, quote, or other work of artistic expression. Allusions can be shorthand for adding emotion or significance to a passage by drawing on the reader's prior associations with the object. The use of allusions enables writers or poets to simplify complex ideas and emotions. The readers comprehend the complex ideas by comparing the emotions of the writer or poet to the references given by them.

Furthermore, the references to Greek Mythology give a dreamlike and magical touch to the works of art. Similarly, biblical allusions appeal to the readers with religious backgrounds.

Presentation 19
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead, Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all —" (Lines: 96-97) (T.S. Eliot: Love Song of Alfred J Prufrock)

Explanation
The poet has employed this allusion from the Bible. In the Bible, Lazarus has been raised by Jesus to tell what happened to him after his death. The poet says he is not Lazarus, who can do this, but a common man. This may refer to contrast in the lives of the poet and that of Lazarus. The theme of these lines is "Love of Jesus".

4. Conclusion
Poetry is a complex genre of literature, because it involves diverse elements, various literary devices, unique forms, structures, subject matters, modes of expressions, speakers, tones and so on. Moreover, it is written in different settings and contexts by using varied symbols, images, allegories and allusions. There is not only one factor that contributes to the theme of the poem. Teachers, students or readers should consider several factors to determine the themes. We should accept that a poem may have different themes and the same poem can be explained in multiple ways.

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