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A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION  
OF THE  
PROBLEMS OF TEACHING POETRY  
TO  
ENGLISH-SPEAKING PUPILS  
IN  
SOUTH AFRICAN SENIOR SCHOOLS

by

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'... the chance of things  
As yet not come to life, which in their seeds  
And weak beginnings lie intreasured.  
Such things become the hatch and brood of Time.'

Henry IV, Part II.

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This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

(ii)

Form of Citation

In this thesis a shortened form of reference has been used throughout.

For example: Gurrey, P. : The Appreciation of Poetry (1963)  
will appear as: Gurrey (1963).

Details of all publications cited will be found under References.  
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SENIOR

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Scope and Objectives of the Thesis

This thesis is a study of the problems of teaching poetry to English-speaking pupils in South African senior schools. It is a study of what is generally agreed to be 'a peculiarly difficult department of teaching.' Reeves (1958). Some would go so far as to suggest that the teaching of poetry is the most difficult aspect of any school subject :

'No topic in the school curriculum has so many pitfalls as the taking of poetry in the classroom: it is easier to go astray in attempting to promote aesthetic responses to a poem than in any other kind of lesson.'

Gurrey (1958) p. 126.

If one may judge too by the number of complaints from a large body of teachers (see Chapter Four) about the difficulties of teaching poetry successfully, the assessments given by Reeves and Gurrey appear to be well-founded. Additional weight is given by some of the attitudes of pupils themselves towards poetry and the poetry lesson (see Chapter Three). Further confirmation is evident at Teachers' Conferences and from examiners' reports that examination questions on poetry are often among the most badly answered and the least popular of all questions set. Even more significant, perhaps, were the responses from two separate graduate student-teacher groups (U. E. D. English Method classes Rhodes University 1965, 1967). When asked at the beginning of the course to name the one type of English lesson they felt least confident in handling, 42 of the 64 student teachers answered, 'The poetry lesson.'

Although a consideration of adult attitudes and responses towards poetry is beyond the scope of this investigation, it is, nevertheless, of some interest to note the attitudes of ordinary men and women who were supposedly encouraged 'to appreciate' poetry at school. To some extent, the success of literature teaching in the schools should be reflected by the literary interests and reading habits of the adult population at large. No one who values literature in education would suggest

that poetry, like morning assembly, should die on the last day of school. 'Time is not on our side if we imagine the influence of literature ceasing to operate at the age of fifteen or sixteen'. Hourd (1949).

Yet, unhappily, many investigators, Hoggart (1957); Booth (1963); Reeves (1965); F. Whitehead (1966), point to what Frank Whitehead has called, 'the singularly low esteem in which poetry is held in contemporary society at large.' F. Whitehead (1966).

It is not suggested that there exists some magical formula which, if used in the schools, will result in a new generation of young adults all showing an unprecedented interest in poetry. The problem is undoubtedly embedded in features of the modern environment which affect children and adults equally. Indeed, when one reads, for example, Richard Hoggart's brilliantly detailed account of the attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, ambitions and reading habits of the British 'masses' today, it is difficult to imagine that there were times when poetry was a completely familiar and accepted feature of society - times when poetry read, sung, or spoken in the form of ballads, madrigals, lute-songs, the liturgy, religious drama and Bible readings was a part of everyday living.

One might be forgiven<sup>en</sup> for quoting, at some length, an extract which neatly sums up the position :

'Nowadays the average child's out-of-school contacts with anything even dimly resembling poetry are astonishingly scanty. He will have had a wealth of nursery rhymes recited to him in infancy; that tradition, though it may now be in decline, is still, fortunately, a living one. Apart from this, what? The 'lyrics' from current popular songs; the incantatory jingles blared forth as the accompaniment to T.V. commercials; vapidly benevolent rhymes on the inside of Christmas or birthday cards; the halting couplets which caption the monotonous adventures of Rupert Bear; the flat little poems in Annuals about animals or fairies - and that is all. How can the taste for poetry flower if it has to grow from a soil such as this? In dealing with prose we can at any rate count on our pupils (in most cases) gaining for themselves a wide acquaintance with stories which have some distant kinship with the books we put before them in school; the stories they read for themselves may often be of indifferent quality, but they do form a starting point from which advance is possible. We shall find

no basis of this kind for what we try to do in poetry lessons.' F. Whitehead (1966).

Further difficulties emerge when the numerous publications and commentaries on the subject are examined. Some writers lay the blame fairly and squarely on the teacher/-L. A. G. Strong (1946); others claim that while girls are generally highly responsive to poetry, boys are at a distinct disadvantage. T. W. Sussans (1949). H. Blamires, in observing that 'literature is rendered unattractive to generations of school-children', is particularly critical of teacher-training methods. Student teachers, he believes, are being groomed to instruct children in literature, instead of being guided to help children to become acquainted with the experience of literature. He further adds that great harm results from 'the attempt to combine too closely the study of English as an aesthetic subject with the study of English as a linguistic discipline.' H. Blamires (1951). Others feel that the greatest hazard in the appreciation of poetry cannot possibly take place if there is 'any occasion for scansion, chat about verse-form, rhyme schemes, or any raking over the fine tilth of poetry to find alliterations, assonance, vowel harmony' and that in evaluating a poem, 'no analysis of the images or naming of figures of speech will be of any avail'. P. Gurrey (1958). Some have blamed conventional aims, methods and texts. M. Baldwin (1959). Yet again, there are those who point out that before any progress can be made in the teaching of poetry, the teacher must 'supply as far as he can the deficiencies of the environment' and that in the early stages of the secondary school, 'the teacher will be well advised to devote a good deal of the time available for poetry not so much to "teaching" particular poems as to creating and fostering a background of poetic experience.' F. Whitehead (1966).

It will be seen that many investigators tend to be critical in a particular direction:- teachers, their aims, attitudes and training; methods; texts; examinations; environment. Other researchers spread the blame over several or many possible areas. Naturally, for every defect examined or difficulty exposed in the teaching of poetry, a better presentation, a different aim or a newer method is suggested; and, clearly, one of the chief aims of this present study will be to evaluate these recommendations.

Notably, the least adverse criticism is directed against the pupil; and it is upon the needs, attitudes, natural interests and creative responses of children at all stages of growth that this thesis is based. As noted, at least one investigator has declared that significant differences in attitude and response exist between boys and girls. A great deal of evidence to the contrary will be led in this thesis and a main line of argument developed will be that there is no irrefutable evidence to show that boys, as opposed to girls, are at any great disadvantage; that the onset of adolescence markedly reduces poetic responses; or even that superior intelligence necessarily bestows any special advantages in this direction.

With regard to the commonly used expression, 'the appreciation of poetry', it will be stressed that the aesthetic response of children in general towards poetry is an act of the creative imagination which as Coleridge says, '...brings the whole soul of man into activity'. This conviction is not only supported by the evidence in Chapters Three and Seven, but also by the work of successful teachers who would agree that the genuine 'appreciation of poetry' is an act of re-creating each poem anew, for oneself. This is admirably expressed by Sir Percy Nunn when he declares that a work of art should not merely evoke admiration or pleasure but that pupils 'must become in a sense its re-creators'. Nunn (1930).

The active, pleasurable experience of poetry comes easily and naturally to children, if it is allowed to do so under the best conditions. Poetry stirs a vital creative force from within which at once has the power to make contact with the child's most vital interests and experiences; it has the power to delight, to enlarge sympathies, feelings and ideas. An education in literature - poetry in particular - is therefore an endless extension and renewal of the frontiers of experience, awareness and perception. Every poem is its own education; every poem has the power, as Coleridge puts it, to 'dissolve, diffuse, dissipate in order to re-create.'

All this, however, is negated should poetry not be allowed to act from within.

"Poetry is a force released in activity. That is how an educationalist and a poet see it. It is rarely how critics and academics see it. They see it as a series of poems; correspondingly it is as a 'Collection of Poems' that it is taught. But, surely, it is something emerging from the individual; not something existing outside and demanding to be let in." Baldwin (1959).

Moreover, the activity of appreciation appears to be closely allied with a natural and pleasurable desire for creative self-expression. There is much evidence to show that most children - unless inhibited in some way - show a strong inclination to capture and express their own experience freely in a poetic manner. The evidence collected in Chapter Seven correlates significantly with evidence from other parts of the world to show that the great majority of children, of all ages and all social environments, need little encouragement, and even less guidance, to write poems which frequently reveal an astonishing perception and quality. A most noticeable feature of the creative verse-writing programme described in this thesis was the increased demand, from hundreds of pupils, for a wider experience of poetry; coupled with this demand was the delight, voluntarily expressed by many of these young writers, in their new-found powers and in the marvellous potential of language. Consequently, it is felt that any approaches to the teaching of poetry which fail to give the encouragement and opportunity for creative self-expression in verse are restrictive and unfulfilling.

This thesis is built around the conviction that the teaching of poetry in schools should be brought more into line with the best teaching in other aesthetic subjects such as drama, art and music. It is accepted today, without question, that a lasting appreciation in any of these subjects is best encouraged through an active, creative expression, rather than a passive training in criticism. Acting, mime, design, drawing, painting, playing an instrument, singing - all these are familiar ways of self-expression; all these are outlets for activities which deeply satisfy the interests and needs of children, by providing the emotional release, the uplifting satisfaction, recreation and relief from mere routine work, all of which Aristotle named as essential in aesthetic education. Aristotle: Politics Book VIII. Above all, artistic expression, no matter how rudimentary, gives a positive, stimulating awareness

of the creative powers and potential craftsmanship that lie within all of us :

'... the power to produce beauty is not a gift grudgingly given by the gods to a mere sprinkling of fortunate beings; but an ability which, though varying in strength, like other abilities, from individual to individual, is yet as universal as the power to learn arithmetic.'

Nunn (1939).

No one will deny the importance of developing a critical understanding and an awareness of values in literature. Yet, it is equally important that such skills should coincide with a child's readiness to accept and understand them. Once again, a comparison should be drawn with the teaching of other arts in schools. One writer, in assessing the position of literature in the classroom, makes just such a comparison :

'... we continually make the mistake in schools - and our examination system has hitherto encouraged us in our error - of trying to convert growing children into immature critics. It is not a mistake that we make in other subjects. In teaching art, we teach children to appreciate the work of great masters and to paint themselves - certainly not to write aesthetic criticism. Similarly, in the teaching of music, we teach appreciation, and then harmony and counterpoint or the piano - certainly not the art of tossing off a few journalistic phrases about Beethoven's Ninth.'

Blamires (1951).

Although this investigation is concerned with the teaching of poetry in the Senior School, some account must clearly be taken of the present position in Infant and Primary Schools. Most chapters, therefore, find their natural beginnings at these levels.

The tradition of poetry in education is traced from Plato to the present day. This is followed by separate chapters on the pupils, the teachers, the texts and the examinations. Together, these form the body of the investigation. In addition, a detailed description is given of a creative verse-writing experiment.

The final chapter of the thesis is a summary of conclusions and recommendations compiled from earlier chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TRADITION: POETRY IN EDUCATION

2.1 The Aims of Teaching Literature

Why do we teach poetry in schools today? What special needs are served by including literature in the school curriculum? Is it inevitable that the child's early delight in poetry must apparently "fade into the light of common day" during the process of growing up? How much can the school be blamed for the apparent lack of interest in poetry among older children and most adults?

These questions are important when one examines some assertions made by educationists in recent years :

'...Most children leaving school, if they think of poetry at all, dismiss it as silly, tedious, incomprehensible, or at best irrelevant to the interests of normal people...'

F. M. Stevens in The Use of English: 5.4.213.

'...Society has little use or respect for poetry, though according it and other ancient monuments some deference; and school-children are commonly indifferent or hostile by the time they sit for the G. C. E. In a recent experiment, the poetry lesson in two boys' grammar schools was ranked last but one in popularity among the English lessons in every year from eleven to fifteen - the grammar lesson being consistently last; and, as the boys grew older, the general attitude to poetry worsened...'

R. J. Harris in The Use of English: 7.2.99.

'... There is a lot of nonsense talked about poetry in secondary Modern Schools. It is implied in journals and talks that it has great value in the class-room. As far as Secondary Modern boys are concerned this is not true. Its value is strictly limited. Its meaning is generally not appreciated by these boys, and the sooner this is realised by many educationists the better - the better for both boys and poetry...'

A. Crang in The Use of English: 12.3.178.

And yet, these writers would probably agree that boys and girls in infant and primary classes, generally show a natural, unspoilt

delight in poetry. When presented with well chosen material and when encouraged by a teacher who is sensitive to their needs, young children seem to maintain this natural liking for poetry throughout their junior school years. Often, the poetry lesson is one of the most popular in the school time-table. Most young children seldom seem to tire of reading or listening to appealing poetry; enjoyable poems are often voluntarily learned by heart; many pupils are frequently eager to recite without embarrassment. Boys and girls alike seem easily captured by strong rhythms, ballads and verse narratives. They often read aloud, talk about poems, request teachers to read poems, write verse themselves and compile personal anthologies. M. Baldwin (1959), F. Arnstein (1963). In short, for these children poetry is a delight. (See Chapter Three.)

But it seems that, while the child delights in his nursery rhymes and ballads, the adolescent schoolboy struggles with his poetry and the adult generally neglects, ignores or belittles the whole matter.

What has happened? What has gone wrong, seemingly within the school, to turn a capacity for pleasure in poetry into an apparently acquired distaste?

There seems little doubt that the distaste is acquired. In a great number of senior schools everywhere, the right material and the right approaches have made the teaching of poetry a most stimulating experience for pupils and teachers alike. Far from declining, the enjoyment and interest in poetry often increases in the upper school (See Chapter Seven), and it appears that many young people voluntarily continue to read and write poetry for pleasure after leaving school.

Conversely, it is not uncommon for children in the primary school to lose their natural liking for poetry and to develop a prejudice against poetry at an early stage. When this occurs, how much blame is to be placed on education and how much on the child? Can

we possibly afford to overlook the ill-effects of harsh, unsympathetic teaching, unsuitable material or even a single misguided approach - compelling children, for example, to learn, unwillingly, a great deal of unsuitable poetry by heart?

It will appear from the evidence of later chapters that the chief difficulty in the teaching of poetry is not the child, as some writers seem to suggest; on the contrary, the chief difficulties arise from the educational conditions, contrived by adults, in which children and poetry meet, and the attitudes of society towards literature.

As we have noted, assumptions are sometimes made that older children - and in particular, ordinary children apparently without special aptitudes - have no real interest in poetry, and that poetry does not appear to have any educational value for them. Similarly, an investigation of teachers' attitudes towards poetry (See Chapter Four) reveals that many teachers believe boys are less responsive to poetry than girls.

And yet, how can one account for the extraordinary response to poetry and to creative verse writing noted at a large, non-selective senior boys' school in South Africa? After a one-year experiment (See Chapter Seven) at this school during which all pupils were indirectly encouraged to express themselves freely in verse, the following results were noted :

- (a) 217 boys, most of whom confessed to only a slight previous interest in poetry, began to write creatively in verse and continued to write verse throughout the year without any direct persuasion.
- (b) A sharply increased demand for more poetry in the classroom occurred throughout the school. (26 classes: 620 boys.)
- (c) A remarkable increase in the number of boys who began to read poetry for pleasure out of school hours was noted and an unprecedented demand arose for anthologies and collected works of poets which led to the establishment of a special poetry section in the main School Library.

The success of this single experiment, and of many similar approaches in schools overseas, raises two obvious questions. Apart from the time-honoured school "composition", how freely are children encouraged to make their own literature; to explore the marvellous potentials of language and experience; to follow whatever form and theme is dictated by their interests, feelings and imagination? And how far are children shackled, particularly in their early schooling, by formal, correctly dressed, prose expositions on subjects ranging from "A Day in the Life of a Button" to "My Future Career"?

Before examining the question "Why do we teach poetry in schools today?" we should note some of the failures and difficulties which frequently appear to beset the teaching of poetry in schools. These will be studied fully in later chapters.

1. The apparent failure of many senior school pupils to enjoy much poetry or to show signs of a developing taste for poetry.
2. The apparent failure of many teachers to conduct successfully stimulating poetry lessons; the apparent failure of teachers to enjoy much poetry or a failure to read poetry for pleasure; the apparent lack of sound training and the inability to read poetry well.
3. The apparent failure, on the part of those responsible for the selection of texts, to understand the needs and interests of children.
4. The obvious failure of many examinations to promote meaningful teaching that is educationally stimulating for pupils and teachers alike; and the intrusive effect of unsound examining techniques upon the delicate three-sided relationship between pupil, teacher and poem.
5. The influences which exist largely outside the school situation; attitudes in homes and society; the effects of mass media, pop culture, pulp literature and the vast, glamorous entertainment world of song and dance. Though superficial, these garish, compelling attractions offer an irresistible gaiety and excitement

and an obvious outlet for tensions and desires. In this context, how far can the teaching of literature in schools be re-vitalised to resist and displace such attractions?

A critical examination of all these difficulties is central to this thesis. The main problems in the teaching of poetry appear to fall within one or more of the five categories above. For example, in a survey of teachers' attitudes towards poetry it was found that one poem frequently prescribed for Senior Certificate was severely censured by teachers as being unsuitable. At twenty-six senior schools in South Africa teachers complained of the strain and difficulty in teaching Milton's poem, Lycidas. Altogether, ninety-one teachers complained of their own - and consequently their pupils' - difficulties in understanding and liking "extremely mature, demanding and often obscure" works by Spenser, the Metaphysicals, the Augustans, Wordsworth, Yeats, Dylan Thomas and T.S. Eliot. Many teachers complained that the literary criticism of these poems was a difficult, painfully slow procedure, far above the heads of all but the most gifted pupils.

The inclusion of the best works by these authors in the school literature curriculum is not a new development; these poems have become a traditional part of English courses in senior schools all over the world. Are there any valid reasons to justify the continuation of the traditional syllabus pattern in the face of such widespread criticism from so many teachers of English? And as such mature and frequently philosophical poems cannot be studied effectively without a disciplined and penetrating literary criticism, what is the effect of such discipline prematurely imposed upon young minds? Is there any good evidence today to show that many adults read Milton for pleasure because a taste for his works was developed at school?

The answers to these questions seem abundantly clear - and the answers are not necessarily given by practising teachers. Some of the most influential writers since Matthew Arnold have added their warnings; and every warning in turn appears to pass unnoticed.

'Nothing could be more completely unsuitable for them (children learning Goldsmith's Deserted Village) and this being soon proved by the event the use of the poem for the purpose in question has happily almost ceased. That the poetry chosen should have real beauties of expression and feeling, that these beauties should be such as the children's hearts and minds can lay hold of . . . . All these are conditions to be insisted upon.'

Matthew Arnold (1880) (Italics mine).

'... the deliberate attempt to grapple with poetry which is not naturally congenial, and some of which never will be, should be a very mature activity indeed; an activity ... which cannot be recommended to young people without grave danger of deadening their sensibility to poetry and confounding the genuine development of taste with the sham acquisition of it...'

T. S. Eliot (1933).

'Roughly my contention is that for full appreciation and the most fruitful study of the subjects in question - history, literature and politics - experience of life is necessary ... the years of post-primary education (i. e. from 15 - 18) cannot be the best period for these studies.'

Sir Richard Livingstone (1941).

'It is the dull and tedious over-emphasis upon the intellectual elements in works of literature that deal with subjects outside children's interests and beyond their imaginative grasp that is responsible for their distaste of what they would appreciate readily enough if it were presented later and in happier circumstances.'

A. F. Watts (1944).

'I was put off Milton for years by a fool who made me learn the Sonnet on his Blindness when I was eleven. Nothing can be sillier than to set a child a poem to learn by heart before he has reached the stage at which he can appreciate it. Such attempts to force adult taste on immature minds do incalculable harm.'

L. A. G. Strong (1946).

'It is likely that those who set out to train pupils' judgment and critical appreciation often make use of exercises in criticism too low down in the school. They do not perhaps realise that most pupils in secondary schools today need considerable experience of reading good literature before critical analysis begins ...'

P. Gurrey (1958).

It is true that aesthetic experience without criticism and intellectual discipline is unsatisfying and inadequate, but only a longer

experience spent in discovering the delight of literature will prompt "the genuine development of taste" and the subsequent desire for inquiry, discernment, analysis and judgment. When and how literary analysis is introduced into the curriculum will be discussed fully in a later chapter. It is sufficient to note for the moment, and with some concern, that the teaching of poetry in schools appears to suffer in a number of ways. Firstly, it is clear that a good deal of the material chosen is ill-suited to children; far too many poems prescribed for the senior school are too difficult and quite alien to the interests of young people. Dominated by the rigours of an external examination, the happy experience of poetry too often dwindles to a painful drudgery in the upper school, as the majority struggle to understand that which is too remote from their reality. Secondly, the very nature of such difficult or philosophical material demands a literary critical approach which, in itself, is a demanding intellectual act frequently beyond the grasp of children. We are reminded of John Betjeman's comment, "I think verse is natural to all of us and is only killed by 'Eng. Lit. '." Lastly, it seems that the most difficult poems are often the first to be seized in the fashionable trend to inter-relate the many sides of English. The "all-in-one" approach is often met with in school text books and examination papers. To combine so many aims and to attempt to teach reading, comprehension, paraphrase, literary analysis and grammar, while at the same time purporting to encourage "appreciation", is surely a confusion of activities and a most destructive form of education. Why should literature be used at all as a source for such exercises? There are many more appropriate and untapped journalistic sources - newspapers in particular - which offer unlimited opportunities for parsing, analysis, paraphrase and other grammatical exercises. And some external examinations, directed at thousands of children, unfortunately perpetuate this practice. It is distressing to note in recent years, that a poem, or extract from a poem, is invariably set in the Junior Certificate Language paper of at least one Provincial Department of Education, and is treated largely as a language exercise. (See Chapter Six.)

So far attention has been focussed on the negative side; on the problems, the difficulties, the apparent failings in the teaching of poetry.

What of the aims of literature in the school curriculum? What positive gains can be expected from highly successful literature teaching?

In a very recent article, Professor L. C. Knights poses the same question and answers it in the following manner :

"We can't, really, come to grips with this situation without raising the general question: Why do we teach literature? To which the short answer is, so that as many people as possible shall share the imaginative life that is 'stored' in the great masterpieces, so that their own imaginative-creative life may be quickened. Obviously what is in question is not 'knowing about' the masterpieces, but a genuine response from a personal centre - the only way in which great literature can become part of our own lives. That is easy to say: the difficult thing is to make it a reality. How do we achieve an aim that is so important and yet so difficult to define, because the result (if we call it that) will be something different for each individual pupil, and probably something different from anything we could have foreseen? To the question I have just asked there is no answer that can be offered ready-made. As teachers we each have to find our own way over a considerable period of time. I can only offer some thoughts of my own on the teaching of Shakespeare, with the kind of aim I have indicated. And before I try to put those thoughts in order let me offer one more caution - remember that you can't make people see; you can only provide opportunities and - in the way you present material that is so much more important than anything that can be said about it - prompt them to do their own seeing."

L. C. Knights (1967).

By its very humility and simple awareness of essentials and limitations, this view comes as close as possible to the heart of the matter. Statements such as "Share the imaginative life", "response from a personal centre" (as opposed to "knowing about") and "to do their own seeing", are all-important in the teaching of literature. But Professor Knights wisely warns us that the aim is difficult to define, "because the result (if we call it that) will be something different for each individual pupil, and probably something different from anything we could have foreseen." So much depends, as he points out, on finding "our own way" and providing opportunities to prompt people "to do their own seeing".

This concept of literature, as creative and re-creative experience from within, finds its most famous expression in Plato's metaphor of the Cave.

"... certain professors of education must be wrong when they say that they can put a knowledge into the soul which was not there before, like sight into blind eyes ....Whereas our argument shows that the power and capacity of learning exists in the soul already."

Plato: Republic VII: 518.

Failure to put this truth into practice has resulted in much mishandling of the arts in education. And, in the teaching of literature, it is poetry which appears to have suffered most. The whole aim of including poetry in the curriculum is its extraordinary power to enlarge areas of recognition; to encourage and extend the feelings and perceptions and to release activity and expression from within the child. But, instead, the teaching of poetry frequently appears to be nothing more than a 'collection of poems' forced upon the child 'like sight into blind eyes'. So important is this principle of activity from within that it is not surprising to find a plea for its general recognition :

"...the curriculum should be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored."

Board of Education: The Primary School,  
p. 93,

We teach literature, or rather "present" literature, because it is a direct experience which enlarges vision. Just as the aim of literature teaching is not "knowing about" great works, so the experience of poetry is not "about" experience; it is experience. The function of poetry in education is the enlargement of experience, not by information, or instruction or percept but by direct impact. This means that the experience of poetry in schools should involve listening to poetry, speaking poetry, reading poetry, writing poetry, discovering and sharing poetry, knowing some poetry; above all, enjoying poetry as an experience.

Furthermore, the experience of literature in schools must not be thought of solely in terms of literature to be studied or "the great

classics to be appreciated." Professor Nisbet, in a study of the conventional curriculum, shows his concern over this narrow view :

"It should be made clear, finally, that we refer to the creation of literature - that is, to the pupils' own literary compositions in prose or verse - as well as the reading, hearing, and appreciation of it."

S. Nisbet (1957).

The creative instinct which exists, to some degree, in all people, only needs encouragement to be freed. It flourishes in an atmosphere where an exposure to fine, stimulating literature leads to an excitement of ideas and feelings. Given encouragement, approval, and freedom children do not need to be taught to re-create experience; they simply cannot be prevented :

"Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood ... Next, there is the instinct for 'harmony' and rhythm ..."

Aristotle: Poetics I: I-IV.

And if the experience of literature is largely an imaginatively re-creative act ("imitation") by the reader or listener, how natural for a child to wish to be a maker himself. Further, as Aristotle points out, man "through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated." (Italics mine/) It becomes clear, then, that, when children are creative writers and make their own poems, the explicit evaluation of the poem is not nearly as important as the created poem and the act of making it; for it is the act which brings delight and growth.

POOL

Still, evening mirror.

Pebble

And my water-face crept away in silken rings.

Rob, aged 14.

The boy who voluntarily wrote these simple, vivid lines was one of hundreds of young people at a single school who delighted in making their own literature (See Chapter Seven/.) This writer showed a fondness

for Chinese and Japanese verse in translation. He needed no instruction and no injunction to write, but simply felt free to re-create an actual incident in words. And by doing so he is satisfying his creative needs, accelerating his growth and gaining pleasure by capturing a personal experience in language.

"Mere literary knowledge is of slight importance . . . Literature only exists to express and develop that imaginative world which is our life, the kingdom which is within us . . . The appreciation of literature is really creation. The written word, its music and its associations, are only the stimuli. The vision which they evoke is our own doing."

A. N. Whitehead (1917).

"To lead pupils to 'appreciate' is not merely to lead them to admire or to take pleasure in a beautiful thing, but to make them become in a sense its re-creators."

Sir Percy Nunn (1930).

"... as it is impossible to form a just estimate of the value of a poem until one has experienced all that the poem can give, the appreciation of poetry is not primarily a critical activity, it is creative."

P. Gurrey (1963).

This returns us to Professor L. C. Knights writing in (1967) about the aims of teaching literature. "... - remember that you can't make people see; you can only provide opportunities and ... prompt them to do their own seeing."

Hence, one of the main contentions in this investigation will be the extraordinary importance in literature - poetry in particular - of reading, hearing, speaking, and creating, as activities in the same context. Each is an act of the imagination; together they should form complementary creative responses accompanied by pleasure.

Any literature programme must be regarded as inadequate which does not encourage the growth of a personal, creative response to literature. This does not mean the acquiring and storing of facts about poems, poets, and criticism in order to pass some examination. It means making the creative vision of literature a constant part of the

existence of children as they grow; for it is only by satisfying the present needs of children that we best anticipate their needs of tomorrow.

## 2.2 Poetry in the School Curriculum: A Historical Perspective/

### The Graeco-Roman Tradition

Reading and literature were subjects of central importance in early Athenian education and many related activities such as recitation, declamation, acting, music, singing, and dancing received careful attention. The emphasis given to these aesthetic expressions was, in part, due to the religious significance of many of them. The Homeric poems, for example, served as semi-religious texts, the learning and recitation of which introduced the young Greek boy to a knowledge of myth and legend, morality, and wisdom. Apart from their importance as models for the study of reading and literary criticism, the great poems of that time served as illustrations of social life, ethics, history, geography and politics. It is not surprising, therefore, that poetry received such devoted attention. In the words of one writer :

" These poems, especially Homer, Hesiod, and Theognis, served at the same time for drill in language and for recitation, whereby on the one hand the memory was developed and the imagination strengthened, and on the other the heroic forms of antiquity and healthy primitive utterances regarding morality, and full of homely common sense, were deeply engraved on the young mind. Homer was regarded not merely as a poet, but as an inspired moral teacher, and great portions of his poems were learned by heart. The Iliad and the Odyssey were in truth the Bible of the Greeks. "

S. S. Lawrie (1895) p. 258.

The simple but effective early Athenian school curriculum was made up entirely of music (which included literature and religion), a careful physical training, and instruction in citizenship. 'They (the Greeks) taught no arithmetic or grammar, no science, no drawing, no higher mathematics and no foreign tongue.' Cubberley (1920) p. 34.

Literature and music were together regarded as a whole and did not form distinct arts as they do today. The harmony and rhythm formed by poetry and music together (see later Protagoras:326) was seen to play a most important part in education, 'to soothe, purge and harmonize man within and make him fit and moral instruction...' Cubberley (1920) p. 30. The term 'music', as opposed to 'gymnastics', was used to denote a wide range of aesthetic activities, 'including all the literary and artistic interests from the myths and tales told at the mother's knee to the later study of the poets, and even a smattering of the sciences for those disposed to learn them.' Boyd (1932) p. 35.

It can be seen, then, that poetry received great emphasis in Athenian schools not only for its own sake but for its religious significance and for its value as a vehicle for a general education.

After the Peloponnesian War there was a rapid transition from the old education to the new teachings of the Sophists. The new education was an education for a limited elite. With the increase in commerce, wealth, travel, citizenship and the rise of a leisure class, Attica had become the predominant Greek state and, gradually, 'Literature lost much of its earlier religious character and the religious basis of morality began to be replaced by that of reason.' Cubberley (1920) p. 40. The Sophists were fired by Protagoras' dictum 'man is the measure of all things.' The old, disciplined order of education was relaxed: literature became a more distinct study, less closely bound with music. Boyd (1932). Education itself under the Sophists became more pleasurable and individualistic. Many of the traditional authors began to be replaced by contemporary writers. Grammar, rhetoric and philosophical discussion assumed great importance and were studied as more useful, practical and separate literary arts. Cubberley (1920) pp. 41, 42. The chief studies in the private schools run by the Sophists were concerned with the form, content and practical usage of the Greek language.

' Rhetoric and grammar before long became the Master studies of this new period, as they were felt to prepare boys better for the new political and intellectual life of Hellas than did the older type of training. In the schools of the Sophists boys now spent their time in forming phrases, choosing words, examining grammatical structure, and learning how to secure rhetorical effect.'

Cubberley (1920) p. 42.

But, in turn, this education gradually gave way to the new schools of philosophy. Socrates refined the Sophist beliefs by trying 'to turn youths from the baser individualism of the Sophists of his day to the larger general truths which measure the life of a true man.' Cubberley (1929) pp. 43-44.

Plato, followed by Aristotle, developed this ideal. Each proposed, in turn, an educational system designed to remedy the declining ideals of citizenship.

One of the earliest statements by Plato on the educative influence of poetry may be found in Protagoras:326. Here, Plato describes <sup>how</sup> that, when a boy first understands what is written, he is required to read and learn those morally uplifting poems which deal with the actions of great men. Later, children are introduced to lyrical poetry and teachers are told to make such

'...harmonies and rhythms quite familiar to the children's souls, in order that they may learn to be more gentle, and harmonious, and rhythmical, and so more fitted for speech and action; for the life of man in every part has need of harmony and rhythm.'

Protagoras: 326 (italics mine).

This belief should be viewed in the context of a later statement by Plato :

' Then do you know that the most important part of every task is the beginning of it, especially when we are dealing with anything young and tender? For then it can be most easily moulded and whatever impression any one cares to stamp upon it sinks in. '

Republic/ II:377.

Not only was literature prominent in the school curriculum but some of the principles of education described by Plato are worth noting. He regarded the ideal educator as one who would endeavour 'to effect conversion in the easiest and quickest manner; not implanting the faculty of sight, for that exists already ...' Republic/ VII:516. Furthermore, coercion was to be avoided. Instead, the injunction was given to teachers to educate children 'not by compulsion but by games', so that it would become easier 'to see the natural abilities of each.' Republic/ VII:537.

Plato saw poetry as a most powerful influence operating from childhood through to maturity. Republic III:401. He was only too well aware of the effects of poetry upon the imagination. If poetry, as he knew it, was introduced into education for ideal citizenship, its power to stir the feelings was likely to renew 'the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry.' Republic X: 607. Clearly, the misuse of poetry was a very real threat, yet, it may be noted in his later Laws, that Plato's objection is not to poetry but to unexpurgated poetry. If the poetry of his time could be subjected to a strict censorship (Laws 801; 811-812) he was content to acknowledge its 'decisive importance' in education especially when conjoined with music, for then 'rhythm and harmony sink deep into the recesses of the soul and take the strongest hold there.' Republic III:401-402.

Aristotle, in Politics: Book VIII, goes even further in his assessment of the value of 'music' in education :

'More than one advantage is to be looked for in the study of music. These advantages are education; release of emotion; cultivation of the mind, together with recreation and relief from the pressure of work.'

Politics: VII:1342 (a).

Aristotle saw aesthetic education as an important alliance of activities and pleasures each serving an essential need. These 'advantages' will be fully discussed in later chapters.

With the decline of the Greek states the prevailing educational system was absorbed into the Roman State with few changes. In spite of some national protest, by 100 B. C. 'the Graeco-Roman school system had taken form,' Cubberley (1920). The system was made up of primary and secondary education; the former was established for useful, practical information, the latter for more cultural studies. In the elementary schools of Rome, literature 'received no such emphasis ... as in those of the Greeks.' Cubberley (1920) p. 64.

Similarly, although Greek and Latin literature was included in the curriculum of the secondary or Latin grammar schools, pride of place was given to grammar itself which was studied before literature.

Cubberley (1920) p. 67. Quintilian explains in Chapter IV of his treatise, Institutes of Oratory, that grammar consists of 'two parts, the art of speaking correctly and the illustration of the poets . . . ' Clearly, these two parts correspond to 'language' and 'literature' studies today.

Once the elements of grammar (i. e., language) had been correctly grasped, a thorough grounding in literature was begun.

' The poets were the main subjects of study, but it was recognised, in theory at least, that a complete course should also include the prose writers. '

Boyd (1932) pp. 70-71.

Great stress was laid on the close, analytical study of literature 'to develop an appreciation for literary style, elevate thought, expand one's knowledge, and, by memorization and repetition, to train the powers of expression.' Cubberley (1920) p. 67.

The following method of studying literature was much in vogue. The literary piece was first read aloud by the teacher and then the pupil would do likewise, paying particular attention to accent and quality. All allusions and references were carefully analysed and explained by the teacher. Following this, the text was examined critically, and strengths or weaknesses of expression were discussed. Paraphrasing of the text was a much favoured exercise leading to 'a critical estimate of the work, a characterization of the author's style, and a resumé of his chief merits or defects. The foundations were here laid for Grammar and Rhetoric as the great studies of the Middle Ages.' Cubberley (1920) p. 68.

In addition to primary and secondary education, schools of rhetoric were established, serving as institutions of higher education for boys over sixteen and including in a specialised curriculum, 'a further linguistic and literary training. . . .' Cubberley (1920) p. 69.

Greek and Latin literature were studied in conjunction in the schools ('though I am inclined to think that the Greek should take the precedence/'). Quintilian: Institutes of Oratory: IV. Yet it is also clear that linguistic discipline was beginning to take precedence

over literature as it had been presented in Athenian times, and that Aristotle's idea of aesthetic education as an alliance of pleasures serving basic human needs was already lost. Roman education, though derived from the Greek, had assumed a different spirit. System, discipline, practical usefulness and the analytical approach took over from the imaginative, subjective aesthetic enjoyment of the beautiful and good as immediate pleasures in themselves. Speaking of this 'Roman genius for system' and the 'mechanical perfection' one writer goes on to add,

'It was largely for this reason that the Roman model rather than the Greek was followed in the educational reconstruction which began with the passing of the Dark Ages, and that down to the Nineteenth Century the study of language by analytical methods has almost entirely monopolized the interest of the schools of Europe.'

Boyd (1932) pp. 72-73.

While Plato and Aristotle laid great emphasis on literature as an important formative influence in Athenian education, it should be remembered that their view rested solely upon a familiarity with a literature in the vernacular. Moreover, both Plato (Protagoras:326) and Aristotle (Politics VIII: 1340) agree that a literary/aesthetic education should begin at a very early stage. Aristotle, in particular, outlines 'more than one advantage' from such an education and, as already noted, these 'advantages' together serve important needs such as a 'release of emotion' and 'relief from the pressure of work.'

Clearly, the general aims behind the teaching of literature in Roman schools, were already beginning to fall out of step with these beliefs.

Similarly, for centuries in England, the adoption of English literature in the school curriculum; the importance of English literature in elementary education; the fact that literature in the school curriculum should mean something more than a formal, linguistic discipline - all these important considerations received scant recognition in a slowly developing tradition marked by instability and fluctuating progress. It was not until the late nineteenth century that a growing attention was directed to these needs.

The Tradition in England,

After 1600, in England, the original spirit of liberal education, which had fired the Italian humanists, had all but disappeared. A narrow formalism began to set in. 'Instead of using the classical literatures to impart a liberal education, give larger vision, and prepare for useful public service, they came to be used largely for disciplinary ends.' Cubberley (1920) p. 283.

Even when the usefulness of Latin diminished and it was replaced first by French, 'as the language of polite society' and later, by the vernacular, the disciplinary emphasis of classical education was retained as a narrow, formal, drill in composition, declamation and imitation.

Earlier, in the sixteenth century, a cleavage between the use of Latin and English had become marked. In the main, Latin continued to be the written language of the scholar and churchman. On the other hand, the vernacular was being used more and more extensively by the working class masses.

A new demand for vernacular schools followed the invention of printing and the Protestant Reformation. Tyndale's translation of the New Testament (1526) did much to emphasise the strength and beauty of the English language (Cubberley (1920) p. 310). More important, a demand was created for elementary instruction in reading, and the need for elementary schools in the vernacular became widespread. Previously, such education had catered for scholars or church leaders. 'Now a new class became desirous of learning to read, not Latin, but the language which they had already learned to speak'. Cubberley (1920) p. 311.

But while the elementary schools served the ordinary people, a gulf arose between elementary and secondary education. The latter was reserved exclusively for the select, scholarly group.

'The elementary schools were in the vernacular and for the masses; the secondary schools were in the Latin tongue and for the training of the scholarly leaders. Between these two

schools, so different in type and clientele, there was little in common. This difference was further emphasised with time. The elementary schools later on added subjects of use to the common people, while the secondary schools added subjects of use for scholarly preparation or for university entrance.'

Cubberley (1920) p. 353.

After the restoration of the Stuarts (Charles II, 1660) some two thousand non-conforming clergymen were 'dispossessed'. Soon afterwards, children of Non-Conformists were excluded from grammar schools and universities. The majority of these clergymen - some strongly influenced by Milton's humanistic-realistic view of education - began to serve their people by opening schools which offered a very wide range of subjects. In these schools 'All teaching was done in English, and the study of English language and literature was emphasised.' Cubberley (1920) p. 401. Unfortunately, it was not long (Toleration Act: 1689) before this promising movement was absorbed into the rigid Latin grammar-school system of the time 'without producing much change in the character of these older institutions.' Cubberley (1920) p. 401.

The views of Richard Mulcaster who published, in 1582, The First Part of the Elementarie, were far in advance of his age. He advocated the use of the vernacular to secure a good foundation in reading and writing before the serious study of Latin. His plea 'that the mother tongue should be taught first and well, and should be the language of the school from six to twelve,' (Cubberley (1920) p. 432) early became firmly established in ~~the~~ educational thought<sup>only in</sup> of the nineteenth century.

Before the middle of the eighteenth century 'A new influence of tremendous future importance - general reading - was now coming in; the vernacular was fast supplanting Latin; newspapers were being started; ... books for children and beginners were being written; the popular novel and story had appeared (Robinson Crusoe; 1719; Gulliver's Travels; 1726) and all these educative forces were creating a new and somewhat general desire for a knowledge of the art of reading.' Cubberley: p. 452. (italics mine.)

Once again, the demand for elementary vernacular schools was given further impetus; secondary schooling, on the other hand, remained severely formal, narrow and almost withdrawn from national life until 1870. {Cubberley/ p. 461}.

It is clear, that, up to the late nineteenth-century, elementary education benefited from a broadened curriculum and an enlightened attitude towards education. By 1814 the Infant Schools, begun by Robert Owen, in Scotland, had attracted much attention. Owen himself visited Pestalozzi in Switzerland and was much influenced by the methods he observed which obviously harmonised with his own beliefs in the great value of freedom, singing, dancing and play. Cubberley p. 631/. Herbart expanded upon Pestalozzi's work by adding to the elementary school curriculum, the two new important studies of literature and history (Cubberley p. 760) while Froebel, in developing the kindergarten plan, laid great store by expression through play, self-activity and the unfolding of inborn capacity.

And yet, although attempts to introduce English literature into the secondary school curriculum met with strong resistance and even scorn - D. J. Palmer (1965) p. 43 - it must not be supposed that the elementary schools were in any better position. As late as 1871, Matthew Arnold was writing, 'What is comprised under the word literature is in itself the greatest power available in education; of this power it is not too much to say that in our elementary schools at present no use is made at all.' Matthew Arnold (1871).

Had the principles advocated by Pestalozzi, Herbart<sup>t</sup> and Froebel enjoyed immediate acceptance, a more favourable climate might have been created for the introduction of English literature into the schools as a humanising instruction.

But other forces were at work and perhaps the most de-humanising was the cult of 'useful' knowledge which was to dominate much of the teaching in both primary and secondary schools.

Earlier in the nineteenth century an astonishing theory had gained

much favour. It was the belief in the acquisition of useful knowledge. The mind of an uneducated person was looked upon as an empty vessel and if that vessel could be filled to overflowing so much the better. Furthermore, this theory gained rapid favour when it was seen to promise a universal application. Even the most humble labourer, it was argued, has the ability to memorise a great deal of simple general knowledge. People were persuaded to believe that informed minds were educated minds. Lord Brougham was a passionate champion for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and in 1827 he became the first president of a society under such a title.

The new emphasis upon the encyclopaedic storage of 'useful' knowledge encouraged all those concerned with education to become 'crammers'. Worse still, this fashionable trend for acquiring facts and useful knowledge, coupled with, 'A seemingly unbounded faith in examinations ... one of the least attractive aspects of nineteenth-century education ...' (D. J. Palmer (1965) p. 16) tended to deaden the spirit of literature at every turn.

And there was also doubt over the moral goodness of English literature. At London University, English literature had, at last, secured a foothold in the curriculum by 1828. Not only was literature taught and examined in terms of rhetoric, grammar and facts about literary history, but the chief function of literature was seen as moralistic. As one writer notes, 'It is painful to have to record that the first Professor of English began his career with a vehement attack on literature,' (D. J. Palmer (1965) p. 21) for, in his inaugural address, Professor T. Dale saw it as his moral duty to parents to use literature 'to inculcate lessons of virtue' and to shun or expurgate even the 'gems' of literature, 'lest they should convey pollution with the foul mass of daring profaneness or disgusting wantonness in which they are too often incrustated.' (Quoted in D. J. Palmer (1965) p. 20.)

This fashionable trend for learning facts and useful knowledge persisted for many years. It can be seen dictating the form of examination questions, most of which were concerned with grammar and historical fact.

"Derive and conjugate the irregular verb to break, and state whether there is any grammatical error in the following : 'I have broke with her father and his good will obtained' - Shakespeare."

Quoted in D. J. Palmer (1965) p. 22.

"Give the chief facts in the life of Shakespeare until 1603."

Quoted in D. J. Palmer (1965) p. 47.

It can be seen, as the object of satire, in literature itself.

"You are to be in all things regulated and governed," said the gentleman, 'by fact. We hope to have, before long, a board of fact, composed by commissioners of fact, who will force the people to be a people of fact, and nothing but fact. You must discard the word Fancy altogether.... This is the new discovery. This is fact. This is taste.'

The girl curtsied, and sat down. She was very young, and she looked as if she were frightened by the matter of fact prospect the world afforded."

from Hard Times (1854).

The Newcastle Commission appointed in 1858 took a firm stand against this popular theory of education and condemned it as mere cram which 'destroys the intellectual appetite, and makes knowledge an object of disgust.' The Commissioners cite the words of a Training College Principal who stated that 'In very few cases is a taste of reading formed among trained pupils. It will not, I suspect, be found that School-masters are a very studious or a very literary body.' Quoted in/ The Teaching of English in England (1926) p. 46.

Mindful of this widespread cult of acquired knowledge and information, it is not surprising to note the stand taken by Matthew Arnold :

'Young men whose knowledge of grammar, of the minutest details of geographical and historical facts, and above all, of mathematics, is surprising, often cannot paraphrase a plain passage of prose or poetry without totally misapprehending it, or write half a page of composition on any subject without falling into gross blunders of taste and expression.'

Matthew Arnold (1852).

The eighteen-sixties mark an extremely important period of ferment in English Education. This is clearly evident, not only from

the cumulative weight of Matthew Arnold's Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882, which will be specially noted in a later section, but also from an increasing number of commentators. Grave doubts began to be expressed, from a number of quarters, over the continuing dominance of Classics, and the narrow formalism in language studies. A general sense of alarm about the neglect of English Literature began to grow.

The Newcastle Commission, already referred to, presented, in 1861, their findings on 'the state of popular education'. Although much concerned with the deadening effects of the 'useful knowledge' theory of education, no recommendation was made by the Commission to introduce English literature into schools as a humanising study. The Teaching of English in England (1926) p. 46, 47. Nor did the members of the Commission criticise the curriculum of the Training Colleges which for years had required nothing more of English Literature than that it should furnish material for a study of historical facts, parsing, analysis and paraphrasing. The Teaching of English in England (1926) pp. 44, 45.

'There is no reference to the writing of English, and no suggestion that literature conveys ideas, deals with life, affords enjoyment. Education is viewed as the forming of the mind by the study of certain subjects, independently of experience of life ... attainable ... by a small minority only ...'

The Teaching of English in England (1926) p. 45.

Nevertheless, this decade does fly signals of impending change. In 1867, J. W. Hales, then Professor of English at the Bedford College for Women, urged, in an essay, The Teaching of English, that Classics should be replaced, as the centre of studies, by a liberal education in English. Speaking of the gulf between the pupil and English studies, Hales wrote :

'You divorce peremptorily his studies and his daily life, so that he cannot discern any sign of association between them .... In schools whose pupils are not destined to proceed from there to a University, or to a life of studious leisure and opportunity, English should, I think, be made the prominent linguistic and literary study.'

Quoted in D. J. Palmer (1965) p. 44.

Furthermore, the Taunton Commission in their published report (1868) showed that just under half the endowed grammar schools 'were no longer teaching any Latin or Greek.' D. J. Palmer (1965) p. 43. In this connection, the Commission approved of an extremely significant recommendation by the Rev. G. G. Bradley, Headmaster of Marlborough School, who advocated that schools of lower social status should make English the central study. Writing to the Commission, Bradley stated :

'Above all I would give unusual weight to the teaching of the English language, literature, and history, to the attempt to humanize and refine a boy's mind by trying early to familiarize him with English poetry, and to inspire him with a taste for the best authors whom I could place before him. A school which should succeed to any large extent in doing this might afford to omit from its curriculum many branches of knowledge which are in themselves desirable.'

Quoted in D. J. Palmer (1965) p. 44.

The immediate acceptance, by the Commission, of this viewpoint clearly signals the general concern felt at that time over the neglect of English literature in the schools. It only needed a forceful figure, holding the same views and an influential position, to set in motion forces which would speed up the recognition of English studies, including literature, as a vital part of the school curriculum. That figure was to be Matthew Arnold. For over thirty years, as an Inspector of Schools, he was also to give 'unusual weight ... to the attempt to humanize and refine a boy's mind by trying early to familiarize him with English poetry....'

## 2.4

### Matthew Arnold's Reports on Elementary Education 1852-1882/

'The Victorian era was an age of prophets, and most of them in different ways sounded the note of educational reform, and proclaimed the need for more vision and a much wider interpretation of scope and function. The seeds sown by them took a long time to germinate, and it was not until the twentieth century had got under way that education began to feel the impulse of radical change.'

W. O. Lester Smith (1957).

Efforts to introduce English literature into the school curriculum repeatedly met with considerable opposition. Public and Grammar school education in the second half of the nineteenth century continued to be largely dominated by the uncompromising demands of a strict Classical training. The Clarendon Commission (1864) endorsed 'the continued supremacy of Latin and Greek' in the public schools. With the exception of a few Grammar schools,

'the direct study of English in these schools is really of secondary importance to their approach to Classics, since the philosophy of a classical education was now evolving in such a way that it could be applied equally well to English studies ...'

D. J. Palmer (1965) p. 43.

It appears that there was little room in the schools for the inclusion of English literature as a humanising instruction. Indeed, when asked by the same Commission about the educational value of English literature, Dr Kennedy of Shrewsbury School stated that, 'he had not the time to give to the subject, and that to teach English would fritter away his power.' Quoted in D. J. Palmer (1965) p. 43. In some instances, this deeply ingrained reluctance to allow Greek and Latin to be displaced by English studies, continued far into the present century. One post-war survey notes that in Great Britain, 'There are still a few public schools which have no separate "department of English"', W. H. Gardner (1955).

However, in the second half of the nineteenth century much was done to re-vitalise elementary education and Matthew Arnold in his thirty-five years (1851-1886) as a school inspector emerged as a champion of reform. His Reports on Elementary Education 1852-1882 clearly reveal the urgent 'need for more vision and a much wider interpretation of scope and function.' Arnold believed that English literature deserved recognition as a subject in elementary schools and this view was not tinged by any hesitancy.

'What is comprised under the word literature is in itself the greatest power available to education.' (1871 Report).

In his untiring efforts over so long a period, Arnold did much to quicken the slow acceptance of English literature as a valuable, formative influence in education. Inevitably, his firm views on the importance of English in elementary education began to find favour in secondary schools by the turn of the century. (See later The Teaching of English in England (1921) ).

Nor did Arnold only condemn the absence of English literature in the elementary school curriculum. His reports from 1852 to 1882 reflect a deep concern over the training of teachers, the needs of pupils, the selection of texts and the choice of methods. It is important that all these views should be examined in some detail.

In his earliest report (1852) Arnold writes with deep concern over the effects of the 'Useful Knowledge' cult. While examining pupil teachers, he was, 'much struck ... with the utter disproportion between the great amount of positive information and the low degree of mental culture and intelligence which they exhibit.' He goes on to state :

'... I am sure that the study of portions of the best English authors, and composition, might with advantage be made a part of their regular course of instruction to a much greater degree than it is at present. Such a training would tend to elevate and humanize a number of young men, who at present, notwithstanding the vast amount of raw information which they have amassed, are wholly uncultivated ...'

In 1860, Arnold, who had recently returned from an inspection tour of Continental schools, reported that school inspectors in France were dissatisfied with the prescribed school books in French schools.

'... what was wanting there, as it is wanting with us, was a good reading book, or course of reading-books. It is not enough remembered in how many cases his reading book forms the whole literature, except his Bible, of the child attending a primary school. If then, instead of literature, his reading book, as is too often the case, presents him with a jejune encyclopaedia of positive information, the result is that he has, except his Bible, no literature, no humanizing instruction at all. If, again, his reading-book, as is also too often the case, presents him with bad literature instead of good - with the writing of second or third rate authors, feeble, incorrect and colourless - he has not, as the rich have, the corrective of an abundance of

good literature to counter-act the bad effect of trivial and ill-written school books . . . But besides the fault of not fulfilling this, their essential function, the ill-compiled reading books I speak of have, I say, for the poorer scholar, the graver fault of actually doing what they can to spoil his taste, when they are nearly his only means for forming it. I have seen school books . . . in which far more than half of the poetical extracts were the composition either of the compilers themselves, or of American writers of the second and third order; and these books were to be some poor child's Anthology of a literature so varied and so powerful as the English!'

General Report for the Year 1860.

It is to such defective reading matter referred to above that Matthew Arnold attributes the deficient taste and literary insensitivity of not only the children but even '... well-instructed pupil-teachers of four or five years training.'

Clearly, Arnold was striving to have genuine literature replace those 'readers' whose only aim was to fill the mind with what A. N. Whitehead (1917) was later to describe as 'this horrible burden of inert ideas.' In the same report (1860) Arnold goes on to add :

'I believe that nothing would so much contribute to remedy it (memorized information) as the diffusion in our elementary schools of reading-books of which the contents were really well selected and interesting. Such lessons would be far better adapted than a treatise on the atmosphere, the steam-engine, or the pump, to attain the proper end of a reading-book, that of teaching scholars to read well; they would also afford the best chance of inspiring quick scholars with a real love for reading and literature in the only way in which such a love is ever really inspired, by animating and moving them; and if they succeeded in doing this, they would have this further advantage, that the literature for which they have inspired a taste would be a good, a sound, and a truly refining literature; not a literature such as that of the few attractive pieces in our current reading-books, a literature over which no cultivated person would dream of wasting his time.'

On his return from a second Continental mission, Matthew Arnold felt that standards in British schools had retrogressed and now showed '... a deadness, a slackness, and a discouragement which are not the signs and accompaniments of progress . . . a lack of intelligence much more striking now than it was when I returned from the Continent in 1859.'

Later in the same report (1867) Arnold notes with misgivings that :

'... books are very often compiled by persons quite incompetent for the undertaking ... It is very usual for the scholar to have to purchase his reading book, which is often the only book of secular literature in his possession; it is important to do what we can to ensure its being a good one. Perhaps it may be permitted to an ex-professor of poetry to remark that in general the choice of poetry in these books is especially bad; I print in a note<sup>1</sup> a specimen of popular poetry from the Fifth Standard book of a series much in vogue. In the Fifth Standard the scholars have, as is well known, to read poetry aloud for an examination. When one thinks how noble and admirable a thing genuine popular poetry is, it is provoking to think that such rubbish as this should be palmed off on a poor child for it with (sic) any apparent sanction from the Education Department ...' (*italics mine*)

In his report for 1871, Matthew Arnold draws attention to the lack of any organised literature programme in schools. He speaks passionately of '... that immense indeterminate field called literature', adding,

'Here, above all, neither plan nor order of study exists, nor any well-conceived choice of books; yet here, above all, these are necessary. What is comprised under the word literature is in itself the greatest power available in education;

---

1 MY NATIVE LAND

She is a rich and rare land,  
Oh! She is a fresh and fair land,  
She is a dear and rare land,  
This native land of mine.

No men than hers are braver,  
The women's hearts ne'er waver;  
I'd freely die to save her  
And think my lot divine.

She's not a dull or cold land,  
No, she's a warm and bold land;  
Oh! she's a true and old land,  
This native land of mine.

Oh! she's a fresh and fair land,  
Oh! she's a true and rare land  
Yes, she's a rare and fair land  
This native land of mine.

of this power it is not too much to say that in our elementary schools at present no use is made at all. The reading books and the absence of plan being what they are, the whole use that the Government, now that its connection with religious instruction is abandoned, makes of the mighty engine of literature in the education of the working classes, amounts to little more, even when most successful, than the giving them the power to read the newspapers.' (Italics mine)

This neatly sums up the disregard of English literature as a subject in elementary schools by 1871. Not only was there a lack of aim or system, but reading material, such as the spurious verse already quoted, was of the poorest literary quality. It was against such aimlessness and poor judgment that Matthew Arnold firmly stood. His repeated appeals for genuine literature, systematically taught, are among the most noticeable features of his reports. For instance, in the 1872 report he emphasises the value of recitation which he clearly regards as the only means available, at that time, of bringing literature and the child together.

"... 'Recitation' is the special subject which produces at present, so far as I can observe, most good. The great fault of the instruction in our elementary schools.../ is, that it at most gives to a child the mechanical possession of the instruments of knowledge, but does nothing to form him .../ what practically will be found to contribute most towards forming a pupil is familiarity with masterpieces, ... 'recitation', in the present absence of any attempt even to raise their reading into something of a literary study, (italics mine) must be relied upon for carrying the power of perception onward."

Again, two years later, in the 1874 report, he repeats the same appeal :

'If the Education Department would yearly name in its syllabus a short work of classical English poetry for the candidates for admission, this work might with great advantage be adopted for the recitation and literature lesson in the school. Thus carefully studied it would have a good chance of being appropriated and assimilated by both pupils and pupil-teachers, and only thus can such a work produce its due effect. Its due effect, when produced, is invaluable, and is precisely that of which our elementary schools stand most in need.'

It will be seen that Arnold repeatedly echoes Plato's belief that literature - particularly poetry - is an important formative in-

fluence on the young mind. The words 'forming' or 'formative' frequently appear whenever Arnold discusses the value of English literature in education. In his General Report for the Year 1878, Arnold again gives a lengthy account of the value of recitation, which, he is pleased to note, has 'become general in the schools of my district, partly, perhaps, because the teachers know that I am strongly in favour of it.' He goes on to add that the 'advantage of this seems to me indisputable.' Subjects such as sewing, calculating, writing or spelling, 'have utility, but they are not formative.' Even the power of reading he considers an acquisition and 'not in itself formative.' But poetry, he believes, stands pre-eminent - and even when the meaning is elusive, the rhythm and language are, in themselves, formative.

'... for a higher purpose, to serve in any way to form the pupil in addition to giving him the mere power of reading, no serious person would maintain that our reading books are at present fitted. But good poetry is formative; it has, too, the precious power of acting by itself and in a way managed by nature, not through the instrumentality of that somewhat terrible character, the scientific educator. I believe that even the rhythm and diction of good poetry are capable of exercising some formative effect, and cannot be spoiled by pedantry and injudiciousness on his part.' (Italics mine)

The only remaining reference to poetry, in the 1878 report, springs from a random reflection on vocabulary; yet the comment concerns quality of texts and is most forcefully expressed. Speaking of the 'scantiness of vocabulary' among school-children, Arnold reports :

'We enlarge their vocabulary, and with their vocabulary their circle of ideas. At the same time, we bring them under the formative influence of really good literature, really good poetry. We must not, of course, be so rigid as to exclude all poetry but the very best. Poetry like that of Scott and Mrs Hemans, for instance, is no doubt of texture different from that of the best poetry, yet it has excellent qualities, and qualities to which our school-children are very sensible; we may be glad to have them learning it. Still, an effort should be made, for this one exercise, to fix the standard high. Gray's Elegy and extracts from Shakespeare should be chosen in preference to the poetry of Scott and Mrs Hemans, and very much of the poetry in our present school reading books should be entirely rejected.'

Of all the reports submitted by Matthew Arnold, none is of such particular interest as the General Report for the Year 1880. The

first six pages of this report are almost entirely concerned with the importance of English poetry in the elementary school curriculum. As before, Arnold endorses the value of learning and reciting poetry. He emphasises again his earlier statement that, in the absence of a clearly defined literature course, recitation 'must be relied upon for carrying the power of perception onward.' The report begins with the following observation :

"I find that of the specific subjects English literature, as it is too ambitiously called - in plain truth the learning by heart and reciting of a hundred lines or two of standard English poetry - continues to be by far the most popular. I rejoice to find it so; there is no fact coming under my observation in the working of our elementary schools which gives me so much satisfaction."

Arnold then goes on to address those who are critical of his views :

"Some people regard this my high estimate of the value of poetry in education with suspicion and displeasure. Perhaps they may accept the testimony of Wordsworth with less suspicion than mine. Wordsworth says, 'To be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God.' And it is only through acquaintance with poetry, and with good poetry, that this 'feeling of poetry' can be given."

Immediately following is a statement which is unmistakeably Platonic in character. These lines were destined to attract strong official approval and to be quoted twice in an important survey some forty years later: The Teaching of English in England (1921) pp. 49, 86.

"Good poetry does undoubtedly tend to form the soul and character; it tends to beget a love of beauty and of truth in alliance together, it suggests, however indirectly, high and noble principles of action, and it inspires the emotion so helpful in making principles operative. Hence its extreme importance to all of us; but in our elementary schools its importance seems to me to be at present quite extraordinary."

Arnold expresses the hope that this early contact with poetry should not be confined only to the fifth and sixth standards in the elementary schools but should also be 'retained for the children of the

Fourth Standard, and brought into use universally for at least these three standards.' He assures the Royal Commission of Enquiry that, in the schools he inspected, the poetry exercises remain the most popular, but he adds a warning that, 'The choice of passages to be learnt is of the utmost importance, and requires close and intelligent observing of the children.' He condemns, for instance, the once fashionable practice, apparently recommended by Lord Lyndhurst, of learning Goldsmith's Deserted Village by heart :

'Nothing could be more completely unsuitable for them, and this being soon proved by the event, the use of the poem for the purpose in question has happily almost ceased. That the poetry chosen should have real beauties of expression and feeling, that these beauties should be such as the children's hearts and minds can lay hold of, and that a distinct point or centre of beauty and interest should occur within the limits of the passage learnt, all these are conditions to be insisted upon.'

He criticises the setting of passages from Shakespeare or Scott where 'the point of interest is often not reached within the hundred lines which is all that children in the Fourth Standard learn.' This habit, coupled with a frequent disregard for the three conditions previously mentioned, prompts Arnold to conclude :

'How little, therefore, has the poetry exercise been made to do for these children, many of whom will leave school at once, and learn no more poetry! The conclusion I wish to draw is, that the teacher should always take care that the year's poetry of a class shall contain the best poetry in the piece chosen for them, and the central point of interest in it; not be mere prelude and introduction to this centre of interest. To secure this, the teacher may without scruple plunge into the middle of a scene or a passage.... This is a far better course than to throw a year away, as is frequently done now, upon comparatively ineffective poetry, with the intention that the child, if he remains at school, may next year continue the same passage and reach the point of interest.

I insist at such length upon this poetry exercise, because of the increasing use of it, and because of its extreme importance.'

Arnold's closing remarks on the subject of poetry are blended with some interesting reflections on the composition of the curriculum.

He envisages 'poetry or poetic literature' as a separate class subject.

'I should like, above all, to see this poetry exercise made no longer an extra subject, but a part of the regular work of the school, which would then consist of the three elementary matters, of the class subjects, and of this.'

Realising that such a revolutionary idea would not be accepted easily, Arnold goes on to recommend a basic curriculum for children between the ages of eight and thirteen :

'... a teacher should in general endeavour to teach to all children of the Second and Third Standards something of poetry or poetic literature, grammar, geography, Naturkunde or elementary natural science, and music. For the standards above he should add to these history. So that, in general, our school children, of from eight years of age to ten, should all be receiving instruction in these eight matters, reading, writing, arithmetic, poetry, or poetic literature, grammar, geography, Naturkunde, and music. Our school children of from ten years of age to thirteen should all be receiving more advanced instruction in these eight matters, with history, as a ninth matter added. And a picked few of these older children should be taught, further, the rudiments of French and Latin, and elementary geometry.'

This suggested approach not only anticipates the type of curriculum yet to come, but it appears to be the first of its kind, by an appointed official, to lay a separate but equally weighted emphasis upon literature and language in the vernacular. The recommended separation should also be noticed; poetry as one subject, grammar as another. Moreover, Arnold believes these two subjects should enjoy an earlier presentation than history, foreign languages, and geometry.

But it is in his last report (1882) that Arnold develops an observation, which, in the light of the Aristotelian view presented earlier, (Politics: Book VIII) is of the greatest interest. He mentions the concern felt at that time of the 'break down, in India, of a number of young men who had won their appointments after severe study and severe examination.' After describing these exacting examinations as 'injudicious' he adds :

"The mind is less strained the more it reacts on what it deals with, and has a native play of its own, and is creative. It

is more strained the more it has to receive a number of 'knowledges' passively, and to store them up to be reproduced in an examination. But to acquire a number of 'knowledges', store them, and reproduce them, was what in general those candidates for Indian employment had had to do. ... Composition in the dead languages is now wholly out of favour, and I by no means say that it is a sufficient test for candidates for Indian employment. But I will say that the character and quality of mental exertion required for it is more healthy than the character and quality of exertion required for receiving and storing a number of 'knowledges'....

Of such high importance, in relieving the strain of mental effort, is the sense of pleasurable activity and of creation. (Italics mine) / Of course a great deal of the work in elementary schools must necessarily be of a mechanical kind. But whatever introduces any sort of creative activity to relieve the passive reception of knowledge is valuable. (Italics mine) / The Kindergarten exercises are useful for this reason, the management of tools is useful, singing is useful. The poetry exercise, if properly managed, is of very great use, and this is why I have always been in favour of it and am glad to see further development given to it by the New Code.

People talk contemptuously of 'learning lines by heart'; but if a child is brought, as he easily can be brought, to throw himself into a piece of poetry, an exercise of creative activity has been set up in him quite different from the effort of learning a list of words to spell, or a list of flesh-making and heat-giving foods, or a list of capes and bays, or a list of reigns and battles, and capable of greatly relieving the strain from learning these and affording a lively pleasure."

Even when teachers have an unavoidable duty to instruct classes in these 'knowledges', Arnold points out that, 'the teacher's whole design of instruction in these knowledges should be the aim of calling forth, by some means or other, in every pupil a sense of pleasurable activity and of creation; he should resist being made a mere ladder with "information".' (Italics mine) /

Arnold concludes this, his final report as an Inspector of Schools, with a sentence from one of Butler's sermons (1745):

"'Of education', says Butler, 'information itself is really the least part.'"

Of what significance is this detailed account by Arnold of 'the sense of pleasurable activity and of creation' in education?

Firstly, he considers poetry/ 'of very great use ...' as '... an exercise of creative activity ...'. Yet it should be remembered that he had in mind nothing else but the learning and recitation of poetry.

What of the variety of ways in which poetry is presented and experienced in schools today? And/ what are the effects on pupils when, mistakenly, poetry is treated as a 'knowledge' of forms, devices, content, prosody - as though these were/ 'a list of capes and bays, '?

All these approaches will be examined in later chapters, but, for the moment, it may be noted that Arnold's views on poetry in education coincide strikingly with those of Plato and Aristotle. In particular, the beliefs expressed in the 1882 report closely resemble those of Aristotle. (Politics/ VIII; Poetics/ I-IV) The tone of Arnold's words is similar - 'sense of pleasurable activity and of creation'; 'relieving the strain from learning.'

Further, the 'poetry exercise', seen by Arnold as a pleasurable creative activity, closely parallels Plato's/ 'train your children in their studies not by compulsion but by games....'

In the same way, when Arnold says of poetry, 'in our elementary schools its importance seems to me to be at present quite extraordinary,' this is a clear echo of Plato's belief in an early training in literature (Protagoras: 326) and of his more general principle, '... the most important part of any task is the beginning.' (Republic/ II : 377) In general terms, too, Arnold's views anticipate an official dictum emphasised in a Government report published nearly 50 years later :

'... (the curriculum should be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored.' The Primary School (1931) p. 93.

It should be observed, that Arnold strove to re-instate three beliefs, generally accepted in Athenian education, but largely neglected in the intervening centuries :

1. The important educative value of literature in the vernacular.
2. The important formative power of elementary education.

3. The humanistic view that literature is something far more than a linguistic discipline.

Matthew Arnold must surely claim the distinction of being the first English educator to suggest such radical reforms; and certainly the first to have claimed that literature is/ 'the greatest power available in education.'

## 2.5 Literature in the Curriculum: The position in British Schools since 1880/

Until 1882, English literature in the elementary schools was treated separately from English grammar and was described as an optional 'specific subject' as opposed to a compulsory 'class' subject. The syllabus for literature in 1876 was given as follows :

'1st Year. - One hundred lines of poetry, got by heart, with knowledge of meaning and allusions. Writing a letter on a simple subject.

2nd Year. - Two hundred lines of poetry, not before brought up, repeated; with a knowledge of meaning and allusions. Writing a paraphrase of a passage of easy prose.

3rd Year. - Three hundred lines of poetry, not before brought up, repeated; with knowledge and meaning of allusions. Writing a letter or statement, the heads of the topics to be given by the Inspector.'

Quoted in: The Teaching of English in England (1921).

In 1882, however, English, including literature, was re-grouped to form a 'class' subject and much emphasis was laid on grammar.

By 1890 the mounting number of complaints about <sup>the</sup> this weight given to grammar and recitation received the attention of the Cross Commission. The following observation, one of many sympathetic to the cause of literature in the English syllabus, reveals the concern felt:

'A suggestion has been made that "advanced reading" by which we understand intelligent reading in some standard authors, might be allowed to take the place of Grammar in the Class Subject of English.'

Quoted in: The Teaching of English in England (1921),

Further concern was expressed when the Boyce Commission (1895) pointed out that special grants to assist the teaching of science in elementary schools had brought about '... a narrow curriculum, a neglect of literature, and an unsuitable style of instruction.' Quoted in: The Teaching of English in England (1921) p. 52.

Nevertheless, important advances continued to be made, particularly between the years 1895 and 1902. During these years English was made compulsory in every elementary school.

But what status, if any, did English command as a subject in secondary education at this time? What advances had been made towards introducing English literature into the curriculum of the senior school and was such a study regarded with any sympathy?

Before reviewing any changes, it is necessary to distinguish between two main types of secondary schooling :

1. Grant-aided secondary schools, which, after the turn of the century, included the majority of the old established Grammar schools.
2. The principal Public Schools; Endowed Schools; private and denominational schools.

In all these schools, especially in the case of boys' schools, 'the conditions were, almost till the end of the nineteenth century, unfavourable to the study of the mother tongue.' The Teaching of English in England p. 98.

The reasons for this were quite different for each group. Schools in the first classification, although largely free of the dominating and rigid classical tradition, were, until the Education Acts of 1902 and 1903, committed by grants to give detailed attention to the teaching of science. This was accomplished at the expense of English, of which very little account was taken anyway.

The second group of schools, jealously guarding their long classical tradition, refused to acknowledge the educational worth of English. Even with a curriculum that was widening 'under the pressure of new

forces and ideas, ' the benefit, of what many such schools still regarded as an educational doubt, was not given to English, but to 'modern sides', such as science and, later, foreign languages.

The Education Acts of 1902 and 1903 were responsible for a new emphasis being placed on English studies. The Acts 'legalised financial aid to literary and linguistic as well as scientific subjects.' English language and literature began to be taught in some depth and secondary schools were compelled to plan a curriculum in which English was given a central place.

Furthermore, as English had been named a compulsory subject in elementary schools, pupils entering grant-aided senior schools, <sup>note</sup> ~~not only~~ lacked a classical background, but were ~~now~~ equipped for the continued study of English. Moreover, secondary grant-aided schools were, 'required to satisfy the Board of Education that they provide instruction in the English language and literature, and to submit their time-table for inspection.' The Teaching of English in England (1921) p. 97.

Although the Public and Independent Schools, amidst such sweeping changes, did not continue to deny the value of English literature, the attitude adopted was that the subject could not yet be seriously considered as a vital study in the curriculum. The objections were simply that the appreciation of English literature would not survive classroom study or the fierce competition with other subjects. It was thought best to let it flourish on its own, out of school hours, as a leisure activity. This attitude is neatly summed up in the words of a head-master of the time :

" 'with a really adequate school library, and a library in every Form-room of books which the Form was encouraged to think worth reading, including poetry; with opportunities every week for discussion of what they found amusing, and for self-expression through school magazines authorised and unauthorised; with debating societies and plays, in fact with anything they liked in the matter of English literature, would not the boys have all the opportunity required? " '

Quoted in: The Teaching of English in England (1921) p. 122.

While there is little doubt, that, in some respects, this attitude allowed English literature to exert an important indirect influence as an extra-mural recreation, it is also clear that the lack of classroom and examination recognition gave English no 'subject' status at all.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that many of the state-aided elementary and secondary schools took the lead for many years over the Public Schools in the planned, intensive study of English literature and language as a school subject. Indeed, it is worth noting again, that, in some instances, English studies <sup>only</sup> received serious attention <sup>^</sup> after the Second World War. 'Until 1947 Dulwich College, one of the oldest and largest schools in London, had no English specialist on the staff: now it has a Senior English master and six other specialist teachers ...' W.H. Gardner (1955).

This was a period, then, when the majority of ordinary elementary and secondary schools throughout Britain set an important example. The first few decades of the century saw a rapid break-down of prejudice and out-worn ideas which, in turn, were replaced by some remarkable advances in the teaching of literature. In order to gauge the extent of this swing away from the ideas of the nineteenth century, it is worth noting some of the aims and methods given in a manual of the times, The Teaching of English (1908) A. Roberts and A. Barter.

1. "The old over-annotated, 'over-introduced' book has been driven out of the market. Children are ... now being allowed to bestow their attention on the actual text of the works of our great English writers instead of wasting time in learning about them." (pp. 2-3).
2. "Much greater importance is attached to English - as an examination subject it takes the foremost place; there is far greater freedom allowed to the teacher; first-hand acquaintance with the great works of our literature is required; and wide intelligent reading rather than detailed study is encouraged." (p. 3).
3. "Memory recalls a time ... when in a secondary school of good standing the English lessons during one whole term consisted of nothing else than exercises in parsing and analysis founded on 'The Ancient Mariner'; when, in an elementary school lauded by the Department as a model of what a school should be, Standard II (age 8-9) spent an entire school year in learning to recite 'The Song of the Shirt', and in getting the 'meanings' of almost every word by heart ..." (pp. 3-4).

4. Literature, "does not mean a microscopic study of the grammatical forms, figures of speech, archaeological, historical, and geographical allusions. . . . Literature teaching should not resolve itself, then, into mere verbal discipline. . . . There is a general tendency to underrate the aesthetic and literary instincts of children." (pp. 8-9).
5. "The questions set at public examinations are often of a very illiterate nature. The method of setting parsing and analysis from the prescribed text has not yet finally disappeared. Such faulty examination methods have led to the evil of studying the text, not for its matter and style, but as a hunting-ground for tracking down difficulties: of construction, and anatomizing the language into a thousand lifeless fragments, in order to satisfy the examiners . . ." (p. 12).
6. "An examination in English cannot be satisfactory unless part of it is conducted orally; for spoken English cannot be examined except orally". (p. 12).
7. When literature is taught chronologically, "It may be said, quite unhesitatingly, that such a plan . . . is unnatural and ineffective." (p. 60).
8. "Instead of helping the student to appreciate literature, it (paraphrasing) has helped to make him dislike it." (p. 195).

The book is aimed at all levels of school education from the infant stage to the upper school classes. Matthew Arnold is quoted several times. The desirability of a specialist English room is stressed (p. 64) - The Library, the importance of reading widely for enjoyment, the value of Dramatic, Debating and Literary societies are all given detailed consideration. A separate chapter is devoted to creative verse composition, the advantages of which are described as follows :

'It fosters originality and ingenuity; it strengthens the imagination; it engenders a love for reading poetry; it gives satisfaction and pleasure, inasmuch as it satisfies the rhythmical instinct innate in the young; it increases the child's stock of words; it helps him to discriminate their shades of meaning; and finally, it refines the feelings. It is, in short, as essential a part of the literary training as prose composition.' (pp. 181-182).

The extracts above have been quoted at some length because, collectively, they give a vivid impression of the new humanistic approach to literature in the vernacular. It is obvious that an extraordinary change of attitude had occurred by the early part of this century.

Yet, it must not be imagined that progress was uniformly swift. More than a decade later (1921) an Education Department survey notes that '... the position of English in the Secondary Schools is still far from satisfactory in respect of the actual time allotted, of methods, and of results.' The Teaching of English in England (1921) p. 105 . A feature of this - ~~as~~ with any other - period, though, was the success achieved in new English teaching methods by a number of enlightened individual teachers. In particular, the influential work of Mr. Caldwell Cook (Perse School, Cambridge) and Mr Guy Pocock (Royal Naval College, Dartmouth) attracted widespread attention and is the subject of special praise in The Teaching of English in England (1921) pp. 103, 108, 151-152/. Much of the success of this pioneering work was based on a sensitive recognition and understanding of children, their interests, needs and activities. From such an understanding, it is clear that these teachers made a wise choice and presentation of texts, encouraged a love for wide reading, and for creative writing, and, above all, believed in the principles of pleasure, play, activity, interest and 'readiness'. (See Chapter Three/.)

Caldwell Cook laid a great deal of stress on the importance of poetry in school, not as an unpalatable discipline received passively from a text book, but as a creative activity entered into and experienced by writing it, dramatising it, speaking it and listening to it. He aimed, in his lessons in the "Mummery" room at the Perse School, to unite the elements of song, dance, poetry, drama and play. He was a pioneer of choral speaking as a useful method of presenting certain poems to young children. Above all, his techniques and successes in stimulating children to become creative verse-writers themselves (and to regard this as a natural and satisfying form of expression) made him a leader in this field. Caldwell Cook passionately believed that his pupils gained a genuine, unique understanding of poetry and its relation to life, by becoming 'poets' themselves. It was through 'doing', he felt, that true appreciation and a developing taste came about; and by encouraging young boys to write verse and act drama with complete enjoyment, he was urging a break away from 'the absurdly bookish character of present-day education.' He had little time for those who tried to teach appreciation by teaching prosody.

'Is it prudent, kind or healthy, to kill a good natural artist in literature, in the premature endeavour to make artificially a poor scientist in criticism?' Caldwell Cook (1919).

In his book The Play Way (1919), Caldwell Cook sets out the principles and practice of his teaching, much of which resembles Matthew Arnold's 'sense of pleasurable activity and of creation', but in more passionate terms :

'It is the core of my faith that the only work worth doing is really play; for by play I mean the doing anything with one's heart in it.

.....  
The class of poetry to set before boys is that - whether ancient, mediaeval, or modern - which is full of the spirit, which is striving at the present day. Also the boys <sup>much</sup> ~~much~~ themselves come forth as poets. ...I am confident that a good teacher, given fair conditions, could lead his pupils to regard poetry as the inspiration of their daily life. And this is Play in its finest form, namely, the ideal in action and reality. Poetry, the work of a maker, must itself be creative; must not stop short at impression, but originate expression; must not be magniloquent only, but magnificent as well.'

The Play Way (1919) Caldwell Cook.

It is sometimes pointed out that Caldwell Cook's approach to poetry and drama in the school depended for its success on his personality; that, as a universal method, it is therefore limited. Yet, it is interesting to note that, in post-war years, the Perse School at Cambridge has revived and refined the "Mummery" tradition begun there 50 years ago, and that, since 1947, five teachers have adopted Caldwell Cook's approach with remarkable success. (See <sup>Table</sup> ~~Appendix~~ 17.)

It seems clear that the great advances in literature teaching at this time were made by a few inspired teachers at the secondary level and by many teachers in elementary schools.

The Commission formed after the First World War, 'to inquire into the position of English in the educational system of England', added a special note on the remarkable response to poetry in many elementary schools where it was obviously being taught with a new force and inspiration:

'Few things are more encouraging, and, indeed inspiring, than the enthusiasm for poetry kindled in numerous schools by teachers who love it. ... Much is to be found today that would have gladdened Arnold's heart. The children who learnt their 100 or 200 lines, usually all from the same poem, and then only as an extra subject, have been succeeded by children who can recite a number of separate poems, selected by themselves from their anthology, and have read and appreciated very many others; who compile and transcribe anthologies of their own, and delight in composing poems. The children indeed, present no difficulty. They have a natural love for beauty of sound, for the picturesque, the concrete, the imaginative, that is to say, for poetry. The difficulty is rather with the teachers. All delight in poetry may be easily killed by ill-judged selection of pieces, undue insistence on perfect memorising, destructive explanations, and ill-concealed indifference, or even distaste. The teacher for whom poetry has no message should not attempt to take it with a class, unless, perhaps, he can catch from the children themselves some of the freshness of their feeling for a ballad or a play. But his loss will be great. There is no lesson like the poetry lesson for producing that intimacy between teacher and class which makes school a happy place.'

The Teaching of English in England (1921).  
(Italics mine)

This extract has been quoted at length because it reveals a number of notable features, any of which would, indeed, 'have gladdened Arnold's heart.' The chief interest of the extract is the clear indication that children are naturally and easily attracted towards the experience of poetry. Rather than being  $\not\propto$  drudgery or  $\not\propto$  discipline imposed upon pupils, the subject now appears almost as a recreation and delight. This evidence not only gave added support to Caldwell Cook's own successes, but it also supported his contention that teachers - their attitudes, methods and choice of material - appear largely to blame for turning children away from literature.

The spirit of the extract suggests an approach based on 'activity and experience rather than facts to be stored' - a dictum which was to be strongly recommended for the whole curriculum ten years later. The Primary School (1931). There is a new freedom, too, in the encouragement given to children to select the poems they wish to learn; to compile their own anthologies of favourite poems; to delight in being makers of verse themselves. The contention that the 'difficulties' lie mainly with the teaching and the choice of texts is further supported elsewhere

in the same report :

'We do not suggest that only the recognised English classics should be included. The lesson will be a failure if it is not really a recreation . . . . Certain of our witnesses, to whose lot it has fallen to teach literature to pupils who have passed through the elementary school, tell us that many of those pupils regard literature almost with hatred, and that this appears due to their school teaching . . . . No doubt schools vary immensely in this respect. In some, literature is almost ignored, in others it is practically the mainspring of the work. . . . We also note that children, like adults, demand contemporary literature.'

The Teaching of English in England (1921)  
pp. 84-85.

Vigorous efforts were made at this time to develop, improve and systematise the teaching of English in Secondary Schools. Within several years, the results of important surveys had been published: The Teaching of English in England (1921); Memorandum on the Teaching of English in England (1923); Some Suggestions on the Teaching of English in England (1924). This last publication outlines a system of presenting and examining literature which is roughly comparable to most present day approaches in England. It envisages English literature as not merely an important part of the English syllabus, but as the central feature. 'The work of the English teacher in the secondary school for the most part centres in literature, in the study and reading of books.' (p. 5). A very wide course of reading is recommended, and an extensive list of literature is appended, suitable for yearly age groups from 12½ to 16½. Teachers are urged to follow a variety of approaches to stimulate the pupils' understanding and enjoyment of texts. 'The succession of texts should correspond to the growth of the pupil's ability and to the widening of his interest and experience.' (p. 6). Both intensive class study and extensive leisure reading is advised and this should be pursued systematically in the following ways :

1. The reading and critical discussion of texts in class.
2. A more extensive, recreational reading at home.
3. With longer works, such as novels, the careful, intensive study of chosen passages and a rapid reading of the rest of the book.



4. The reading of as many suitable forms of literature as possible - novels, translations, voyages and travels, poetry, drama, essays.
5. Recreational reading in class which can be continued later at home.
6. The class reading and discussion of a text and the home reading of additional texts by the same author.

As for methods of reading and discussing a text, the greatest possible flexibility is advised :

*'In developing his method the teacher of English has the advantage of being bound by no tradition. On many of the questions involved no one can safely dogmatise. The teacher is free to learn from the experience of teachers of other literatures, and whilst he is developing his art he should refrain from being exclusive or limited in his practice.'*

(p. 7) (Italics mine)

Detailed suggestions are given on method and critical approach, but teachers are asked to remember that the text alone exerts the most powerful, direct, individual appeal. The temptation to stand between the author and the reader must be resisted. Dr Johnson's advice on reading Shakespeare 'on the wing', without notes, explanation, interruption or minute considerations, is strongly recommended to those teachers who fail to remember that '... most texts will require a second stage devoted to more special study of the whole or of particular passages.' (p. 8). Teachers are also asked to exercise the greatest care in selecting suitable texts for pupils and to understand the bewildering 'haze which hangs for many of them over "Lycidas" or over the "Song for St Cecilia's Day" after the first reading.' (p. 9).

But of greatest interest are the Recommendations of the Investigators in English in the First and Second Examinations contained in an appendix. Examinations in literature are set at two levels: the First Examination and the Second Examination. These correspond closely with the present day General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level and Advanced Level respectively. In the First Examination there are 'two policies ... (a) The policy of set-books (b) The policy of a general paper in English literature. Some examining bodies allow the two as alternatives.' (p. 57). In both 'the mere getting-up of "notes" ...' is deprecated. The examination attempts to test both extensive and intensive appreciation. The

principle is laid down that 'Literary criticism is not to be expected at this stage, but questions should be set to draw out a candidate's appreciation of the books read.' Within certain limits, the investigators would consider allowing schools to offer their own syllabuses as 'certain amount of latitude is clearly desirable.' Similarly, some system of options is considered advisable to enable teachers to select those texts 'that they can teach sympathetically.' (See Chapter Five.)

Most important of all was the unrestrictive policy laid down - that examinations should not be allowed to dictate the whole syllabus nor should they fetter the whole year's reading. (p. 58).

The Second Examination had, as its scope and aim, the serious, continuous study of literature for two years after the First Examination. While it was advised that a detailed study should be made of texts, 'sufficient both in number and variety', it was equally recommended that :

'The syllabus should neither be so exhaustive as to deprive a teacher of the power to add some book or books more particularly suited to the quality and tastes of his class, nor so restricted as to place the subject at a disadvantage in comparison with the other humanistic studies of the school curriculum.' (p. 58).

This Second Examination catered for those scholars who intended 'to proceed to an Honours course in English at a university or to carry into private life a scholarly and intelligent habit of English reading.'

The investigation agreed with the current practice which set texts for both detailed and less detailed study and recommended that, in addition, candidates should be allowed to offer one period of special study, preferably not 'earlier than the Elizabethan or later than the Victorian.'

Thus, it can be seen<sup>projected</sup> that, by 1924, the secondary school examinations in English literature were at least as extensive in aim and scope as most Board examinations in Britain today.

It is sufficient to note for the purposes of this chapter that, since

1924, English studies have maintained a central place in the curricula of schools. Moreover, in the last three or four decades, English Literature has become, progressively, the spiritual centre of English teaching. On the whole, 'English' is more generously represented on school time-tables than any other subject; most schools have at least one English specialist on the staff; allied activities such as drama, speech training, films and radio broadcasts are frequently given special attention outside the English time-table, and outstanding library facilities and aids now exist in most schools. Of the library alone, it has been said that 'perhaps no subject in the curriculum has benefited more than English has from this development.' The Teaching of English: (Second Edition) (1957), p. XV. Any difficulties experienced today in the teaching of English literature cannot be attributed to a lack of attention or emphasis. As an experienced teacher of English in England recently put it, 'English has never had it so good, yet many of the old problems are still with us and we have a number of new ones as well.'

Unfortunately, this very emphasis given to English studies in Britain was partly responsible for a separation of language from literature. Since 1936 (beginning at the Advanced Level and later adopted at the Ordinary Level) English language and English literature were offered as separate curriculum subjects. This is still viewed in Britain with some unease and is seen by one investigator as :

"... - a foolish blunder from which, so far, South Africa has been spared. The implications of the unholy divorce are that literature is something extraneous and 'fancy'. The unnatural separation of 'comprehension' from 'appreciation' is one of the odd results." W. H. Gardner (1955) p. 8.

2.6

Literature in the Curriculum: The position in South African schools  
Since 1860,

What was the position in elementary schools <sup>1</sup> in South Africa

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1 Only very late in the nineteenth century did the responsibility of secondary education begin to fall upon the schools. Previously, 'the few hundred pupils who sought secondary education ... went to the colleges. These, though State-aided, were ... outside the system of schools. ... When Muir came into office in 1892

at the time of Matthew Arnold's investigations?

It is clear, from reports issued by each Superintendent-General of Education from 1861 until the early part of this century, that English literature was given little recognition in the school curriculum. Mention should be made, though, of the Public Examination in Literature and Science offered to students over 18 years of age. The Literature Syllabus was made up of five papers, one of which was concerned with English language and literature.

- I History up to George II.
- II Modern history up to the death of William the Silent.
- III English language and literature.
- IV Modern languages: Dutch, French, German.
- V Latin and Greek languages.

The 'Literature' in Paper III consisted almost entirely of factual, biographical and grammatical questions. The extracts which follow are taken from the Second Class Certificate paper of 11th January, 1865 :

III English Language and Literature

3. Write brief biographical sketches of Chaucer; Spenser; Shakespeare; Milton.
4. Quote passages from the poetical works of the foregoing authors ...
5. Name, with dates of birth and death, the principal prose writers of the eighteenth century ...
6. Analyse ... the following passage (Grammatical analysis of verse extract).

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I (contd.)

there was still no organised curriculum above the elementary standards.' Pells (1938) p. 45.

Moreover, the term 'secondary education' is completely misleading. Even by the end of the century 'secondary education' in the Transvaal was used to describe work completed between Standards 3 and 6. McKerron (1934) p. 66.

The Cape Senior Certificate Examination was instituted in 1910, but the number of candidates was extremely low and it was not until 1920 that the classification 'primary' and 'secondary' was brought into general use. McKerron (1934) p. 78.

Cape of Good Hope : Reports of Committees  
The 1865 Report of Public Examiners in Literature and Science

But apart from these senior, public examinations in Literature (for which there were four successful candidates in 1865) the annual reports issued by each Superintendent-General of Education show that English syllabuses for schools did not include any literature. Moreover, it will be remembered from Matthew Arnold's Report for the year 1872 that "'recitation', in the present absence of any attempt even to raise their reading into something of a literary study, must be relied upon for carrying the power of perception onward." Yet, in schools in South Africa, children were not even blessed with this slight contact with poetry until 1894, when Recitation was named as a 'neglected subject'. In this year, it was introduced into the Standard IV syllabus and pupils were expected, 'to recite 40 lines of poetry with knowledge of meanings and allusions'. Report of the Superintendent-General of Education for the year 1894: p. xlii .

Concern was clearly beginning to be felt at this time. As with the reports submitted by Matthew Arnold, the most urgent and forceful comments on the need for wider reading and better methods and texts, may be seen in the reports submitted by Inspectors to the Superintendent-General of Education. In some instances, it is the latter who urges schools to do everything possible to stimulate pupils to explore literature :

'It must never be forgotten that the object of a school library is not merely to make the children more intelligent, and, therefore, better fitted for their ordinary school work; it is also to develop a taste for reading and an interest in books.'

Report of the Superintendent-General of Education:  
1894 p. xiv. (Italics by Superintendent-General of Education.)

'Recitation has become a subject of examination in the Standards for the first time this year, and therefore could scarcely be expected to be excellent yet. As presented, it has generally been a meaningless repetition of verses, and the educative value of the subject has rarely been appreciated. I had presented in Standard V in one case sixty lines of a jingling metrical chronicle of the Cape, repeated in a monotone with an entire disregard for punctuation or sense; the teacher was much surprised that the "poetry" and rendering should not meet with approval.'

Report of the Superintendent-General of Education: 1895

From: Acting-Inspector Bennie's Report: p. 11a

'The New Standards . . . . As regards recitation it will, however, be well to mention that I have had on more than one occasion to warn teachers against keeping their pupils all the year round at a set passage containing the minimum number of lines prescribed. Let some one or more passages, if it seems desirable, be learned with special care by every member of a class, but in the selection of other passages the pupils themselves might be allowed some range of choice. So with reading books. It is no doubt very desirable that the half (or whole) book prescribed for the year's work should be known particularly well. But when once this portion has been learned with sufficient exactitude let me counsel teachers to give their pupils plenty of practice in reading of a more desultory kind, where pure enjoyment is the immediate aim. Let there be a minute and scrupulous survey of a very contracted field (for a training in accuracy); but alternatively with this, let the mind be aroused and encouraged to take a cheerful and comprehensive view of the whole visible horizon.'

Report of the Superintendent-General of Education: 1895

From: Inspector Noaks' Report: p. 65a. (Italics mine).)

It is clear from these reports, that, notwithstanding the absence of an official literature course in schools, the recommendations made are beginning to point towards the urgent need for such a study. Such remarks as, 'a taste for reading and an interest in books'; 'the educative value of the subject'; and 'reading . . . where pure enjoyment is the immediate aim', clearly reflect this awareness.

In 1903, the following 'draft alternative syllabus' was discussed at a conference, for possible adoption by the South African Colonies - the Cape of Good Hope, Transvaal, Orange Free State, Natal and Rhodesia.

'Standard I	To repeat, clearly and intelligently, 20 lines of simple verse.
Standard II	To repeat, clearly and intelligently, 30 lines of simple verse.
Standard III	To repeat, clearly and intelligently, 45 lines of simple verse.
Standard IV	To repeat, clearly and intelligently, 60 lines from a Standard poet.
Standard V	To repeat, clearly and intelligently, 80 lines from a Standard poet.

- Standard VI To repeat, clearly and intelligently, not more than 100 lines of Shakespeare or Milton, or other English Classic, not necessarily a poet.
- Standard VII To repeat, clearly and intelligently, not more than 150 lines of Shakespeare or Milton, or other English Classic, not necessarily a poet.'

The Education Gazette (1903) Vol. III, No. 10, p. 146.

By 1905, in the continued absence of a literature syllabus for schools, a report appeared in The Education Gazette (Vol. IV, No. 31, 19th May, 1905) describing the introduction of a scheme to interest children in literature.

Literature Scheme for School Children

There are now in operation many circles for adult readers in connection with the National Home Reading Union, largely owing to the efforts of the Literature Committee of the Guild of Loyal Women. The greatest difficulty has, however, been experienced in getting circles for junior readers fairly started. By way of supplementing the work of the Union in the direction of fostering a love of reading among young people, the Committee has selected a certain number of books specially suitable for school children, and prizes will be offered for competition at the close of the year to those who have read the prescribed books. Three prizes will be given to school children of 14 years of age and upwards, and three to school children under 14....'

'Literature Scheme for School Children (Devised by Loyal Women's Guild) Senior Section (14 years and upwards)

1. G. Eliot, "Silas Marner."
2. Dickens, "Tale of Two Cities."
3. Tennyson, "Idylls of the King."
4. Kipling, "Kim."
5. Kingsley, "Heroes."
6. Scott, "Lady of the Lake."

Junior Section (14 years and under)

1. Ewing, "Jacksnapes."
2. Ruskin, "King of the Golden River."
3. Canon Ainger, "Tennyson for the Young."
4. Longfellow, "Hiawatha."
5. Hawthorne, "Stories of Ancient Greece."
6. Smith, "Life of Queen Victoria."

In the same year (1905) the attention of teachers was urgently directed towards an extract of an address by Sir Oliver Lodge. The

extract, which appeared in an issue of The Education Gazette, read as follows :

'The President of Birmingham University on Secondary Education

"Of all the studies which hold their own throughout manhood, and are worthy and repaying objects of study, and form welcome deposits in the memory, I verily believe that literature stands chief."

'Thus writes Sir Oliver (Lodge) and quotes the following fine passage from a friend who is an experienced teacher :-

"I would urge that practical teachers, whatever may be the exigencies of examination Codes, should cultivate in literature a widely catholic taste - not to think that God lives only on the mountain tops but that he is in the meadows too. ... Very often the book passion is first aroused by the homely rather than by the sublime. ... Teachers might well encourage children to bring to the class anything that has just touched their fancy. If the bit chosen is vulgar in matter or insincere in feeling or false in expression then the children get their lesson in literary criticism. ...

From cases under my own observation it has seemed to me as if the literature of our day, begotten of familiar circumstances, is most likely to rouse that tremendous first thrill of recognition of belonging to a race that can aspire and feel deeply, and see lovely things around."

The Education Gazette (Vol. V, N<sup>o</sup> 5, 25th August, 1905).

Extracts such as these show that the gathering force of influential opinion could only strengthen the stand made by Matthew Arnold. There is little doubt, too, that, in spite of a narrow, ill-defined course of literary studies in the schools, the Cape Education Authorities were sympathetically aware of a changing mood in Great Britain. Best of all, The Education Gazette was taking steps to communicate and recommend these new ideas to all teachers.

No detailed English syllabus for senior schools is available before 1916, but the Elementary School Course for that year shows some interesting details.

English is sub-divided into Reading, Recitation, Writing, Spelling, Grammar, and Composition. Clearly, the first two divisions are relevant in this survey, and the prescribed work for Standards I to VII is set out as follows :

Standard I

Reading To read intelligently from a Standard I Reading Book.  
Recitation To repeat 12 lines of simple verse with knowledge of the meaning.

Standard II

Reading (As above) from Standard II Book.  
Recitation (As above) 20 lines.

Standard III

Reading (As above) Standard III Book.  
Recitation (As above) 32 lines.

Standard IV

Reading To read fluently and intelligently from a Standard IV Reading Book, or an ordinary narrative from any other source.  
Recitation To recite 40 lines of poetry, with knowledge of meaning and allusions.

Standard V

Reading (As above) from Standard V Book.  
Recitation (As above) 60 lines of poetry.

Standard VI

Reading (As above) from Standard VI Book.  
Recitation (As above) 80 lines of poetry.

Standard VII

Reading To read fluently and intelligently a dialogue in blank verse from any standard author.  
Recitation To recite 100 lines of verse from a standard dramatic author, with knowledge of meanings and allusions.

Syllabus of the Elementary School Course: (1916)  
Department of Public Education  
Cape of Good Hope.

By 1925, a clear division between Primary and Secondary School courses had been established. In addition, the Secondary School course

was divided into Senior Certificate and Junior Certificate courses.

The familiar system of set work books was instituted; the examination in English was made up of three papers and a greater weighting of marks was given to Literature, Reading and Elocution.

The following extracts are taken from the Handbook for 1925 :

"Junior Certificate

(i)	Literature, Reading and Elocution	160 marks
(ii)	Composition	120 marks
(iii)	Grammar	120 marks
(i)	(a) The study of prescribed prose and verse - one book of each.	
	(b) The reading of two standard works selected from a short published list."	

In the instructions given for conducting oral examinations, the traditional pattern of Recitation has been retained, but the added injunction is that:

'pupils must be able to read and recite effectively passages from standard authors, suitable passages of poetry or prose being specially prepared for recitation ... the oral test is one in general knowledge and command of language ...'

The prescribed books for the 1925 and 1926 Junior Certificate courses are given as follows :

1925	" (a)	<u>Detailed Study</u>
		Dickens - <u>Tale of Two Cities</u>
		Arnold - <u>Sohrab and Rustum and Balder Dead</u> OR
		<u>The Way of Poetry (up to page 134)"</u>
1926	" (a)	<u>Detailed Study</u>
		Goldsmith - <u>The Deserted Village</u> and <u>The Traveller</u>
		Kingsley - <u>Hereward the Wake "</u>

During the same years (1925/1926) the Senior Certificate course closely followed the style of the Junior Certificate course. (It should be noted that, under (a) Detailed Study, a play by Shakespeare was selected as 'a book of verse');

Senior Certificate Prescribed Books 1925

(a) Detailed Study

- Shakespeare - A Midsummer Night's Dream  
Stevenson - Virginibus Puerisque OR Borrow

(b) General Reading

English Verse, Old and New

etc.

The year 1930 saw a significant change in the structure of the Senior Certificate literature syllabus. The new instruction detailed in the Secondary School Handbook for 1930/1931 reads as follows :

'The general study of six prescribed works. The books should be studied from a literary aspect. Annotation, etymological or otherwise, save where necessary for an intelligent appreciation of the text, should be avoided.

- (i) A drama of Shakespeare.
- (ii) A modern drama.
- (iii) Epic or lyric poetry.
- (iv) A novel.
- (v) Biography or Travel.
- (vi) Essays.

At least one book shall be from recent literature.'

The Senior Certificate syllabus retained its dual pattern of Detailed Study and General Reading until 1934, in which year, the examination paper shows a wide choice of questions from six prescribed books, (including a verse anthology).

Thus the pattern was set, which, except for minor modifications and slight provincial differences, has remained in use until the present day. Each examining board in South Africa offers today a wide range of 'network books' in its syllabus, and these are examined by means of a separate examination paper. As far as possible, the important literary forms receive equal emphasis, e.g., the novel, drama, essay or short story, poetry. The details of texts and examinations in poetry will be critically examined in later chapters.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PUPIL

'These, then, are the five basic principles on which all my later arguments will build: the extent of individual differences, the importance of "readiness", the principle of activity, the significance of play, and the principle of interest.'

F. Whitehead (1966).

#### 3.1

#### Conflicting Research Findings

A number of investigators have attempted to single out the responses of children to poetry. In a number of cases, this has been done without any special reference to a multiplicity of other factors such as the great range of individual differences, the variations in social and cultural backgrounds, including the attitudes of the home and peer group; the attitude of teachers; the texts and methods of teaching; the effect of examinations; and a child's earlier experiences of poetry.

It appears, from the sharply conflicting evidence available, that many studies have only a limited validity. Examples of contradictory findings are particularly noticeable with regard to the varying attitudes of boys and girls; of children of differing age ranges, or of boys and girls towards the subject matter of poetry. R. A. Pritchard (1935), in an examination of the relative popularity of secondary school subjects at various levels, noted that poetry made a powerful appeal to girls but was only infrequently mentioned in favourable terms by boys of the same age. On the other hand, D. Jordan (1937) investigated the attitudes of pupils to certain school subjects and found that poetry enjoyed little or no popularity except among younger boys. In a study of the attitudes of a particular age group to poetry, D. R. Martin (1947) concluded that both girls and boys aged between 13 and 14 years liked poetry equally well but that a sex difference appeared in their preferences - boys showed a greater relative preference for exciting narrative and supernatural poems, while girls seemed to prefer descriptive and love poems.

T. W. Sussams (1949) repeatedly points to the differences in attitude between boys and girls. He emphasises that girls show a more favourable attitude towards poetry. Yet, in a well documented study of the reading tastes of boys and girls, A. J. Jenkinson (1940) concluded that, 'The reading tastes of boys and girls are broadly similar .... Age is a weightier differentiator than sex.'

Even a study of the attitudes of a large group of boys and girls, such as that conducted by Pritchard (1935), cannot neutralise altogether the many objections to investigations of this nature. Pritchard describes some of these variables as 'popularity of the teacher', 'effectiveness of the teaching', and 'aptitude of the child.' It is, therefore, disturbing to note such a conclusion as the following :

"A decided aversion to poetry becomes evident amongst boys at about 15.

'I have never had any liking for poetry.'

'Some of the poetry is too high-brow.'

'Learning poetry is decidedly boring, useless and sentimental.' "

Pritchard (1935).

While these remarks may seem to apply to poetry in general (in fact it seems likely that a 'blanket' or transfer effect of prejudice is operating) the investigator fails to point out that '...never had any liking...' points towards an uncongenial past experience of poetry; that 'Some of the poetry is too high-brow' hints at unsuitable texts; that 'Learning poetry is decidedly boring...' reflects faulty teaching methods.

Balanced against the conflicting findings outlined above is the accumulating evidence that good 'teachers' of poetry, when allowed to follow their own judgment, consistently succeed in arousing the interest of children for poetry. Such teachers are not only sensitive to the needs and interests of children but, as teachers, they share the same pleasures in poetry as do their pupils. Over the years, a teacher who has the ability to make poetry a delight in the classroom may have

evolved some highly individual approaches. He is able to select the right poems at the right time to suit both boys and girls. By reading poems aloud, really well, he is able to bring out in each a special quality which reduces the need for explanation. Perhaps some of the most successful presentations of poetry in the classroom depend largely upon a special relationship established between class and teacher.

'Though hundreds of teachers are working with similar techniques every teacher will make his own peculiar use of them. Moreover, there can be no education of any use unless a relationship is set up between teacher and child, and it is this relationship which in the last analysis determines the quality of the teaching which results.'

M. Hoard (1949).

Much of the evidence in this thesis also strongly confirms a considered official opinion published nearly 50 years ago :

'The children indeed present no difficulty. They have a natural love ... for poetry. The difficulty is rather with the teachers. All delight in poetry may be easily killed by ill-judged selection of pieces ... destructive explanations, and ill-concealed indifference, or even distaste.'

The Teaching of English in England (1921).

It would appear, however, from the evidence in Chapter Four, that the main problem may not lie so much with the teacher as with the pressures acting against the best natural teaching. Even the most successful, gifted teachers, may be severely handicapped by unsuitable texts not of their own choosing and by examinations not of their own devising. Initially, success may also depend upon how effectively a teacher is able to dispel prejudices and fixed attitudes or is able to neutralise the effects of earlier, faulty teaching.

From the conflicting research evidence quoted above, it would seem more profitable to examine the changing and developing needs and attitudes of children. This would include the attention - or lack of it - paid to the five principles which head this chapter. Further still, some assessment would have to be made, of teaching, texts and examinations - each of which is dealt with as a separate chapter in this investigation.

3.2

### Some General Principles and Selected Evidence from Child Studies

In the previous chapter, an outline was given of the advances made to establish English literature - as a part of English studies - in the school curriculum. The educative value of literature was also noted - ranging from the beliefs of Plato and Aristotle to the powerful declaration by Matthew Arnold that, '... literature is in itself the greatest power available in education.'

Though expressed perhaps in a less passionate voice, the need for literature in schools today is still regarded as vital. As Frank Whitehead (1966) puts it :

'All children, whatever their ultimate role in life is to be, need experience of literature; they need the uniquely valuable organisation of experience which is embodied in literature, if their personalities are to expand and flower into a capacity for fullness of living.'

But what of the pupil? How far have studies shown that children are actively interested in poetry; that poetry is at all relevant to their needs and activities today? And, if such needs exist, how do they vary with the changing interests and attitudes shown by children as they grow up?

Most of the systematic observation of children in vogue some forty years ago has only, recently, found application in infant and junior schools. 'Secondary schools, on the other hand, are still slow to recognise the relevance of this work to their own problems.' Whitehead (1966).

Arnold Gesell published his detailed study The Mental Growth of the Pre-School Child in 1925. He was followed by such notable workers as Jean Piaget; (Language and Thought of the Child 1927); H.M. Johnson; (Children in the Nursery School 1928); Dr Susan Isaacs; (Intellectual Growth in Young Children 1930); (The Psychological Aspects of Child Development 1935) and Charlotte Bühler; (From Birth to Maturity 1935).

Detailed, systematic accounts began to accumulate recording the

growth, interests and activities of children in their everyday lives. These studies were basically scientific refinements of observations noted by Froebel (1782-1852) in his formulation of the kindergarten system, with its stress upon the natural development of the child through play, music, songs, stories, games and directed self-activity. By the turn of the century, further impetus was given to the movement which subordinated subject matter to the more important interests and activities of young children. In 1899, John Dewey established an experimental school, attached to the University of Chicago, for children from four to twelve years of age. He was the first educator to re-formulate Froebel's ideas and to apply them in the education of children up to the age of twelve.

'So far as these statements correctly represent Froebel's educational philosophy, the school should be regarded as its exponent. An attempt is being made to act upon them with as much faith and sincerity in their application to children of twelve as to children of four.'

Dewey (1956).

More important still, the principles emerging from Dewey's pragmatic view of education - that all school studies must keep pace with, and be based upon, a child's present experiences, interests and activities - were to have a powerful influence upon later, systematic studies of children.

The extent to which Dewey's views directed later educational thought may best be gauged by the following extracts. Although separated by thirty or more years the echoes are unmistakable.

- (a) 'The material is not presented as lessons, as something to be learned, but rather as something to be taken up into the child's own experience, through his own activities.'

Dewey: from The School and Society  
(first published 1900).

- (b) 'The curriculum is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored.'

H.M.S.O. The Primary School (1931).

- (c) 'The child is already intensely active, and the question of education is the question of taking hold of his activities, of giving them direction. Through direction, through organised use, they tend toward valuable results, instead of scattering or being left to merely impulsive expression.'

Dewey: ~~from~~ The School and Society  
(first published 1900).

- (d) 'The chief function of the educator ... lies in understanding the spontaneous interests and activities of the child at each successive age, so that the materials and opportunities and stimuli, that will bring the greatest fulfilment along all directions of his growth may be provided ...'

S. Isaacs (1935).

Many studies of child development - notably those by A. Gesell and S. Isaacs - were to be scientific explorations of what Dewey had termed the 'universal capital' upon which a child's growth is dependent. Dewey saw the natural interests of the child as :

- '... the interest in conversation, or communication; in inquiry or finding out things; in making things or construction; and in artistic expression.'

Dewey (1956).

Further examination of some of Dewey's principles will show that many of the later child studies were scientifically controlled extensions of the same ideas. And the five key principles listed by Whitehead (1966) - individual differences, 'readiness', activity, play and interest - are, in turn, refinements of the same beliefs. Furthermore, it will be seen that some of these basic ideas were emphasised by Plato and Aristotle.

Dewey believed that unless subject matter makes a vital connection with a child's needs, experiences and inner life, it remains - as subject matter - dead, formal and symbolic. External presentation, without such a vital connection, destroys motivation. Dewey uses the term 'psychologize' to describe subject matter which is 'viewed as an out-growth of present tendencies and activities ...' Dewey (1956) p. 25. Once the subject is thus made significant to a child's present interests and past experiences, it is automatically of interest and it ceases to be

inert, remote, externally presented material (cf. 'Any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development' when it is presented 'in terms of the child's way of viewing things'). J.S. Bruner (1961), (Italics mine.)

Moreover, Dewey felt that guidance should be seen as an encouragement of growth, activities and interests, and not as an attempt to curb, control or restrain. 'Guidance is not external imposition. It is freeing the life-process for its own most adequate fulfilment.' Dewey (1956) p. 17. This principle was to become one of the distinguishing features of the later work conducted by Dr Susan Isaacs. Throughout her observations she was to stress the need for free imaginative play combined with our passive help as educators. This was not intended to mean that teachers should shed all responsibility and leave children to fend for themselves. It was to mean, though, that we should curtail our direct interference and restraint.

Dewey also laid great stress on the need to recognise and encourage the natural vitality and activity shown by children. There was little need, he felt, to draw out such activity; it was difficult to put it down.

'The child is already intensively active, and the question of education is the question of taking hold of his activities, of giving them direction. Through direction, through organised use, they tend toward valuable results, instead of scattering or being left to merely impulsive impression. Dewey (1956) p. 36. (cf. Plato/ Republic VII: 518J.)

Again, Dewey was one of the first to emphasise that education takes place more effectively when children are involved in activity which has caught or fired their interest. Energy and motivation are unleashed through interest. A bored, listless child whose attention is not fully engaged by his 'work' is instantly transformed with energy when his interest is caught by some hobby or pursuit. And, as Dewey points out, interests indicate readiness.

'Interests are the signs and symptoms of growing powers . . . . Only through the continual and sympathetic observation of childhood's interests can the adult enter into the child's life

and see what it is ready for and upon what material it could work most readily and fruitfully.' Dewey (1941).

It only remained for later investigation to confirm the significance of play and the extent of individual differences in children at all stages of development. Child studies, and the work of such outstanding teachers as Caldwell Cook<sup>(1919)</sup>, Hughes Mearns (1958), Sybil Marshall (1966), have shown, for example, that play is not a time-wasting activity. It is central to growth. It is closely bound up with the principles of readiness, activity and interest. With younger children in particular, the educative value of satisfying, creative play is supremely important. In the words of Susan Isaacs (1935) :

'The most fertile means of education ... is the child's own spontaneous play.'

More important for the later, serious study of literature, is the need for a considerable amount of spontaneous, experimental play with language and expression. In her work with young children, H.M. Johnson (1928) p.132 points out :

'We do not feel that this is the time for cultivating literary appreciation. It is the time for extending the child's experience with language activity ... we wish our children to be able to play with language, to make it serve their ends as clay and paint serve them later.'

No less important are the creative results of play; for it is these early, tentative expressions that hold the promise of finer accomplishments to come. The play principle in the creative fashioning of one's own literature extends well into adolescence (see Chapter Seven) and this continuation should not be overlooked or rigidly controlled by adult interference.

'... whatever the child is attempting to do, an imperfect or unfinished product achieved by a child's own efforts is more valuable for his growth than the perfected performance which might result from adult direction and explanation.'  
H. M. Johnson (1928) p. 137.

Unfortunately, play as a means of education is too often regarded solely as a phenomenon of the primary school years. It should be more

✓ often remembered, as Frank Whitehead (1966) points out, that  
'Even at the secondary school stage the distinction between play and work (so obvious to adults) has little real meaning to the child.'

Systematic child studies have also shown the extreme range of differences which exist even among children of the same age. These differences may be noted in every possible sphere of development - general ability; interests and attitudes; motivations; personality and physical characteristics. A. Gesell (1940)(1946)(1956).

Moreover, each child will show a rate and pattern of development which is not quite that of any other child. This unique development is 'often markedly erratic, uneven or lopsided... neither constant nor predictable... characterised at one time by rapid spurts forward, at others by slow advance, or standstill, or even, in some respects, a slipping backward.' F. Whitehead (1966) p. 17.

Nevertheless, diversity exists within a ground-plan of uniformity. Growth tends to follow a general, ordered course and a sequential pattern of development. It is a mistake, though, to regard growth as a series of separate stages or of certain needs ending and new needs arising. Development is a continuum and the growing personality should be seen, at any one time, as a complex of needs - some persisting, some fading and new ones arising. The demands, for example, of six-~~or~~ or eight-year-olds for stories and for poems with strongly marked rhythms, repetition and rhyme may become less insistent among fifteen-year-olds. This older group, however, may respond very positively - as an essential part of their growth - to free verse or meditative expression or to contemporary poetry or to texts which are concerned with conflict or violence. This does not mean that the younger group cannot appreciate such qualities or ideas; nor does it mean that fifteen-year-olds have ceased to gain pleasure from rhyming narratives. The needs of either age group will be largely dictated by the degree of 'unreadiness in development' on the one hand and, on the other hand, by the degree of 'readiness to move on.'

✓ Arnold Gesell (1940)(1943)(1946)(1956), in his detailed studies of many thousands of children, points out that nearly all infants character-

istically show an interest in the elements of poetry at an astonishingly early age. Not only are simple story poems enjoyed by children of three years and under, but there is a marked response to all the elements of poetry - rhythm, repetition, song, rhyme, story, music, movement and dance.

Gesell (1940) reports that, at the age of 18 months, infants begin to hum syllables, respond rhythmically to music and listen with pleasure to short rhymes. Appreciation at this stage precedes creative expression.

'Appreciation of aesthetic experiences is established well before artistic expression. By the time the child is 18 months old he has been responding to music, pictures and rhymes for many months but his creative experiences are still very limited, with the exception of rhythmic expression and sound play which may come in the first year of life.' Gesell (1940).

With the passing months the profile becomes increasingly interesting. At 24 months rhythmical movement is more pronounced and is often associated with tapping, rocking and singing. There is a more marked interest in rhymes and spoken language is frequently rhythmic and repetitive. The child now begins to attend with great interest to 'short, simple stories with repetition and familiar subjects', Gesell (1940). A two-year-old delights in the sound of words and spontaneously repeats nursery rhymes with an adult. At 30 months there is a rapid increase in vocabulary, and spontaneous speech continues to show rhythm and repetition. Long monologues, showing a fluent use of language, are common. Gesell (1946) also notes that a ritualistic pattern now occurs at this early age - children love to hear poems or stories over and over again.

As the child develops there is no evidence of a fading interest in the elements of poetry. At the age of 4 years most children show a great interest in 'longer stories, poems and nonsense rhymes'. Gesell (1946). Five-year-olds love to be read to; most are enthralled by stories and poems told over and over again - especially those poems with animal subjects. It is at this stage, according to Gesell (1946), that 'there is a

is a burst of activity in the language arts.' Writing lags well behind speech, listening and reading. At the same time, Gesell (1940) notes that, in the first five years of life, 'individual differences are perhaps more marked in aesthetic expression than in any other field of behaviour.'

By the age of seven a stronger interest emerges in 'fairy tales, myths and legends, poetry'. Gesell (1946). A considerable passion for reading and browsing in libraries usually develops at this stage and the great interest in books, reading, listening to stories and poems continues until it reaches a peak at the age of nine.

These interests continue well into adolescence. According to Gesell (1956) ten- and twelve-year-olds, in spite of great individual variations, continue to show a marked interest in reading and literature. Eleven-year-olds typically take great pleasure in 'making up poems, plays, imaginative games' - Gesell (1956) - while twelve-year-olds show interest in creative writing. Twelve-year-olds also begin to show signs of becoming more critical and discriminating. At thirteen, 'there is a general increase of reading interest and amount of reading,' including 'an additional amount of re-reading for pleasure . . . . We should probably encourage such re-reading and a habit of contemplative reading.' Gesell (1956).

An interest in literature continues very strongly up to the age of 16. According to Gesell (1956), of all the media, 'Books . . . remain the most fundamental, the most flexible, and the most diversified', and, 'since such reading of prose and poetry combines these fundamental advantages most uniquely, books become a touchstone for evaluating the merits of competing and supplementary media.'

There is considerable evidence from other sources that children, from an early age until at least early adolescence, show an unspoilt liking for poetry. In a well documented study, H.M. Johnson (1928) points out that the early speech patterns of children frequently allow a rhythmic form in the balance and beat of the language; phrases are very often thrown backwards and forwards in antiphonal fashion while rhythmic repetition is almost universal. Language is a vital part of creative play

very closely bound with music, chanting, repetition, enumeration and movement. Collectively, these give intense pleasure and satisfaction to young children.

'It (the play element of language) makes more emphatic an experience as it is in progress or recalls it with its accompanying sensations. It represents the elements of which poetry and literature are composed. I believe that children can all share in the joys of creation in all sorts of arts if they are given a play approach to the world about them. Adult standards are entirely out of place in judging children's output.'

H.M. Johnson (1928) p. 129.

Similar observations are made by Dr Susan Isaacs (1924-1927) during her intensive studies of children aged 2.8 to 10.5 years at the Malting House School, Cambridge. Throughout this age range children showed a marked and consistent enjoyment of poems, stories, fairy tales, music, drama and movement. Once again, dramatic expression in the form of play is a notable feature.

'The children had a very strong impulse to the dramatic expression of all their experiences - whether stories or verse, nursery rhymes, or things that really happened.'

S. Isaacs (1930).

Moreover, in recent years a number of writers - H. Mearns (1958), M. Hourd and G. Cooper (1959), J. Britton (1963), S. Marshall (1966) - have shown convincingly that children of all ages - both boys and girls - take the greatest delight in writing poetry from an astonishingly early age; and that this urge to write in verse, for pleasure, is complementary to the enjoyment derived from reading and listening to poetry. (See also Chapter Seven.)

### The Principle of 'Readiness' and the Need for a Rhythm in Education

From the evidence to be led in this investigation, there is a great need in the teaching of English today to stress a neglected principle in education. This is the principle of a rhythm in education or a 'readiness' on the part of the child to progress naturally according to his

developing abilities and interests. This concept will be seen as profoundly important in the teaching of English literature. As noted earlier in this chapter the principle of 'readiness' is one of five upon which Frank Whitehead (1966) bases all his arguments for a revised attitude towards English studies. In his own words it would seem that 'readiness' may be regarded as the most significant - and the most neglected - of the five principles named :

"...it remains true that for any individual child there comes a particular time when one of his maturing abilities is 'ready' to move on to the next stage in its development; and the importance of this 'readiness' is perhaps the most fundamental contribution which child study has yet made to education (*italics mine*). There is a good deal of evidence to show that no advantage is gained in the long run by pressing the child on to the next stage before he is ready for it. It seems, in fact, that such premature 'forcing' is one of the most prevalent causes of backwardness and apathy later on."

Frank Whitehead (1966) pp. 18-19.

The idea of a 'rhythm in education' has a long and complex history; it finds implicit mention in Plato (Republic; VII:534, 536, 537); it can be seen in the development of scientific knowledge from early wonder and speculation culminating in scientific laws. It is implicit in the experimental work of educators such as Froebel, Montessori and Dewey. 'If ... we identify ourselves with the real instincts and needs of childhood ... the discipline and information and culture of adult life shall all come in their due season.' Dewey (1956).

But perhaps the most persuasive formulation was that put forward by Professor A. N. Whitehead some fifty years ago. He envisaged three broad stages of learning and intellectual growth which he termed stages of 'romance', 'precision' and 'generalisation'. This growth should not be thought of as a linear progression but as cyclic or periodic. Nor are the stages distinctly divided. They are comparable to zones merging with each other. Whitehead urged that all education, whether as a whole or as separate subjects or as particular topics within a subject, should unfold according to this rhythm. The period of romance is typified by wonder, excitement and delight deriving from exploration and discovery. In time this leads naturally towards a readiness to analyse the subject,

to formulate ideas and to obtain precise knowledge. Finally, to complete the cycle, the mature stage of generalisation offers 'a return to romanticism with added advantage of classified ideas and relevant technique'. A. N. Whitehead (1962) p. 30.

Professor Whitehead points to the danger of a premature imposition of precise studies, in any subject, before the initial phase of excitement, wonder and curiosity has reached a point where the child is ready for analytical study.

'... a block in the assimilation of ideas inevitably arises when a discipline of precision is imposed before a stage of romance has run its course in the growing mind.'

A. N. Whitehead (1962) p. 52.

A little earlier in his address, Professor Whitehead in describing The Romance of Adolescence sums up this first cycle as follows :

'Ideas, facts, relationships, stories, histories, possibilities, artistry in words, in sounds, in form and in colour, crowd into the child's life, stir his feelings, excite his appreciation, and incite his impulses to kindred activities. It is a saddening thought that on this golden age there falls so often the shadow of the crammer.'

A. N. Whitehead (1962) p. 34.

Before considering the importance to English studies of a rhythm in education and the 'readiness' of the child to advance, an interesting theory put forward by J. S. Byrner (1961) should be examined. His bold hypothesis is that 'any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development.' Bruner (1961) p. 33. He suggests that the way in which this can be achieved is to represent the structure of a subject 'in terms of the child's way of viewing things', and that '... it is futile to attempt this by presenting formal explanations based on a logic that is distant from the child's manner of thinking and sterile in its implications for him.' (p. 38).

Bruner is mostly concerned with the early presentation of scientific and mathematical concepts, but he asks whether a comparable approach will not hold good for the teaching of literature. Is it not possible, for example, to teach literary forms

"... by presenting the child with the first part of a story and having him complete it in the form of a comedy, a tragedy, or a farce - without ever using such words? When, for example, does the idea of "historical trend" develop and what are its precursors in the child? How does one make a child aware of literary style?"

Bruner (1961) pp. 46-47.

If there is any truth in Bruner's novel argument - he admits that much research needs to be done - it follows that we do not have to wait for the onset of 'readiness'. All that is needed is a way of presenting almost any subject or topic 'in terms of the child's way of viewing things.' In fact, 'readiness' becomes an ever-present potential.

A similar assertion, made by Dewey, has already been noted. In calling for the 'psychologising' of subject matter, he believed that the school curriculum of his day fell between two stools: either it was composed of formal, symbolic subjects 'externally presented', each failing to arouse interest, or the subjects in the curriculum succumbed to 'a general reduction to a lower intellectual level' so that they could more easily be 'presented as stuff only for "memory".' Dewey (1956) pp. 22-25.

How could Bruner's hypothesis influence the teaching of literature in schools?

✓ Bruner advocates that a curriculum 'ought to be built around the great issues, principles, and values that a society deems worthy of the continual concern of its members.' Bruner (1961) p. 52. He cites literature as one of these values. He asks that if it is thought desirable to kindle, in children, 'an awareness of the meaning of human tragedy and a sense of compassion for it, is it not possible at the earliest appropriate age to teach literature of tragedy in a manner that illuminates but does not threaten?' Bruner suggests that this might be achieved through myths, children's classics and films. The vital question, he feels, is 'to know how the child will translate whatever we present to him into his own subjective terms.' (cf. Dewey). Bruner recommends that a skilful teacher should not wait upon research findings

but should go ahead and 'experiment by attempting to teach what seems to be intuitively right for children, correcting as he goes.'

Bruner concludes his remarks on the teaching of literature with the following assertion :

'In time, one goes beyond to more complex versions of the same kind of literature or simply revisits some of the same books used earlier. What matters is that later teaching build upon earlier reactions to literature; that it seek to create an ever more explicit and mature understanding of the literature of tragedy. Any of the great literary forms can be handled in the same way, or any of the great themes - be it the form of comedy, or the theme of identity, personal loyalty or what not.'

Bruner (1961) p. 53. (Italics mine.)

Bruner is, in fact, postulating a 'rhythm of education'. Quite clearly, he sees that the natural order of growth is from simplicity and delight towards a more 'explicit and mature understanding' of literature. The limited scope, however, of his hypothesis is obvious. His contention is that literary themes, concepts or forms may be made meaningful and interesting even to very young children. Any child, he believes, would be able to grasp, for example, the concept of tragedy. But Bruner does not offer a method by which a young child 'at any stage of development' may be moved by a specific literary text such as Hamlet.

It is one thing for a ten-year-old to grasp the idea of death and sorrow; it is quite another matter to interest him in Milton's Lycidas or to get him to work out that it is a pastoral elegy by 'presenting the child with the first part and having him complete it.'

One of the main contentions in this thesis is that the principles of 'readiness' and of a 'rhythm in education' are largely ignored in English studies. In the teaching of literature - poetry in particular - this neglect is sharply evident in two directions :

- (i) Texts. It will become clear from ensuing chapters that, in many instances, the texts presented to children in schools are ill-chosen, difficult, too mature and intellectually demanding and largely unrelated to children's development, natural interests and accumulated experience of life. This error in selection is

best described by the argument put forward by T. S. Eliot (1933) and cited in Chapter Two '... the deliberate attempt to grapple with poetry which is not naturally congenial ... should be a very mature activity indeed ...'

- (ii) Analysis and Criticism. It will also be seen that a marked distaste for poetry is caused by the premature imposition of 'precision' and from a confusion of 'analytical techniques' often referred to under the spurious description of Critical Appreciation.

In these matters, the views of prominent writers pleading for texts that 'children's hearts and minds can lay hold of' and for an extension of the period of romance, have already been noted in Chapter Two. See Matthew Arnold (1880), T. S. Eliot (1933), Sir Richard Livingstone (1941), A. F. Watts (1944), L. A. G. Strong (1946), P. Gurrey (1958).

But perhaps one of the most convincing arguments for a rhythm in English studies and for the vital interdependence of language and literature is put forward by W. H. Mittens (1959) in an essay which pleads for an application of A. N. Whitehead's 'rhythm of education' to the teaching of English in schools.

'I would stress that language and literature are parts of the same spectrum. English is one subject, not two, whatever the examination and timetable arrangements may suggest. The difference between language and literature lessons is a difference of angle and tactics. Whereas in the language lesson the emphasis is commonly on initiation rather than response, on practice and instruction rather than experience, literature is primarily a matter of enjoyment. But enjoyment is inseparable from understanding, discrimination and - at a due stage of maturity - criticism. Stylistics, properly understood, occupies an intermediate position on the spectrum. It offers common ground for creative composition by the young writer on the one hand and critical analysis of the work of the established writer on the other. As Professor Quirk puts it, "the teaching of language needs literature amongst its prime material" and "literature is best studied when the study of language is to hand as an ancillary."

A more or less complete merging of the two areas is appropriate to senior secondary school pupils, but at earlier stages the interaction will naturally be less explicit. There the main objective is to encourage the appreciation rather than the analysis of literature. This appreciation will include, one hopes, intuitive response to the patterns of language employed, and this response will be made increasingly explicit as the capacity for criticism emerges. But there is an obvious danger of rushing the process, of making premature demands for evaluation and analysis. Robert Frost's well-known comment that "Poetry begins in delight and ends in wisdom" is applicable to literature in general, and teachers forgo or shorten the stage of delight at their peril.

These observations by W. H. Mittens have important implications not only for the teaching of poetry but for the rest of the English curriculum as well.

It was stressed in the first two chapters of this thesis that what really matters most is the experience of literature; that enjoyment of the whole poem comes first and that intellectual analysis and explanation is to be avoided, or at least postponed until children are ready for such inquiries. And this <sup>is</sup> right, for as Mittens points out, '... literature is primarily a matter of enjoyment'. But equally, he goes on to add, 'enjoyment is inseparable from understanding, discrimination and - at a due stage of maturity - criticism.'

There is little doubt that children are excited by apprehending the right words and rhythms; by sensing - and hearing - that words are in their right patterns. And this pleasure in language is inseparable from the pleasure gained from the humanising experience of literature. When Coleridge spoke of poetry as 'the best words in the best order' he was referring to memorable and pleasing 'linguistic shape'. Much of the evidence, too, in Chapter Seven, shows that when children themselves become writers in verse they derive great pleasure from selecting, manipulating or recognising pleasing structures and patterns.

As W. H. Mittens says, 'language and literature are parts of the same spectrum', and this points to a great need in our schools for the gradual introduction and development of a more precise linguistic awareness. This is not to suggest that a rigid division between language

and literature studies must be promoted. The essential difference between the two is one of 'angle and tactics', or as Professor Quirk so aptly states '... language needs literature ...' and 'literature is best studied when the study of language is to hand as an ancillary.' Understanding and appreciation go hand in hand; there is no profit, only loss, <sup>in</sup> ~~from~~ treating either of these activities as separate 'exercises'. Each includes the other.

At what stage, approximately, in the child's development should an explicit, critical awareness be encouraged in such matters as sentence structure, lexicon and stylistics? Should these studies precede or emerge from the study of literature or are they to some extent autonomous?

It would seem, at least in the primary school stages, that the main task of the English teacher is not to implant new sets of skills and techniques, for, in each of the main modes of using the mother-tongue (listening, speaking, reading and writing) the young child has already acquired and continues to acquire, a considerable skill outside the English lesson. Whitehead (1966).

'... the true task of English teaching is to help children to refine, polish, raise to a higher level of sensitivity, effectiveness and precision a language which they already possess in a highly developed form.'

F. Whitehead (1966) p. 16.

And it is probably desirable - even necessary - at this early stage to separate reading, or listening to, literature as an experience; and the teaching of reading as a skill. This is the argument offered by W. H. Mittens when he speaks of the emphasis in a language lesson upon '... initiation rather than response, on practice and instruction rather than experience ...'

The separation, at this early primary school level, of these two distinct activities, is important. Children will only be encouraged to read for themselves after they have enjoyed something which is read to them. This should be a fundamental first aim in the teaching of literature, which, if neglected, may lead to a serious disruption of enjoyment extending

into the senior school, and beyond.

'Progress in the technique of reading, in the case of the young beginner, is organized independently of the progress in literature. At school the child of six or seven is advancing step by step through reading primers which are scientifically designed and make no pretensions in the sphere of literature. At home, in the evenings, another kind of progress in English is being made as the child is read to and, later, reads for himself. . . . It is absolutely imperative that we should see our work as a continuation of the progress through literature which begins with the child's delight in The Three Bears or Jack the Giant Killer. Unless we are nourishing and developing this sheer delight in imaginative story and situation, we are not fulfilling our duty as teachers of English literature. We may be doing lots of other things successfully and efficiently - improving our pupils' powers of comprehension and expression, developing their understanding of language and meaning - but in the absence of this nourishment of delight in books, we are failing to teach literature.'

H. Blamires (1951).

It will be seen that H. Blamires is arguing along the same lines as W. H. Mittens. As the child progresses towards the senior school these two activities - reading literature for the delight of the experience and the development of the skills of understanding language, meaning and structure - must necessarily converge to form 'A more or less complete merging of the two areas.' Yet I believe that it may be unwise to merge the two areas immediately upon entry into the senior school. Certainly, with the less literate child it would be judicious to postpone the explicit interaction between literature and language until well into the middle school (Standard 3). Perhaps our wisest aim in the teaching of literature is to extend, for as long as possible, the early delight of childhood when literature is an exciting activity transacted between a parent and child. Our aim throughout the school - and indeed beyond the school years - should be to maintain this spirit of delight while extending the range of literature and the gradual need for discrimination and criticism. For it is only when such a development matches and satisfies a young person's widening experience and maturity that the true development of taste may begin. Consequently, there must be times, even at the most senior levels, when the unanalytical enjoyment of literature is taking place. And conversely there should be times when the precise, analytical

study of literature offers a different, but equally important, kind of enjoyment. The need for these two different-yet related-approaches is once again summed up well by H. Blamires (1951) when he says :

'There must be English lessons during which the atmosphere of the classroom is what it is during a good mathematics lesson: technicalities of grammar, sentence structure, scansion and verse-form are being explained and grappled with. These lessons are pervaded by an atmosphere of calculated efficiency. The joy of the pupils in such lessons springs from the sense of achievement and mastery. But there must also be English lessons of an utterly different kind, during which the atmosphere of the classroom is what it is during a good lesson in musical appreciation. This is the atmosphere of the concert-hall and theatre. There is reading, silent or vocal; there is dramatic tension, emotion and imaginative sensitivity. The pupils are engaged in an aesthetic experience: their joy in such lessons springs from individual or common absorption in an artist's vision. The lesson will be a performance rather than an investigation or a progress in instruction.'

This view endorses the rhythm in English studies suggested by W.H. Mitten; and, of course, the 'individual or common absorption in an artist's vision' corresponds to A.N. Whitehead's 'stage of romance' while '... an atmosphere of calculated efficiency' reflects the 'stage of precision'.

Nevertheless, there is a danger inherent in this situation. It should be recognised that once literature and language studies have merged, at an appropriate stage, they must remain merged as 'parts of the same spectrum'. Literary 'experience', comprehension, practical communication, formal linguistics, creative writing and literary appreciation and criticism together make up English studies. The temptation to isolate all these elements should be strongly resisted. None of them can properly exist, on their own, in a falsely splendid isolation. Although in South Africa, unlike Britain, we have been spared the unfortunate division between Language and Literature and consequently "the unnatural separation of 'comprehension' from 'appreciation' ...", Gardner (1955), there is nevertheless an implicit wedge between language and literature.

Firstly, there are those who believe literature should never be examined or closely analysed. This mistaken view fails to take into

account that sound critical judgment and discrimination does not merely involve a taking apart. Evaluation of the parts leads naturally towards a final synthesis and the discovery through analysis results in a more valid judgment than that gained from merely distant admiration. Though not prevalent, the view 'Leave literature alone' was expressed by a number of older teachers in the questionnaire Attitudes to Poetry (see Chapter Four). And those who hold this view also believe that literature and language are distinctly apart; that to develop the skills of criticism in order to appraise literature is to ignore Wordsworth's <sup>charm</sup> ~~plea~~:

'We murder to dissect.'

The second cause is more serious and widespread. Just at that time in the study of language and literature when there should be 'a more or less merging of the two areas' the shadow of the external examination looms large. It will be seen in Chapter Six that there is an inevitable tendency in poetry examinations to examine certain elements and standardised mechanical skills in isolation from the total experience of the poem. Because large scale external examinations must fulfil an efficient predictive function, an excessive weighting is given to 'those tasks which examiners can agree about among themselves and can mark with self-consistency'. F. Whitehead (1966). Consequently, the really important fields which are usually difficult to assess with a high degree of reliability 'may be played down, or even (as in the case of spoken English and drama) left out altogether.' F. Whitehead (1966).

No examination should be allowed to promote bad teaching; yet there is little doubt that the majority of teachers, in preparing pupils for an external examination, are obliged to play down or even ignore the approaches to literature which really matter. The quest for mass reliability (which usually means markable facts or instantly recognisable 'right', 'wrong' answers) allows little room for the personal intuitive response. External examinations purporting to 'examine literature' continue to rely heavily upon cliche analysis, parsing, paraphrasing, antonym-synonym exercises, hunts for devices and the recognition - and isolating - of figures of speech for purposes of labelling and definition.

These tasks - whatever their value may be - can certainly be relied upon to minimize inconsistent marking. But it should be realised that these activities have no connection with the appreciation of literature and are positively harmful to literature as an experience. The practice, in examinations, of using a poem, or parts of a poem, for clause analysis (See Chapter Six) is indefensible and is completely foreign and unrelated to literature. Is it any wonder that literature and language are regarded as being separate? An exercise such as paraphrasing is difficult to justify in spite of its popularity amongst a number of teachers (See Chapter Four). As one teacher puts it, 'paraphrasing forces a poem to yield up its meaning.' But there must be something radically wrong somewhere if a poem is 'forced' to yield anything by being changed into other terms. It is not surprising that L.A.G. Strong (1946) exclaimed :

'Certain public examinations, to our shame, still ask candidates to paraphrase pieces of poetry.'

Examiners - for the reasons given above - are unlikely to discontinue the use of clause analysis, parsing and paraphrasing. But why use literary texts? For such purposes there is an inexhaustible supply of suitable material - common speech and writing, journalism and the world of advertising.

There is, certainly, a need for some linguistic evaluation of literature. But this is an evaluation of a different kind perhaps only properly begun at the University level. It is doubtful whether such a sophisticated examination of literary language has a place in English studies in schools - even at the level of post-Matriculation.

#### Evidence from Pupils

It is clear, from surveys of attitudes to poetry of boys and girls, that four main areas of weakness exist in the teaching of poetry in senior schools. Collectively, these weaknesses lend strong support to the arguments set out in this chapter.

- (i) Texts which may have given children some pleasure at an earlier, appropriate age are being re-presented too frequently in the senior school without due regard to the changing interests and advancing maturity of adolescent boys and girls.
- (ii) In the middle and upper school, texts are given to boys and girls which are clearly too difficult and mature, in thought and language, for the various age groups; too remote from the natural interests and tastes of the majority of children and requiring too much detailed explanation and annotation.
- (iii) For many boys and girls the stage of delight in poetry is cut short by methods of teaching and an examination system which make 'premature demands for evaluation and analysis'. It would even appear that many children, for various reasons, have never experienced a stage of delight .
- (iv) The process of evaluation and analysis appears to be wrongly conducted as a series of separate activities largely unrelated to the total significance of the poem and not contributing to the appreciation of poetry. Consequently, (and especially with inappropriate texts) it is clear that a great number of boys and girls fail to see the connection between the experience of literature and the need for critical techniques to explore, understand and evaluate the texts.

Surveys were conducted during the course of this investigation at five South African schools and at one British school to assess the attitudes of children towards poetry. The preferences, dislikes, opinions and attitudes of 1533 boys and girls were noted. The ages of these respondents ranged between 12 years (Form I/Standard VI) and 19.4 years (Form VI/Post Matriculation). Both private and state schools were selected. The former were preparing pupils for the Joint Matriculation Board examinations while the latter were responsible to the Cape Education Department. The British school selected was the Perse School for Boys, at Cambridge, a Direct Grant Grammar School.

At all these schools the responses were to printed questionnaires and, in some instances, additional information was derived from personal interviews. Altogether 21 teachers were directly responsible for the teaching of English to the classes answering the questions.

Detailed evidence from each school is reflected in the appended tables. (See Tables 1 - 20.)

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It will be convenient to survey the responses under six headings :

- (i) Attitudes towards 14 Set Poems of Matriculation Classes at Three State Schools.
- (ii) Attitudes Towards Poetry of 466 Pupils at a Private School for Boys.
- (iii) Attitudes Towards Poetry of 139 Pupils at a Private School for Girls.
- (iv) Attitudes Towards Poetry of a Group of Junior Certificate Boys at a State School.
- (v) Some Attitudes Towards Poetry of 167 Boys at the Perse School, Cambridge, England.
- (vi) Attitudes Towards Poetry of a Large Junior Certificate Group at a State School for Boys before and during an Experiment in Creative Verse Writing. (See Chapter Seven.)

.....

- (i) Attitudes Towards 14 Set Poems of Matriculation Classes at Three State Schools (Tables 1-4.)

This group of 100 boys and 54 girls <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ asked to rate 14 set poems according to a six point scale. Pupils were invited to make a comment after rating each poem.

Although some of these ratings may reflect a particular

teacher's attitude - for example, the teacher at School A 'detested' Browning's My Last Duchess - the overall response clearly reveals the popularity, amongst boys and girls, of Eliot's Journey of the Magi; Browning's My Last Duchess and Campbell's The Zulu Girl. The most unpopular <sup>poems</sup> were those by Wordsworth and MacNeice - each with 55 ratings of 'dislike' - followed by Tennyson's The Lotus-Eaters and Owen's Strange Meeting - each with 45 mentions of 'dislike'. There are no startling differences in attitude between girls and boys except that girls tended to favour, heavily, the response I Rather Like (259 responses from a group of 54 girls).

Of the hundreds of comments made, the following were among the most frequent :

Poems Most Enjoyed

'Interesting', 'appealing' (mentioned 128 times), 'Easy to understand' (mentioned 97 times), 'Modern' or 'Not old-fashioned' (mentioned 88 times). Other frequent comments were: ✓ 'real', 'sincere', 'does not need analysing', 'different', 'full of feeling'.

Poems Least Enjoyed

'Too difficult' or 'difficult to understand' (mentioned 166 times), 'Boring', 'dull' or 'monotonous' (mentioned 109 times), 'Too long' (mentioned 73 times), 'Needs too much explanation' (mentioned 47 times), 'Too old-fashioned' (mentioned 31 times).

There is a remarkably close correlation between the three most popular poems listed above and the poems, listed by teachers, as 'most enjoyed by matriculation pupils'. (See Chapter Four, Question 4b.)

(ii) Attitudes Towards Poetry of 466 Pupils at a Private School for Boys  
(Tables 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, pp. 287-307.)

A detailed analysis of this survey is given in the appended tables but the following predominant attitudes are worth noting :

Poems Most Enjoyed by Matriculation Pupils N = 191

Generally, the poems most enjoyed were 'modern' - in the sense that they were written during this century. Wilfred Owen's Dulce et Decorum Est received a very high rating (46 mentions) from the senior group of 86 boys. In junior matriculation classes four poems by D.H. Lawrence were variously mentioned 39 times. At the same time, poems of the tradition such as Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard and Coleridge's The Ancient Mariner received high ratings. Some long poems were highly rated. Many comments indicated that length is not a serious objection provided there is clear meaning, interest, movement and story.

'The story, rhythm and mystery of The Ancient Mariner are all so good I don't worry about how long it is.'

'The poem by Mr Lewis Day (sic) on the flight to Australia is very long but it's an exciting story, easy to follow and full of good language like "the dumb engine spoke".'

Among the most frequent reasons given for poems most enjoyed were the following : 'Easy to understand' (34 mentions), 'modern', 'real' or 'realistic', 'stimulating', 'without puzzling meanings', 'not difficult', 'does not require explanations.'

Poems Least Enjoyed

Here, as with the rating at three state schools, the poem least enjoyed was Wordsworth's Ode on Intimations of Immortality (42 mentions). Also frequently mentioned among the least enjoyed poems were Arnold: The Forsaken Merman; Rossetti: The Blessed Damozel; Swinburne: The Garden of Proserpine. These were variously listed 79 times. Among the most frequent comments were the following ; 'Difficult to understand' (over 50 mentions), 'needs too much explanation' (28 mentions), 'boring', 'old-fashioned', 'sentimental', 'too difficult for exams', 'soppy', 'abstract', 'needs too much analysis'. W.W. Gibson's Flannan Isle was disliked by 23 boys, Many described this poem as 'childish', 'over-dramatic',

'far-fetched', 'all right for juniors'. Seven boys mentioned that they had 'done' this poem in the primary school.

106 boys felt that they did just the right amount of poetry at school, while 39 felt that more poetry should be read at school.

.....

Poems Most Enjoyed in the Middle School (Standards 7 and 8)

N = 196

A powerful interest was shown by Standard Seven pupils in poems concerned with living creatures. The titles, alone, of the highest-rated poems indicate this interest (Snake, Mallard, The Eagle, Bat, Mountain Lion). Many comments reflected a high interest in 'wild life', 'animals' or 'birds'. The third most popular poem amongst Standard Eight pupils was Guy Butler's Cape Coloured Batman.

Longer narrative poems and traditional ballads were the popular choices of over 40 boys. The most popular text amongst Standard Eight boys was a parody of Browning's How They Brought the Good News from Aix to Ghent.

Among the most frequent reasons given for the enjoyment of these poems were: 'Easy to understand' (mentioned over 20 times), 'modern', 'interesting', a 'relief' or 'relax<sup>at</sup>ion' (mentioned 11 times), 'good story', deals with 'wild life', 'different', 'does not need explanation', 'not difficult'.

✓ | 'I enjoyed these poems because there was no need to analyse them and find out what was happening by going into detail.'

Poems Least Enjoyed

It was most noticeable, <sup>in</sup> by matching, in each case, the choice and the comment made, that the poems least enjoyed fell into one or more of the following categories :

(a) Poems unsuited to the present interests and maturity of

the group. Most adverse comments were directed at the following texts :

W. Wordsworth: The Daffodils, A. Tennyson: The Lady of Shalott, J. Clare: Little Trotty Wagtail, H. Monroe: Milk for the Cat, M. Armstrong: Miss Thompson Goes Shopping.

(b) Poems which had been read too often or which were read too frequently in the Primary School. Particular reference was made to The Lady of Shalott, The Daffodils, The Pied Piper of Hamelin and The Jackdaw of Rheims.

(c) Poems which are 'too difficult' or 'complicated', or which needed 'too much explanation'. Most frequent reference was made to the following three poems :

F. T. Prince: Soldiers Bathing (13 mentions), J. Keats: Ode to Autumn, R. Browning: Prospice, W. Wordsworth: Westminster Bridge.

(d) Poems 'too boring' (38 mentions), without any 'story' or with a 'stupid story', 'old-fashioned', 'too long', 'flowery' or 'fairy-like'. Poems particularly mentioned were :

A. Tennyson: The Lady of Shalott, W. Wordsworth: The Daffodils, A. Tennyson: The Lotus-Eaters.

Only 29 boys felt that less poetry should be done at school. 169 boys said that they had enjoyed poetry at some time in their lives, while 19 stated that they had never enjoyed poetry. The majority (91) said they <sup>had</sup> most enjoyed poetry within the last year or two. A large number (53) selected the response: 'I have never really liked or disliked poetry.'

.....

Poems Most Enjoyed in the Lower School (Standard VI) N = 74

The poems selected as 'most enjoyed' were all narrative poems with a marked rhythm, a strong story interest, clear

meaning, clearly recognisable mood and a rhetorical or rousing spirit. The Highwayman and Macavity: The Mystery Cat were selected at least three times as often as any other texts.

The group made fewer comments than boys in the middle and upper school. The following remarks were among the most frequent. 'Tells a good story' (17 mentions), 'exciting', 'well written', 'easy to follow', 'has a good rhythm', 'does not need explaining'.

'I like these exciting story poems they make me relax and listen and our teacher reads them well and the time flies away.'

#### Poems Least Enjoyed

Tennyson's The Lady of Shalott<sup>t</sup> was the least enjoyed poem. Most comments were directed at this poem and variously drew attention to its length, its lack of excitement and interest, its 'old-fashioned' qualities and the fact that it was 'done too often' in the Junior School and was therefore 'boring.'

'I don't<sup>like</sup> long difficult poems of the olden days.'

70 out of 74 boys felt that they did just the right amount of poetry at school or that they would prefer to do more. A large number of boys stated that they<sup>had</sup> most enjoyed poetry within the last year or two.

.....

The figures reflected by Table 10 are of some interest. At all levels, comparatively few boys frequently read, write or memorize poetry for pleasure. Yet large numbers of boys indicated that they sometimes read poetry for pleasure (290 boys), that they sometimes memorize poetry for pleasure (246 boys)<sup>\*</sup>. This points to a widespread latent interest in these three activities, at a school where no out-of-the-ordinary encouragement is given.

<sup>\*</sup> and that they sometimes write poetry for pleasure (168 boys).

.....

(iii) Attitudes Towards Poetry of 139 Pupils at a Private School for Girls (Tables 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. pp. 308 - 318.)

A number of striking similarities in attitudes towards poetry, appeared between the boys at School D and the girls at School E.

The following indications are worth noting :

- (a) There appears to be no great differences in taste between the boys and girls, for the kind of poems most enjoyed.
- (b) A very close correlation exists between the boys and the girls for the kind of poems least enjoyed.
- (c) Girls and boys supplied almost identical reasons for disliking certain poems.
- (d) The majority of girls and boys stated that they most enjoyed poetry within the last year or two.
- (e) At both schools, girls and boys in the middle school showed a marked preference for poems dealing with living creatures.
- (f) The number of boys and the number of girls who read, write or memorize poetry for pleasure is remarkably similar.

One noticeable difference emerged. Unlike the boys, most girls in the upper school tended to stress feelings or description in the poems preferred.

'The poems are full of feeling', 'the descriptions are vivid', 'the poems are moving', 'this poem deals with suffering,' 'the poem deals with longing.'

Some Points of Interest

After Apple-Picking by Robert Frost was selected as the poem most enjoyed by 17 girls in a Standard IX class of 42 girls. This text - not prescribed in the syllabus - was read aloud to this class by a teacher who described it to me as 'one of my particular favourites.'

Flannan Isle by W. W. Gibson was fairly popular (9 mentions) among Standard X girls. None of the girls mentioned, however, that this poem had been read too frequently in previous years.

Tennyson's The Lady of Shalott<sup>t</sup> was rated unfavourably throughout the school (except by Standard IX girls who omitted this poem in their ratings).

Among the most frequent comments upon poems least enjoyed were the following :

'Boring' (over 40 mentions), 'old-fashioned', 'needs too much explanation', 'abstract', 'difficult to understand', 'language too difficult', 'has to be pulled to pieces.'

Nearly all these comments in the upper school were directed at four poems :

- (a) Wordsworth: Ode on Intimations of Immortality
- (b) Milton: Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity
- (c) Browning: Andrea del Sarto
- (e) Swinburne: Garden of Proserpine

(iv) Attitudes Towards Poetry of a Group of Junior Certificate Boys at a State School (Table 16, p. 319.) N = 48

Poems Most Enjoyed

Three poems which appear to be traditionally liked by this age group featured as the most popular - Horatius; The Highwayman; Macavity; The Mystery Cat. These three texts gained 65 mentions. Among the most frequent reasons given for enjoyment of these poems were : 'Easy to understand' (9 mentions), 'exciting', 'a good story', 'adventurous', 'not boring', 'not flowery', 'not complicated.'

Poems Least Enjoyed

The Lady of Shalott<sup>t</sup> and La Belle Dame Sans Merci were the most disliked poems and the most frequent reasons given were : 'Boring' (11 mentions), 'too mythical', 'old-fashioned', 'difficult to understand'. Four boys complained that Tennyson's poem had been 'done' too many times before.

'This is the third time we have done this poem since Junior School and I think it silly but the girls might like it I suppose.'

[ This boy might be surprised to learn that most girls appear to share his distaste.]

The majority of boys felt they did the right amount of poetry at school, and 32 boys felt they <sup>had</sup> most enjoyed poetry within the last year or two.

(v) Some Attitudes Towards Poetry of 167 Boys at the Perse School, Cambridge, England (Table 17, p.321.)

It is not intended that the attitudes reflected by this table should reveal, in an unfavourable light, the attitudes of a selection of South African children. Instead, it is intended to show the potential response to poetry; a response which may be realised under highly favourable conditions. The Perse Grammar School is fortunate enough to enjoy a highly selective intake from a Primary School under the same name. It is at the Primary level that great emphasis is laid upon the use of the mother tongue in its main modes - listening, speaking, reading, writing and dramatising. The reading and writing of prose and verse is regarded as a complementary act. These sound foundations built up in the Primary School are indicated by the attitudes shown, on the table, by the Form I classes. In the Senior School the emphasis upon literature, creative writing, dramatic expression and the spoken word is continued. Much of the work begun by Caldwell Cook has been modified and re-applied to suit the modern child; nevertheless, the tradition established by Caldwell Cook is a central feature, today, of English studies at the Perse School. The idea of Specialist English rooms - each known as The Mummery - is still <sup>practised</sup> at this school.

As Mr Keith Barry, Senior English master at the School, put it :

"Our aim, in English studies, is to ignore the demands of the external 'O' and 'A' level examinations during the first four years; our aim is to give each English master a completely free hand to develop response and awareness among

the boys. If we emphasise anything during the first four years it is feeling, sensitivity and reaction. A very wide diversified literature programme is presented; and in the presentation each master will follow the rhythm, pace and emphasis he thinks best. The boys are not coached in any way to pass examinations - and we only have one promotion examination at the end of each academic year in each of the first four forms. We believe that good examination results are a natural outcome when, in the first four years, the boys are stimulated to read, speak, respond, write, think, argue and be coherent. The idea of cramming or coaching for Board Examinations is quite alien to our programme and yet, as you can see, our examination results are among the best in the country".

(Italics mine.)

An interesting feature is the sharp contrast in attitude shown between the Science Lower VI Form and the Modern Upper VI Form. It was suggested to me by some masters at the school that this divergence is prominent each year between Science and Literature Sixth-formers. The cleavage is attributed to the sharp academic differentiation at the apex of school studies and to the impending specialization at University.

(vi) Attitudes Towards Poetry of a large Junior Certificate Group at a State School for Boys before and during an experiment in Creative Verse Writing (See Chapter Seven) (Tables 18 and 19, pp. 322 - 324.)

Further reference is made in Chapter Seven to this survey. The tastes and preferences of the second group (Table 19, August, 1966) differ markedly from those of the first group (Table 18, March, 1965). Approximately 123 boys in the second group were among the 282 boys who listed their preferences in the previous year. The following details are of interest :

(a) Three English teachers were responsible for the first group. Perhaps the presentation of poetry to this group could be described as 'sound but conventional'. No special methods were employed and each of the three teachers adhered fairly strictly to the prescribed syllabus.

(b) A specialist teacher in poetry was responsible for the second

group. For six months most of these boys had been interested in writing verse (see Chapter Seven). During this time the group had been exposed to a considerable range and variety of poetry. Frequent excursions were made beyond the Junior Certificate poetry syllabus. All boys enjoyed easy access to a well-stocked class library of poetry books and to a school library which contained a large number of suitable appealing anthologies of verse (see Appendix D ). There was considerable evidence at the time that many boys wrote and read poetry for pleasure (see Chapter Seven).

The sharp differences between the two groups - in the range and kind of poems liked and in the frequency of mentions - suggest that attitudes, tastes and preferences may change radically in a short time. It appears, too, that changes are effected largely as a result of sympathetic teaching, reading and listening to a wide variety of texts, and encouragement to write in verse.

This in turn suggests that large scale surveys of the reading tastes and preferences of children, such as those conducted by A. J. Jenkinson (1940) and W. J. Scott (1947), may not reflect so much the natural development of taste as a restricted choice and availability of suitable texts.

Scott (1947), in a comprehensive survey of the reading, film and radio tastes of high school children in New Zealand, lists the most popular poets amongst children. He adds that the choices are very similar to those recorded in an earlier British survey by A. J. Jenkinson (1940). The following table is given by Scott (I have selected the seven top rankings given by girls and boys):

MOST POPULAR POETS

Ranking	BOYS	No. of Mentions	Ranking	GIRLS	No. of Mentions
1	Tennyson	95	1	Tennyson	103
2	Coleridge	52	2	Longfellow	63
3	Kipling	50	3	Kipling	54
4	Longfellow	40	4	Maxfield	44
5	Browning	30	5	Browning	43
6	Newbolt	24	6	Coleridge	35
7	Maxfield	22	7	Noyes	34

Not only do these lists tend to confirm the earlier contention that girls and boys show no great differences in taste, but, more important, the writer also concludes that the experience of poetry for these children is confined to the restrictive tradition of a single school anthology.

'Apart from their school anthologies and perhaps some odd volumes in an inadequate library, many of the pupils who answered this questionnaire probably saw few books of poetry. The majority of the most popular poems on the lists, it will be observed, are stock anthology pieces. It may be assumed, therefore, that the pupils became acquainted with these particular poems because they were in their school anthologies and that they read few poems from any other source.'

W. J. Scott (1947).

The stock authors listed above will continue to remain fairly popular simply because their poems are of the kind that will continue to delight school-children. And this is as it should be. (See Chapter Five.)

Yet, as stated in Chapter Two, a central aim in the teaching of literature should be to provide the child with sufficient opportunity to extend his horizons so that he is not forever roaming within familiar boundaries. Mature taste, however, is not achieved in a single bound. We cannot, without gradually extending this experience, expect children to leap the gulf that exists between the vigorous rhetorical ballads of the middle school and the mature intellectual demands of, say, Wordsworth's Immortality Ode. Yet, this is the very demand which is being made in schools throughout this country. Other writers constantly refer to the matter.

'It is almost certain that the tendency to restrict poetry to the elevated and uplifting kind, and to introduce it to the pupils before they are mature enough to enjoy it, has been partly responsible for the distaste for it felt by many of them.' W. J. Scott (1947).

'They [English teachers] may expect to find that children ... do not care for most of the poetry which they themselves most admire, and they should restrain themselves from attempts to teach great poetry to children.' A. J. Jenkinson (1940).

✓✓ The argument I wish to present here - and which will be developed in Chapter Five - is based upon the following contention. When a wide selection of the right kind of poetry is presented to children at the right time ('readiness') and in the best possible way, sensibility to poetry increases; conversely, the wrong sort of poem presented at the wrong moment and in the wrong way leads inevitably towards a loss of interest in, and a marked distaste for, poetry. While children in the middle school continue, quite rightly, to enjoy Horatius or The Highwayman, their experience and sensibility should also be extended by a different kind of poem. The kind of poem referred to is one which has immediacy and depth and which connects with the meaningful realities and interests of children. Within a few months of leaving <sup>the middle</sup> school, children are expected to grapple with adult works by Spenser, Donne, Milton, Pope, Wordsworth, Yeats and Eliot. What is being done in the lower and middle school to prepare children for this leap? Are boys and girls expected to stride quite comfortably from Eliot's Macavity: The Mystery Cat to Eliot's Triumphal March? Should we not try to close the gap existing between the two school levels by extending children with some demanding poetry which can be approached at a fairly simple level if preferred, but which also profitably bears close examination? Some of the poems listed as most enjoyed in Table 19, August, 1966, illustrate my contention. How many children in South Africa aged between 14 and 15 are familiar with the following authors and poems listed by the group? How many of these authors and texts are represented in typical school anthologies?

Guy Butler: Cape Coloured Batman; The Parting.  
Roy Campbell: The Zulu Girl; The Zebras.  
Robert Frost: 'Out, Out-'; Birches; The Runaway.  
Ted Hughes: The Jaguar; Bayonet Charge.

Clearly, the answers are very depressing. And yet these texts were mentioned 479 times by a group of boys as amongst the most enjoyed in the middle school. These are poems which have immediacy and depth; and these are poems which children enjoy.

We need to achieve a balance which has never been reached in schools. The core of traditional material must be retained. But, in addition, children must be exposed to a very wide range of texts - potentially more rich and complex - which will make a vital meaningful contact with their present realities and interests. The development of mature taste is not a process which may be rushed through in a matter of months or acquired without reference to a child's 'readiness', activities and interests. As T.S. Eliot (1933) points out :

✓ 'One's taste in poetry cannot be isolated from one's other interests and passions; it affects them and is affected by them, and must be limited as one's self is limited.'

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE TEACHER

4.1

It was noted in Chapter One that the presentation of poetry to school children is frequently accepted as 'a peculiarly difficult department of teaching.' Reeves (1958). It was also observed that the blame for this is spread over a number of areas - methods, texts, examinations, pupils, teachers, teacher-training, environment.

Least censure seems to attach to the pupil. On the other hand, much of the blame, directly or indirectly, falls upon the teacher. Criticism such as the following is common :

'It is because poetry has been mistaught and mishandled by teachers unfit to deal with it that we, as a nation, fail to get pleasure from the art in which our literature is richest.'

L. A. G. Strong (1946).

'Poetry suffers from bad teaching more than any other art.'

M. Baldwin (1959).

It is easy to see why the teacher is hotly blamed. When a wrong method is exposed, a teacher is blamed for using it; if a poem is read aloud badly, the teacher is at fault; for every poor examination question set, some teacher (or ex-teacher) is harangued; if a text is too difficult, too easy or too long, the teacher is criticised for selecting it. Sometimes <sup>the</sup> blame is indirect, as when teacher-training comes under fire.

Obviously, there is a great deal of truth in these assertions, particularly when teachers have a free choice in creating a syllabus, in selecting anthologies and texts, in setting examinations, in using individual methods or even in choosing to ignore poetry altogether. It is clear, therefore, that poetry teaching is largely teacher-controlled, particularly in the primary school and in the lower forms of the senior school. But it is equally clear, from the responses of teachers of English at nearly 200 senior schools, that much sound, personal, imaginative teaching and a great deal of skill and potential is stifled by external controls. In short, it appears that the chief forces acting against the successful presentation of poetry in the middle and -

upper school spring from externally controlled examinations and prescribed syllabuses usually consisting of a set number of poems from a single anthology. There is much evidence to show that the same teachers, who delight in sharing poetry with junior classes where these external pressures are absent, find themselves adopting distasteful - but expedient - attitudes, approaches and methods in the upper school to deal with unsuitable texts and a destructive system of examining.

But apart from TEXTS (see Chapter Five) and EXAMINATIONS (see Chapter Six) it appears that in the final analysis, the successful 'teaching' of poetry is largely dependent upon the personality, the attitudes, the approaches and the training of the teacher.

How much really does depend upon good teaching?

The really good teacher, in the words of James Reeves (1958), must show 'a continuous awareness of the varying needs of different children, and of the same children at different times.' The good teacher of poetry should himself be an exploring student; someone who is genuinely interested in reading poetry for pleasure. More than this, he must be able to read aloud really well. And in the classroom the best teachers of poetry will not only know how to read; they will also know, intuitively, when to read and what to read. They will know that poetry is not something which is entirely relegated to a 40-minute slot in the weekly time-table. The stimulating teacher of poetry will have the courage of his own taste and will not focus his attention entirely upon the prescribed number of poems; he will introduce new untried material into the classroom if he feels these texts are likely to win interest and attention. A sensitive, understanding teacher of poetry will almost certainly encourage his pupils to try writing poetry for themselves. He himself will have tried - and enjoyed - writing in verse at some time or other. A skilled teacher will also know when to leave a poem alone, when to ask questions, how to frame the questions and when to stop asking questions. He will know how to maintain the delicate balance between his own 'teaching', the poem as an experience and the response of the children. Nor will he thrust himself between poetry and children. In fact, he will know to what extent he must extinguish his own personality. The good teacher will realise that every poem calls for a

different treatment and that uniformity of any kind is to be avoided. Nevertheless, he may wish at most times to follow a logical procedure and will certainly avoid any haphazard meanderings. Every poem will be treated by him as a potential, an open structure not a closed package. The wise teacher of poetry, by skilfully directing attention towards, and not away from the poem, will assist the children to discover for themselves far more than he directly teaches. He will never interpose, between children and poetry, sets of drills - vocabulary exercises, language mechanics, detached comprehension exercises, tests of grammar and figures of speech - because he understands that the really vital experience of poetry is emotional and imaginative. Inevitably, a good teacher of poetry will know a great deal of poetry by heart - not for the sake of advertising this fact but because he finds he cannot help knowing a great deal.

These are perhaps some of the more important and obvious qualities possessed by good teachers of poetry. Other less tangible attributes such as personality, speaking voice, taste, and a quiet infectious enthusiasm are important but not easy to describe.

Does it seem that to cultivate all these skills and qualities is asking too much of the ordinary English teacher? Does the teaching of poetry call for the appointment of specialist poetry teachers? Obviously, this is not practicable and to entertain such an idea is to evade the issue. Poetry, unlike music, is not a subject in itself. It is part of literature and literature is only a part of English studies. Consequently, it would be more to the point to think in terms of better qualified and better trained specialist English teachers. Tables I and III clearly show that comparatively few teachers (22) hold Honours degrees (or the M. A. equivalent) in English. It should also be noted that 144 of the respondents were in charge of English at their respective schools (See Table V).

Teacher training institutions and students who intend becoming teachers of English would do well to bear in mind an observation made by T. S. Eliot (1960) in an essay entitled The Appreciation of Poetry. Speaking of the qualities of a good teacher he says :

'Perhaps I am merely clamouring for the Ideal Teacher. But don't "educationists" sometimes forget, in their teaching about teaching, that the one essential for good teaching is the good teacher?'

ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY OF TEACHERS IN THE  
SENIOR SCHOOL

ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

1 : OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the investigation were to assess :

- (a) The attitudes of teachers towards poetry.
- (b) The difficulties encountered in the teaching of poetry.
- (c) Teachers' views on present syllabuses, anthologies, methods and examinations.
- (d) The opinions of teachers on the attitudes of their pupils towards poetry.

2. : RESPONDENTS

Printed questionnaires were posted on 24th August, 1965, to senior teachers of English at 238 schools in the Republic, at which English is taught on the Higher Grade. This report has been compiled from 199 returned questionnaires.

163 of the 199 respondents whose papers are analysed here indicated 10 years or more of teaching experience. 139 held Senior English posts and 13 were principals; 167 were graduates; of these, 109 had taken THREE courses in English, while 28 hold post-graduate qualifications in English.

173 respondents were professionally qualified for senior school teaching and, of these, 19 held degrees in Education. 86 questionnaires were returned from schools preparing pupils for the Cape Senior Certificate and 33 each from schools falling under the Natal and Transvaal Education Departments. 27 teachers named the Joint Matriculation Board as their examining body; while 3 teachers indicated the Department of Education, Arts and Science.

152 teachers named English as their home language; 29 named English and Afrikaans; 18 named Afrikaans as their home language.

142 teachers named English as the home language of their pupils; 23 names English and Afrikaans; 34 named Afrikaans as the home language of their pupils.

### 3 : RESPONSES AND COMMENTS

Most questions were framed so as to offer a number of ready-made alternative answers followed by spaces for comments. The comments very frequently qualified a teacher's choice of response. Detailed comments appear on 173 completed papers and, in well over 100 cases, amounted to several hundred words. Many teachers attached long supplementary memoranda.

It will be convenient to begin with a general survey of responses, followed by a more detailed analysis of each question in turn.

177 teachers favoured the inclusion of poetry as a compulsory section in the Senior Certificate English Higher syllabus. Only 14 teachers felt that poetry should be included as an option in the syllabus. The same pattern of response is reflected for the Junior Certificate syllabus. In both sections, no teacher was undecided.

When asked if the inclusion of modern verse eased or complicated their teaching, well over half the teachers (114) felt that modern verse eased their teaching while the remainder were fairly evenly divided between believing that modern verse complicates the teaching of poetry (41) and undecided (33).

An overwhelming number of teachers (178) favoured the inclusion of South African verse in the literature syllabus.

93 poems were listed by the group as being the most enjoyable to teach to matriculation classes. From this number Journey of the

Magi : T.S. Elliot; My Last Duchess : R. Browning and Miners : W. Owen were most frequently mentioned. 77 poems were listed as the ones most enjoyed by matriculation classes. Of this number My Last Duchess : R. Browning was a clear favourite, followed by Journey of the Magi : T.S. Elliot and Snake : D. H. Lawrence. (The marked preferences for these first two poems shows a clear correlation with the results of an earlier questionnaire given to boys and girls at two Grahamstown schools.) A total of 69 poems was named by the group as the most enjoyable to teach to classes below matriculation. The Highwayman : A. Noyes; The Ice-Cart : W. Gibson and The Ancient Mariner : S. T. Coleridge emerged as the most popular.

The number of prescribed poems most favoured by the group for matriculation classes lay between 25 and 38.

Many more teachers favoured the occasional, rather than the invariable, setting of a poem as a comprehension test in matriculation language papers. A significantly large number of teachers (39) felt that a poem should never be set in language papers.

126 teachers admitted feeling occasionally handicapped or inadequate when teaching poetry, while 29 felt regularly handicapped or inadequate.

188 teachers rated their own attitude towards poetry as enjoyment while 7 teachers indicated an attitude of indifference.

Most teachers rated the matriculation classes (Standards IX and X) as the most enjoyable classes to teach.

Numerous teachers suggested changes in the matriculation syllabus.

When asked if they felt that boys and girls differed appreciably in their attitudes towards poetry, the majority of teachers were almost equally divided between Yes (74) and Undecided (76). 37 teachers believed that no appreciable difference existed.

A large proportion of teachers (129) felt that the more intelligent pupils were generally more responsive to poetry than the less intelligent. 33 teachers felt that intelligence played no part in determining responsiveness to poetry. Many teachers (37) were either undecided over this question or failed to make a response.

99 teachers favoured the inclusion of extracts from verse drama in the literature syllabus; 54 teachers opposed such inclusions; 36 teachers remained undecided.

#### 4.: EVALUATION OF QUESTIONS

Question 1. Should poetry be included in the literature syllabus for English Higher?

TABLE 1 N = 199

Responses	As a compulsory section	As an option	Not at all	Undecided	No Response
For Junior Certificate	167	19	2	0	11
For Senior Certificate	177	14	2	0	6

#### COMMENTS

For both Junior and Senior Certificate, an overwhelming number of teachers favoured poetry as a compulsory section in both syllabuses (167 and 177 responses respectively). The few remaining teachers mostly preferred poetry as an option at both levels. No teachers were undecided and only two advocated the exclusion of poetry. Of the 166 teachers who made comments 84 commented unfavourably upon present syllabuses and/or examinations. 12 teachers favoured poetry as an option in the Senior Certificate syllabus because of the unsatisfactory current system of externally set syllabuses and examinations.

Many teachers felt that 'option' nowadays easily led to omission. Many others also believed that poetry, as the highest form of expression

in any literature, should be made familiar and enjoyable to young people since this would encourage a wider and deeper appreciation of life itself. 13 teachers variously described poetry as the highest form of experience, adding that we cannot afford to risk its exclusion from any literature syllabus. Others feared that 'option' connotes 'inferior' or 'less important' in many minds.

33 teachers preferred poetry as a compulsory section provided the selection of material and the examination questions suited the needs and interests of senior school pupils. The following were the most frequent arguments selected by those who preferred poetry as an option: an option would permit enthusiastic, capable teachers to exercise a sound freedom of choice based on personal taste; examinations on prescribed poems too often favoured the intelligent, sensitive pupil while the weak and even average pupil floundered; 'compulsion' and a love for poetry do not mix; hostile, apathetic teachers would teach less poetry thereby creating less hostility among their pupils.

The two teachers who selected not at all stated that neither they nor their pupils had any interest in poetry.

Question 2. Do you feel that the inclusion of modern verse in the literature syllabus eases or complicates the teaching of poetry?

TABLE 2 N = 199

	It eases teaching	It complicates teaching	Undecided	No Response
Response	114	41	33	11

COMMENTS

Over half the group (114) felt that modern verse eased the teaching of poetry. 74 teachers were fairly evenly divided between the responses It complicates teaching (41) and Undecided (33).

147 teachers made comments. Among the most frequent arguments offered by those teachers who welcomed the inclusion of modern verse in the syllabus are the following: suitably chosen modern verse eases the teaching of poetry because contemporary subject matter, imagery, ideas, diction, rhythm and form are stimulation, familiar and therefore meaningful to young people who are themselves intimately involved in the experiences and problems of life today. All poetry was, at some stage, 'contemporary'. Pupils who are unresponsive to the poetry of other times will frequently respond to suitably appealing modern verse. Modern verse and modern youth mix well; they speak the same language. Modern verse dispels the idea that poetry is for 'sissies', that it is effeminate, 'soft', or often romantically beautiful. It encourages verse-writing among children who feel they can use their own highly personal forms in a valid, satisfying idiom. Many teachers felt that when children learn to appreciate the poetry of today, they grow more attracted to the mature 'old-fashioned' poetry of yesterday. Other teachers felt that stimulating, meaningful modern poetry is a refreshing contrast to balance the distaste for the older, more remote, traditional 'classics'. (In this respect, 13 teachers criticised the inclusion of Lycidas; and 9 teachers criticised the inclusion of Augustan and/or Romantic poems.)

The majority of the 74 teachers who responded It complicates teaching or Undecided did so in the belief that much prescribed modern verse is ill-chosen, obscure, 'experimental', abounding in difficult allusions and symbols, and far beyond the grasp of many teachers, let alone school-children. Too much time was required for research and preparation. 'Examination-conscious' children shied clear of poetry that is not clear in meaning. The 2 poems most frequently mentioned as being too difficult for both teacher and pupil to understand were Byzantium; Yeats and Triumphal March; T.S. Eliot.

Question 3. Should South African Verse be included in the literature syllabus?

TABLE 3 N = 199

	Yes	No	Undecided	No Response
Response	178	7	9	5

COMMENTS

An overwhelming number of teachers (178) favoured the inclusion of South African verse in the syllabus.

157 teachers made comments. A large proportion (67) of those who favoured the inclusion of South African poetry felt that these poems must be selected on merit and not merely because they are South African. 14 teachers recommended work by Roy Campbell. Other writers most frequently mentioned by teachers included Butler, Carey-Slater, Delius and Plomer. 4 teachers suggested a publication, similar to New Coin, of South African poetry which would appeal to pupils, and all 4 of these teachers suggested that such a publication should be distributed to all schools.

Among the arguments most frequently encountered were the following:

A good selection of South African poetry would help to dispel the idea that poetry is an 'exotic import'. Pupils must be introduced to that part of their heritage which falls naturally within their understanding, interests and experience. This should be matched by an even greater offering of the best Commonwealth and American verse. Second-rate work will not do. Some teachers pointed to the great interest shown by many pupils in contemporary Afrikaans verse. For the average pupil an appreciation of South African poetry will provide a starting point for the development of a taste for poetry in general. Many teachers felt that an exclusive study of 'traditional' poetry only hinders the growth of real appreciation as indicated by the following quotations :

' The nearer to the pupils' own experience, the

more likely that poetry will arouse interest. So much poetry is disliked because it is remote in time, in language, in subject matter and geographically e.g. Tintern Abbey.'

'My scholars have a fuller understanding of the veld than of pastoral elegies such as Lycidas. They must also be introduced to the considerable body of good South African literature - it belongs to them....'

'Provided the poems chosen are of high literary merit, contemporary South African work can only stimulate the beginnings of a deep satisfying pleasure in the poetry of the past. Let us advertise our own literature and not be ashamed of it.'

'Impact and response immediate. It is an imaginative and spiritual experience which must become a part of a child's education. We cannot neglect the opportunity. Pringle and Hall must give way to Campbell, Butler, Cloete, Delius and even Krige.'

Question 4(a). Which THREE poems do you most enjoy teaching to matriculation forms? (Standards IX and X)

N = 199

139 teachers answered this question.

31 teachers felt they could not give any satisfactory rating.

19 teachers listed 6 or 7 authors and titles. 7 teachers each appended a list of 20-30 poems they most enjoyed teaching.

The following poems emerged as the most popular :

	<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
1.	T. S. Eliot	<u>Journey of the Magi</u>	23
2.	R. Browning	<u>My Last Duchess</u>	21
3.	W. Owen	<u>Miners</u>	19
4.	D. H. Lawrence	<u>Snake</u>	17
5.	P. B. Shelley	<u>Ode to the West Wind</u>	14
6.	J. Keats	<u>Ode to a Nightingale</u>	13
7.	M. Arnold	<u>Dover Beach</u>	12

8.	J. Keats	<u>Ode to Autumn</u>	12
9.	J. Keats	<u>Ode to a Grecian Urn</u>	12
10.	W. Owen	<u>Anthem for Doomed Youth</u>	12
11.	T. Gray	<u>Elegy in a Country Churchyard</u>	11
12.	A. Tennyson	<u>Ulysses</u>	10
13.	R. Campbell	<u>Autumn</u>	9
14.	R. Campbell	<u>Horses on the Camargue</u>	9
15.	R. Campbell	<u>Zulu Girl</u>	8
16.	F. Carey-Slater	<u>Clay Cattle</u>	8
17.	L. MacNiece	<u>Meeting Point</u>	8
18.	W. Shakespeare	<u>Sonnet CXVI</u>	8
19.	R. Browning	<u>The Laboratory</u>	7
20.	J. Milton	<u>On His Blindness</u>	7
21.	G. Butler	<u>Cape Coloured Batman</u>	7
22.	R. Frost	<u>Selection of poems</u>	6

Question 4(e). If you do not enjoy teaching poetry, please indicate this with a cross and give a reason, if possible for your dislike.

N = 199

7 teachers stated that they did not enjoy teaching poetry.

Teacher A stated that neither he nor his pupils liked any poetry at all.

Teacher B did not enjoy teaching poetry because of the demands of the syllabus and examinations.

Teacher C disliked teaching poetry because English is not her home language.

Teacher D disliked teaching poetry because of a combination of dull, unappreciative classes and unsuitable poems prescribed for Senior Certificate.

Teacher E was "tired beyond words" of the "same 3 anthologies and the same poems" year after year during the last 8 years.

Teacher F and G disliked teaching poetry because they could not "put it across" and consequently classes were bored and inattentive.

Question 5. Bearing in mind the teaching demands of the literature syllabus, would you please indicate the maximum number of poems, of moderate length, that you feel should be prescribed for the matriculation course.

TABLE 4 N = 199

Number of poems preferred	Frequency
70 +	4
65 - 69	-
60 - 64	1
55 - 59	4
50 - 54	9
45 - 49	7
40 - 44	30
35 - 39	17
30 - 34	40
25 - 29	27
20 - 24	17
15 - 19	6
10 - 14	7
5 - 9	3
0 - 4	1

173 teachers answered the question. 113 made comments. As shown in Table 4 the most popular cluster is 30 - 34 flanked by 40 - 44 and 25 - 29. Relatively few teachers suggested over 45 or under 20 poems.

19 teachers indicated that they had suggested a maximum number of poems only for examination purposes. 42 recommended the reading of an unlimited number of poems for pleasure. A number of teachers favoured the Transvaal system of recommending, not prescribing, certain poems. 8 teachers recommended the system used in Natal - an unlimited number of poems read in Standard IX and a smaller, specific number studied in Standard X for examination purposes - so that 100 poems of moderate length could easily be read over two years. 20 teachers complained that a demanding literature

syllabus limited the enjoyment and teaching of poetry. Many of the teachers who favoured 20 poems or less did so reluctantly, but felt their choice was a realistic one under present conditions. 14 teachers stressed that the selection should be representative of a wide range of periods, writers, styles and countries. 46 teachers variously complained about the present number of prescribed poems, the type of poems prescribed, or the anthologies presently in use. 4 teachers recommended that several anthologies should be prescribed for the matriculation course.

Question 6. Should a poem be set as a comprehension test in a matriculation language paper?

TABLE 5 N = 199

Invariably	Every other year	Occasionally	Never	No Response
58	11	83	39	8

COMMENTS

Although 58 teachers felt that a poem should invariably be set as a comprehension test a clear pattern emerges favouring a much less frequent use of poetry in language papers. A most significant number of teachers (39) deplored the setting of a poem as a comprehension test in a language paper. Altogether, 138 teachers made comments. A general selection of the more frequent comments is given below.

Invariably

The trend of comments followed a single pattern. Poetry, with its condensed, emotive, figurative language is far more testing than prose, and calls for a deep literary insight. The comprehension of poetry is therefore the highest form of literary comprehension. Practice in such work sharpens literary acuteness and leads towards a better general understanding and appreciation of poetry. It is as important to comprehend poetry as it is any other literary form,

for poetry is not merely 'music'. 14 teachers emphasised the particular importance of this exercise only when candidates have studied other poems by the same author. 17 teachers stressed that the poem chosen should be a complete, short poem and not an extract. 16 teachers variously stated that the poem chosen should not be allusive, dialectical, obscure, 'old-fashioned' or second-rate verse. 5 teachers sharply criticised the extract selected for the 1964 Cape Senior Certificate language paper (extract: The Palm : R. Campbell).

16 teachers suggested that an alternative prose passage should also be set. This arrangement would not penalise unduly the weaker pupils, who frequently found poetry difficult. 6 teachers believed that the language paper is not the proper place for a literary exercise based on a poem. 19 teachers criticised the type of question set in the external examinations.

#### Occasionally

Over 20 teachers pointed out that poetry and language examinations do not mix. The enjoyment of poetry comes from hearing it spoken, not from examining it in cold print. Language comprehension destroys the appreciation of poetry by encouraging an analysis of isolated meanings and parts without fostering an enjoyment of the whole experience. The supreme end of all poetry is enjoyment. Examination comprehension tests tend to destroy this enjoyment. It is not that poetry cannot be examined; the objection raised by 24 teachers is the use of poetry for grammatical purposes. 10 teachers listed and criticised such undesirable instructions as :

- ' Find words which have the same meaning as . . . '
- ' Identify a simile and a synecdoche within the first eight lines'.
- ' Re-write the last stanza in clear modern English'.
- ' Make a clause analysis of this poem'.

Many teachers felt that a poem could be set occasionally, to come as a surprise not an expectation. Once again, a number of teachers (12) recommended that an alternative prose passage should also be included whenever verse comprehension is set. Short, entire poems of good quality were again recommended by a number of teachers. 29 teachers variously stated that this kind of comprehension handi-

capped weak pupils; unfairly favoured bright, mature students; encouraged an even greater dislike of poetry; discouraged those who had developed some liking for poetry.

Never

The 39 teachers who favoured Never tended to make similar (but more emphatic) objections of the same kind as those made above. e. g.

'In such an exercise any interest in the poem, is totally extinguished'.

Question 7. Do you feel handicapped or inadequate in any way when teaching poetry set in your literature syllabus?

TABLE 6 N = 199

	<u>Regularly</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>No Response</u>
Response	29	126	34	10

COMMENTS

A very large majority admitted some occasional handicap or inadequacy. 29 teachers admitted frequent difficulties. Both these groups tended to specify their problems with great candour. 18 of the 29 teachers who regularly felt handicapped mostly complained of the obscurity of much modern poetry, the lack of suitable reference material and their own lack of background, reading and experience. The 34 teachers who selected Never tended to be a very experienced group (+ 20 years). 136 teachers made comments.

Frequent complaints listed by teachers were as follows :

1. Difficulty in understanding much modern poetry (37).  
Authors most frequently mentioned were G. M. Hopkins, W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot and Dylan Thomas.

2. Lack of references, sources of information; no outside assistance (23).
3. Classical allusions, symbolism, mystical work (17).
4. Unsuitable syllabus. Too many poems most of which were unappealing to children (17).
5. Teaching under the shadow of the examination. Examination questions too difficult or unpredictable (14).
6. Pupils' lack of background and apathy (9).
7. Own poor speaking voice, reading and pronunciation (8).
8. Own general lack of background (6).
9. Little understanding of prosody (4).
10. Handicapped by classes prejudiced by poor, unimaginative teaching in early senior school (4).

26 teachers complained of the strain and difficulty in teaching Lycidas. 5 teachers admitted that they 'detested' this poem while the remainder variously criticised its general difficulty, lack of appeal, classical allusions, artificial convention and 'insincerity'. Four teachers felt that the poem tended to destroy any liking for poetry shown by pupils.

Other 'difficult' authors most frequently mentioned were Spenser, Milton, Blake and Wordsworth.

13 teachers requested various kinds of assistance from Rhodes University (English Department) e. g. reference lists, notes, recordings, refresher courses, and tape-recorded talks.

Question 8. Teachers' own attitude towards poetry.

TABLE 7 N = 199

	Enjoyment	Indifference	Dislike	No Response
Response	188	7	2	2

COMMENTS

Although a number of teachers regarded this question as superfluous, its inclusion was helpful in this investigation - if only to gain the necessary statistical confirmation and the useful comments. 79 teachers made comments. 12 teachers stated that their response referred only to their own choice of poems. 11 teachers mentioned that they read poetry for pleasure and/or subscribe to New Coin or similar publications. The teachers who selected 'Indifference' had indicated earlier in the questionnaire that they did not enjoy teaching poetry.

Question 9(a). To which of the following groups do you normally most enjoy teaching poetry?

Standards	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
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TABLE 8 N = 199

Class Combinations	Number of Responses
Standard VI only	16
Standard VII only	3
Standard VIII only	14
Standard IX only	44
Standards VI and VII	4
Standards VI and VIII	-
Standards VI and IX	1
Standards VI and X	8
Standards VII and VIII	1
Standards VII and IX	5
Standards VII and X	-
Standards VIII and IX	-
Standards VII and X	7
Standards IX and X	44
Standards VIII, IX and X	18

Standards VI, VII, VIII	1
Standards VI, VIII, X	1
Standards VI, IX, X	2
Standards VI, VII, X	1
Standards VII, IX, X	10
Standards VII, VIII, IX and X	1
Standards VI, VII, VIII, IX and X	12
Impossible to answer	1
No response	<u>1</u>
	199

Question 9(b). Would you please give reasons for your class preferences under one or both of the following headings:

The Pupils.

Suitability of the Syllabus.

The Pupils

(a) Matriculation

Nearly all the teachers who preferred teaching matriculation classes mentioned the increased maturity of their pupils. This, in turn, led to a greater response from the pupils. A wider range of more 'adult' poetry is appreciated by these older pupils.

(b) Below Matriculation

Teachers very frequently referred to the greater pleasure gained from teaching pupils who were free from the strain of preparing for a major examination. 23 teachers mentioned that pupils are more interested because the syllabus allows teachers to choose suitable poems. Most of the 16 teachers who preferred to take poetry with Standard VI classes only, referred to the unrestricted freedom at that level. "Without a strict syllabus, without examinations, without the killing pace, the teaching of poetry to the sixes becomes a sheer joy for both teacher and pupils."

Many teachers pointed to pupils' attitudes and described them as 'fresh', 'interested', 'responsive' and 'tractable'.

### The Syllabus

#### (a) Matriculation

This section drew the greatest number of comments. 29 teachers felt that the syllabus is generally suitable, but many teachers suggested improvements and those recurring most frequently are listed below :

- (i) Rather too many poems are set, many of which are unsuitable, unappealing and 'a grind'. The scramble to complete a demanding and often distasteful syllabus tends to destroy enjoyment for both teacher and pupil (24).
- (ii) Anthologies are often carelessly chosen. They do not give enough coverage, appeal and variety. Poems should be annotated and ideas supplied for new approaches (15).
- (iii) More good South African and Commonwealth poetry should be set (12).
- (iv) More suitable modern poetry should be included (11).
- (v) Far more scope should be given to teachers to supplement the syllabus with their own selection of poems (10).
- (vi) The syllabus should consist of a wide, recommended selection of poems for the Standard IX year and a small prescribed selection of poems for the Standard X year. Many teachers referred to this as the 'Natal System' (10).
- (vii) The repetition of the same prescribed poems year after year dulls teaching (8).
- (viii) A special list of suitably appealing poems should be compiled and recommended for 'dull-average' pupils or 'C and D streams' (7).

'We shall not be lowering our standards if we prescribe good, appealing, poetry with a less intellectual, obscure

"core", for the dull, average or non-English-speaking boy. I mean the best - often contemporary - South African, Commonwealth and American poetry. These pupils will lose nothing, yet gain a whole world. Continue to force Milton, Wordsworth, Hopkins and Yeats upon them and they will lose a world of delight and loathe poetry for the rest of their lives'.

'We try - unsuccessfully - to develop literary appreciation amongst the brightest; the same approach and the same poems used in lower streams successfully kill all interest for all time'.

(b) Below Matriculation

Most teachers considered the syllabus quite suitable. The most frequent remarks dealt with the need for a fresh variety of poems each year, more suitable modern verse, more encouragement given to teachers to select poems of their own choice and better anthologies (preferably annotated).

'I'm tired of teaching the same old works year in and year out. Too often, examiners ignore new fresh works, but pounce with glee upon Browning and Tennyson'.

Question 9(c). Which THREE poems do you most enjoy teaching to a standard below Matriculation level?

In question 9(a) 39 teachers indicated a preference for teaching poetry to classes below the matriculation level. 47 teachers answered question 9(c).

The following poems emerged as the most popular :

	<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
1.	A. Noyes	<u>The Highwayman</u>	13
2.	W. Gibson	<u>The Ice-Cart</u>	10
3.	S. T. Coleridge	<u>The Ancient Mariner</u>	8

4.	D. H. Lawrence	<u>Snake</u>	8
5.	R. Browning	<u>The Pied Piper of Hamelin</u>	6
6.	A. Tennyson	<u>Morte d'Arthur</u>	5
7.	T. S. Eliot	<u>Any 'Cat' poems</u>	5
8.	H. Newbolt	<u>He Fell Among Thieves</u>	5
9.	D. H. Lawrence	<u>Bat</u>	3
10.	J. Masefield	From: <u>Reynard the Fox</u>	3
11.	Macaulay	<u>Horatius</u>	3
12.	G. K. Chesterton	<u>The Donkey</u>	2

A further 44 poems were each mentioned once.

Question 10(a). Do you feel that there is any appreciable difference between BOYS and GIRLS in their attitudes towards poetry?

TABLE 8 N = 199

Yes	No	Undecided	No Response
74	37	76	12

COMMENTS

Most teachers (150) were fairly evenly divided between Yes (74) and Undecided (76) while 37 teachers felt that boys and girls show no appreciable difference in their attitudes towards poetry. 107 teachers made comments.

Those teachers who felt that there is an appreciable sex difference tended to suggest that girls show an earlier emotional maturity than boys and this in turn leads to an earlier sensitivity to a wider range of poetry. A number of teachers felt that girls read and write verse more frequently than boys. 8 teachers felt that group attitudes play an important rôle. It seems that this is more prevalent among boys in early adolescence - boys tending to be more self-conscious,

fearful of ridicule, and of being labelled 'soft' or a 'sissy' by other boys. Boys are more suspicious of 'art', 'emotions' 'beauty'. 10 teachers felt that boys have as much sensitivity as girls but that they repress their feelings. 6 teachers believed that differences only exist up to 15 + (Standard IX), and that matriculation boys tend to discard earlier inhibitions and group allegiances. 9 women teachers variously believed that girls tend to be idealists, sentimentalists, demonstrative, easily moved and partial to descriptive/lyrical/love poetry. 18 men teachers variously believed that most boys show a natural liking for humorous, dramatic, narrative or rhetorical poems but they often remain reticent and unrevealing even when deeply moved. 6 of these teachers felt that embarrassment largely disappeared during Senior Certificate years and that boys, by then, are often acutely appreciative.

27 of the 76 teachers who favoured 'Undecided' admitted that they had only taught girls or boys and consequently most were loath to offer an opinion.

A number of teachers who felt undecided believed that many boys appreciated a smaller range of poetry but that their liking was no less than that shown by girls.

Question 10(b). In your view, are the more intelligent of your pupils on the whole more responsive to poetry than are the less intelligent?

TABLE 9 N = 199

	Yes	No	Undecided	No Response
Response	129	33	21	16

COMMENTS

The response YES was nearly 4 times greater than NO. 127 teachers made comments. 26 of those who favoured YES simply stated

that the more intelligent pupils responded more favourably to poetry. A number of others stated that intelligent pupils are more interested in, and more acutely aware of, the impact of poetry. 34 teachers said, in various ways, that a superior response from intelligent pupils becomes most marked in matriculation classes, and nearly half these teachers felt that little noticeable difference exists in the earlier stages of the senior school, where most pupils equally enjoy the 'music' of words, rhyme, rhythm, story and emotive appeal.

Many teachers generally felt that the number of poems, the type of poem and the exacting examination requirements at the matriculation level, all underlined the very great differences in response and appreciation existing between bright, and average or 'dull-average' pupils - and that such requirements placed a premium upon intelligence.

A number of teachers who answered NO felt that 'poetic intelligence' is a thing apart from 'I. Q. intelligence', and that the former is frequently possessed by very average students who often show real sensitivity towards 'music', feeling, story and rhythm - all of which compensate for any weak grasp of a poem's deeper significance and 'technicalities'. 8 teachers claimed that the low 'streams' often proved more appreciative than the best 'A' classes, while others testified that intelligent pupils are as often bored and puzzled as the less intelligent. 7 teachers believed that, with suitable poems and with an understanding teacher, bright and dull generally respond equally well, at any level of the senior school. Three teachers mentioned that 'C and D stream' pupils often showed remarkable talent for creative verse-writing.

Question 11. Should the poetry syllabus include extracts from plays by Shakespeare or other writers of plays in verse?

TABLE 10 N = 199

	Yes	No	Undecided	No Response
Response	99	54	36	10

COMMENTS

Nearly twice as many teachers favoured YES as against NO. 94 teachers made comments. 12 teachers felt that appreciation of extracts may encourage pupils to investigate the play in question. 18 teachers emphasised that extracts should only be taken from Shakespeare. 7 mentioned the 'Seven Ages of Man' extracts from As You Like It as ideal. A number of teachers variously felt that not too many extracts should be included; that extracts should stand on their own, and that Marlowe should not be overlooked.

Of those who opposed the use of extracts, 14 maintained that when detached from its context an extract lost most of its essential force and meaning. 9 teachers variously objected to 'snippets', 'tit-bits', 'bits' or 'gems'. 7 teachers pointed out that Shakespeare is invariably prescribed anyway. 6 teachers felt that complete, short poems are superior to extracts.

Question 12. If your views of poetry and your appreciation of particular poems have changed since you left school, would you briefly outline these changes.

149 teachers made comments. The most frequent views expressed are as follows :

1. Badly Taught (39 teachers)

Many described the teaching of poetry during their own school days as poor, uninspired, unimaginative and repelling. Some teachers recalled arduous assignments of verse to be memorised or written out as a punishment. 3 teachers recalled that they were often 'thrashed' during poetry lessons, for stumbling over reading or recitation. It is interesting to note that all these teachers show more than 25 years of service.

2. University Training (26 teachers)

Numerous teachers felt that their appreciation of poetry properly began at university with increased maturity, a liberal, congenial atmosphere, enlightened teaching, wider reading and

background and critical literary discussions. Five teachers believed that many of the poems presently taught in schools can only be properly appreciated by mature, university students. In this connection Donne, Milton and Wordsworth were the poets most frequently mentioned.

3. General Maturity (20 teachers)

Most of these teachers believed that from maturity, increased experience, attainment of adulthood, wide reading and study and their subsequent emotional and spiritual growth, they have developed a deeper, more lasting love and catholic taste for poetry.

4. No Change in Attitude (13 teachers)

This group stated that no change has occurred in their receptive attitude to poetry. 8 felt that they had always liked poetry because of a gifted English teacher at school laid the foundations of appreciation.

5. Modern Poetry (12 teachers)

These teachers described their increased enjoyment and understanding of poetry since they left school. 6 felt that they had grown towards liking modern verse as a direct result of taking it with matriculation classes and all 6 teachers used the word 'familiarity' as being instrumental for their appreciation.

6. Author Shift (12 teachers)

This group indicated a shift in appreciation. The most frequent change indicated was a movement away from 'sentimental' poetry, from 'emotional' sensuously appealing poems (authors most frequently mentioned were Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, Swinburne and Brooke) towards more 'satisfying', 'adult', 'difficult' or 'intellectual' poetry by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne, Herbert, Milton, Wordsworth, Hopkins, Pound and Eliot.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Space was provided at the end of the questionnaire for teachers to make additional comments and suggestions.

The following suggestions were, among those most frequently made.

1. An urgent need exists for a greater freedom of choice in the number and types of poems studied at all levels. Alternative lists of poems should also be made available. "Teachers can only teach best what they like best."
2. The question of internally set examinations, moderated by an external examiner, should be investigated. Alternatively, more organised co-operation should exist between teachers and examiners. 19 teachers criticised present systems of examining poetry, while 8 criticised the idea of examining any form of literature.

'As is the case with prose literature, we are killing the love of poetry by attempting to examine it. Pupils study literature in schools merely to learn an enormous number of useless facts which we expect them to reproduce in an examination. To spend two valuable years revising 6 books (not always the best either) and to force pupils to wade through unimportant details and commit them to memory, is criminal. It is hardly to be wondered at that there is a lack of enjoyment in reading on the part of the pupils. It possibly accounts in some measure too for the shortage of English teachers, for who can derive enjoyment from the knowledge that he has been instrumental in the total or even partial destruction of a pupil's love for reading? I for one am rapidly becoming tired of being a hypocrite when I try to defend the present system in front of a class.'

3. Better anthologies should be selected to offer a wider range of more suitable poetry at all levels. Some teachers suggested that a choice of several anthologies be made available. Anthologies should be well annotated. On the other hand, some teachers pointed out that the need for annotation pointed to unsuitable texts.
4. More cognizance should be taken of recent changes in syllabuses, attitudes, teaching methods and examining techniques, currently practised in Britain.

5. Many difficult or unappealing poems traditionally retained in the syllabus should be omitted or made optional. 17 teachers variously criticised the setting of long poems as 'restricting', 'time-consuming', 'boring'.

6. A number of teachers criticised the present unsatisfactory system of examining poetry at the Junior Certificate level.

"These absurd J. C. verse comprehensions. Quote 1964 Cape J. C.

'It was a hot, hot day  
And I in pyjamas for the heat.' (sic)

Question 1. What sort of day was it?

Question 2. What was the author wearing and why?

Is this why modern poetry is important? To provide this sort of imaginative and intellectual stimulation?"

7. 13 teachers felt that not enough encouragement is given to creative expression in verse in the lower and middle school. Those who advocated this method mostly felt that there is a strong latent urge among children for verse expression and that the act of 'handling' a poet's techniques engenders a deeper appreciation of the superb poetic craftsmanship which is met with at the matriculation level.

8. A number of teachers declared that scant attention is given to poetry at the Standard VI level. It was generally felt that this policy leads pupils to regard poetry as valueless or insignificant and that this attitude is retained in later classes. Other teachers felt that they knew of no suitable anthologies offering genuine poetry to children in the lower senior school. Some teachers felt that if delight and relaxation could be achieved in the lower school, the drudgery and strain of poetry teaching at higher levels could be relieved.

9. 11 teachers believed that the teaching of poetry in the junior schools was generally neglected, unimaginative and regarded as a nuisance. A little, poor, second-rate verse was often passed

off as 'poetry':

10. 8 teachers criticised the attitudes of English teachers in general. Among the most frequent criticisms are the following:
- (a) Little personal interest in poetry is often shown by teachers.
  - (b) Unimaginative, bored or condescending attitudes are often shown in teaching poetry. "Why have teachers lost that delight and wonder of their own childhood?"
  - (c) Many teachers do little to improve their own poor reading<sup>about</sup> of poetry, and are not interested enough to use new and interesting approaches.
  - (d) Too many teachers are still too prone to 'use' poetry primarily for other exercises e. g. clause analysis and paraphrasing exercises.

It is significant, however, that 36 teachers made various appeals for assistance and advice from the Institute - notably for the continued staging of annual refresher courses for English teachers, for notes, lists of useful references and critical commentaries, recordings, recommended poems; for criticisms of the syllabus and/or examining techniques and for an indication of recent overseas trends in the teaching of poetry and general literature.

'There is a vital, urgent need for a resurrection of a living interest in and nourishing and safe-guarding of our English heritage generally - or else we shall continue to have a dying culture on our hands; and on our consciences.'

QUESTIONNAIRE TO TEACHERS

Table I

Academic Qualifications N - 199

<u>Qualifications:</u>	<u>Number of Teachers</u>
D. Litt.	1
* M. A.	46
B. A. (Hons.)	17
B. A.	122
Non-Graduates	11
<u>Other Degrees:</u>	
B. Sc.	1
B. Comm.	<u>1</u>
	199

* M. A. (Analysis)		
(1)	English Language/Literature	16
(2)	Equivalent B. A. (Hons.)	11
(3)	Not in English Studies	8
(4)	Oxford/Cambridge	5
(5)	Scottish	<u>6</u>
		46

Table II

Professional Qualifications N - 199

<u>Qualification:</u>	<u>Number of Teachers</u>
Doctorates	-
M. Ed.	2
B. Ed.	17
Secondary School Diploma/Certificate	154
Primary School qualification only	7
Unqualified	<u>19</u>
	199

Table III

Degree Courses in English N - 199

<u>Course</u>	<u>Number of Teachers</u>
D. Litt.	1
M. A.	16
B. A. (Hons.)	11
English III	109
English II	34
English I	22
No courses in English	<u>6</u>
	199

Table IV  
Teaching Experience N - 199

<u>Years:</u>	<u>Number of Teachers</u>
Retired	3
40 +	4
35 - 39	9
30 - 34	21
25 + 29	22
20 - 24	19
15 - 19	44
10 - 14	41
5 - 9	14
0 - 4	<u>22</u>
	199

Table V  
Present Position N - 199

MEN - 106  
WOMEN - 93

<u>Present Position:</u>	<u>Number of Teachers</u>
Senior English Teacher	139
Acting Senior English Teacher	5
Assistant English Teacher	28
Principals teaching Senior English	16
Temporary English Teacher (Retired)	6
No stated position	<u>5</u>
	199

Table VI

Examining Body Named N - 199

Cape Education Department	86
Natal Education Department	33
Transvaal Education Department	33
Orange Free State Education Department	17
Joint Matriculation Board	27
Department of Education, Arts and Science	<u>3</u>
	199

Table VII

Home Language(s) of Pupils N - 199

English	142
English and Afrikaans	23
Afrikaans	<u>34</u>
	199

Table VIII

Home Language(s) of Teachers N - 199

English	152
English and Afrikaans	29
Afrikaans	<u>18</u>
	199

#### 4.3 Some Observations

Noted below, are some of the more frequent and significant attitudes arising from the analysis. It will be convenient to list these question by question.

##### Question 1.

84 teachers commented unfavourably upon present syllabuses and examinations. Throughout the survey - whether the questions asked for such criticism or not - large numbers of teachers sharply criticised prescribed texts and external examinations. This was particularly noticeable among Cape Education Department teachers who formed the majority of respondents (86). Five teachers attached long supplementary memoranda on the problems of examining poetry (see Appendix B).

##### Question 2.

The majority of teachers felt that a well-chosen selection of modern poetry makes a powerful appeal to children and is therefore stimulating to teach; that much modern verse neutralises the distaste for the more remote and difficult poems of the tradition. The question produced an interesting backwash. In citing examples of 'difficult', 'remote' texts, 13 teachers criticised the inclusion of Milton's Lycidas, while 9 teachers opposed the inclusion of texts by Augustan/Romantic authors. The aversion to Milton's poem becomes even more prominent in Question 7 where 26 teachers variously complained of the strain and difficulty in teaching Lycidas. (See Appendix C)

##### Question 3.

An overwhelming number of teachers favoured the inclusion of suitable South African verse of merit. Clearly, many teachers were highly enthusiastic in emphasising this need. And yet this widespread conviction is hardly supported by the lists of poems teachers most enjoy teaching at various levels (see Analysis : Questions 4(a) and 9(c)). For example, of the 12 poems which teachers most prefer to teach in the middle school, all are stock anthology pieces. No texts by South African authors are listed. Similarly, no South African poems appear in the first 12 rankings of poems which teachers most enjoy reading to matriculation classes. (It should be

noted, though, that Roy Campbell's The Zulu Girl is very highly rated by Matriculation pupils. See Question 4(b)).

This seems to indicate that teachers, while keen to introduce pupils to South African texts, are not prepared to discover suitable poems or <sup>else</sup> remain too closely bound to the prescribed syllabus. It may also indicate that teachers lack suitable resources - recent anthologies and publications such as New Coin Poetry. It may even suggest, as L. A. G. Strong (1946) points out, that teachers lack the conviction of their own judgment; that they would prefer to wait in the hope that promising writers may eventually reach the stature of Roy Campbell.

Questions 4(a) and 4(b).

The first four poems in both lists show a remarkably close correlation with an independent survey conducted among pupils. (See Chapter Three)

Question 4(c).

Seven teachers, for various reasons, disliked poetry or teaching poetry. Unsuitable texts or personal inadequacies were the most frequent reasons given.

Question 5.

The number of prescribed poems most favoured lay between 25 and 38. Many teachers said that they had specified a small number of prescribed poems because this would give them more freedom 'to teach those poems I really enjoy myself.' A number of teachers favoured the more flexible Transvaal and Natal 'system'. (See Chapter Six) 46 teachers variously complained about the present number of prescribed texts; the kind of poem prescribed; and the anthologies <sup>at</sup> present in use.

Question 6.

The general trend amongst many teachers was towards a much less frequent use of poems in language papers. Many teachers (39) deplored the use of poems as comprehension tests. Many teachers felt that the questions set by external examiners act against an appreciation of the text

as literature. 24 teachers objected to the use of poetry for grammatical purposes.

Question 7.

A very large majority (126) admitted frequent or occasional handicaps and inadequacies when teaching poetry. It is astonishing to note that the most frequent complaint (recorded by 77 teachers) was the difficulty experienced by teachers in understanding or appreciating many of the texts prescribed for children. Twenty-six teachers admitted the utmost difficulty in understanding and teaching Milton's Lycidas and a number requested 'notes' on this poem. Thirteen teachers requested various kinds of assistance from Rhodes University, e.g. reference lists, notes, recordings, refresher courses, and tape-recorded talks. Problems voiced at a number of courses for teachers of English held at Rhodes University between 1963 and 1968 support these reactions. At each of these conferences some of the discussion periods tended to be dominated by the difficulties surrounding the teaching of poetry and in interpreting prescribed texts - particularly poems by Donne, Milton, Blake, Wordsworth, Yeats, Eliot and Dylan Thomas.

Question 8.

9 teachers selected indifference or dislike to describe their attitudes to poetry. 11 teachers mentioned that they regularly wrote verse themselves, while 14 teachers mentioned that they frequently read poetry for pleasure.

Question 9(a).

The majority of teachers most enjoyed teaching poetry to the following groups :

Class Combinations	Number of Responses	Reasons Most Frequently Given
Standard X only	44 .....	{ Maturity of pupils; greater response to a wider range of poetry.
Standards IX and X	44 .....	
Standards VIII, IX and X	18 .....	
Standard VI only	16 .....	Unrestricted freedom for the teacher. Pupils' attitudes 'fresh', 'interested', 'responsive'.

Question 9(b).

Once again, many teachers were highly critical of Matriculation syllabuses and examinations. Unsuitable poems destroy all interest for pupils and teachers; examination questions are destructive; poor anthologies are selected with little appeal, variety, coverage; few annotations are given and no ideas for new approaches. Many teachers appealed for more South African and Commonwealth verse. About 20 respondents suggested that teachers should be allowed to supplement the prescribed syllabus with their own selections and that the syllabuses should consist of recommended and prescribed texts. Some teachers praised the extra freedom allowed in Natal and the Transvaal. 8 teachers pointed to the dull, unvaried 'sameness' of the syllabus year after year. 7 teachers appealed for lists of poems suitable for 'dull - average' pupils. Below matriculation, the most frequent complaints were 'staleness of syllabus', lack of a 'fresh variety' of texts, 'more choice needed' and 'new, better anthologies.'

Question 9(c).

The response here clearly showed that the majority of teachers prefer teaching the well-known, stock anthology pieces. The general desire expressed in Question 9(b) for new texts is not reflected among the 12 popular choices listed.

Question 10(a).

Although 74 teachers believed <sup>that</sup> there is an appreciable difference in attitude between boys and girls, it should be noted that 113 teachers variously selected the responses No or Undecided. (The evidence in Chapter Three suggests that only very slight differences, in attitudes to poetry, exist between boys and girls.) Furthermore, such comments as 'boys are not really interested' and 'boys tend to appreciate a smaller range of poetry' are not substantiated by the evidence in Chapter Seven.

Question 10(b).

It was clear that many teachers interpreted this question as 'responsive to kinds of questions asked in examinations' rather than 'responsive to poetry.' The evidence in Chapter Seven strongly suggests that children of average or below average intelligence are no less responsive to the right

kind of poetry than are more intelligent pupils.

Question 11.

With certain reservations, the majority of teachers (99) favoured the inclusion of extracts from plays in verse. The most frequent objection was to the loss an extract suffers out of context.

Question 12.

The most frequent views expressed have been classified under ten headings. But it is worth noting that 39 teachers referred to poor uninspired teaching during their own school days and that all 39 teachers showed more than 25 years of service.

Additional Comments.

Teachers were invited to make additional comments and suggestions and this proved to be one of the most valuable features of the survey. 124 teachers responded. The most frequently recurring views have already been noted, in the analysis. Most teachers re-affirmed or expanded upon their earlier observations and beliefs. 33 teachers attached long supplementary memoranda. The most frequently mentioned topics were: Texts, Examinations, Teaching Methods, Teacher Attitudes, and Teacher Training. Urgent requests were made by many teachers for information, advice and assistance on a number of matters. These may be summarised as follows :

- (i) Suitable poems - including South African, American and Commonwealth verse - for the middle and upper school (see Chapter Five).
- (ii) Examinations and Differentiated Syllabuses (see Chapter Six).
- (iii) Creative Verse Writing in the senior school (see Chapter Seven).
- (iv) Examples of Verse Writing by Children (see Appendix A).
- (v) A detailed analysis of Milton's Lycidas with particular reference to the allusions in the poem (See Appendix C).
- (vi) Suggestions and Approaches for Teachers including some suitable recordings and reference material (See Appendix D).

It only remains, in this chapter, to examine two matters which were frequently raised by teachers and which do not fall conveniently under any one of the six headings above. These are :

The Memorising of Verse.

The Training of English Teachers.

#### 4.4 The Memorising of Verse

Many of the more experienced teachers believed that the memorising of verse is of great importance and is badly neglected in schools today.

The value attached by Matthew Arnold to the learning and reciting of verse was noted in Chapter Two. Further emphasis was later given in official reports published by the British Board of Education. With each succeeding report, the trend was towards a greater freedom of choice with less insistence upon compulsion and uniformity as the following recommendations show :

'... passages learnt by heart should be divided into two classes. The first class should be pieces selected by the teacher to be learnt by all pupils, revised systematically...

Secondly, there may well be room for a number of passages, the choice of which is left to the pupils.'

The Teaching of English in England  
(1921) pp. 111-112.

'... poetry of a character that appeals to the pupils' imagination and interest should be committed to memory and recited from time to time in class. It is not necessary or desirable that all the pupils in a class should learn by heart the same pieces, and a special choice of passages might well be left to the tastes of individual students.'

The Education of the Adolescent  
(1926) p. 192.

Most writers today - and most teachers who expressed their views in the survey - would agree with the spirit of the second recommendation above; although giving perhaps less emphasis to formal recitation in class.

The memorising of fairly short poems, extracts from longer poems, drama and even prose is a valuable, rewarding activity. Writers variously

stress that the texts selected should be the children's own choice; that memorising should not be encouraged too frequently; that pupils should not be forced to learn unsuitable poems beyond their comprehension or poems which are unrelated to their present interests and needs. Even when a teacher anticipates that certain poems will be only fully appreciated in years to come, it would be unwise to suggest the memorising of such texts if children find them unappealing or difficult here and now. One may be forgiven for quoting, once again, from L. A. G. Strong (1946):

'I was put off Milton for years by a fool who made me learn the Sonnet on his Blindness when I was eleven. Nothing can be sillier than to set a child a poem to learn by heart before he has reached the stage at which he can appreciate it. Such attempts to force adult taste on immature minds do incalculable harm.'

If the compulsory learning of unsuitable verse is tedious and distasteful, the memorising of texts as a punishment is quite indefensible and should never be practised. (One teacher, in recommending the memorising of verse as punishment, said 'it is really the best and only way of getting the stuff into their heads!')

As the memorising of verse is a delicate matter, it is as well, while teaching, to keep some of the following questions in mind.

Has the teacher indicated, unobtrusively, from time to time that he, himself, knows a good deal of verse by heart? Have pupils noted that the teacher - without his drawing attention to the fact - is able to raise his eyes from a poem or a Shakespeare play and continue quite naturally?

Does the teacher encourage quality and variety rather than quantity for some examination? Is memorisation confined exclusively to poems of the tradition? Has the teacher suggested a variety of methods to facilitate learning by heart? Not all children, of course, will wish to follow a suggested method. Some will prefer to take in short units at a time. Some may memorise a whole poem, of up to twenty lines, in one stride. But it should be left to each pupil to make his own choice in matters of inclination, the poem selected, the number of lines learnt, and the time taken. And teachers should respect the fact that a few children will show little inclination or aptitude to memorise any poetry at all.

In my experience a useful start may be made from those poems - short ones in particular - which children have really enjoyed or requested several times. Many children find, to their great surprise and delight, that they know or half know a favourite text without having consciously memorised it. The importance of this discovery is not so much in the poem now known but in the strong motivation gained to memorise more poems, using more deliberate effort. In this way, any group which has responded appreciatively to poetry in the classroom may be easily led towards the memorisation of longer ballads and narrative poems and extracts from plays. And the pleasure thus gained will surely add to the pleasure of spontaneous recollection in years to come.

'I began to learn by heart many of those passages of poetry which have been a great treasure and comfort to me during my life - heroic poetry and famous tales and legends of the past. The committing of passages to heart, and the recording of them, is the most valuable part of education and sinks more deeply into the composition of the child than a lot of chatter - patter that is hurriedly spread over him in order to pass some examination.'

Sir Winston Churchill: from his speech after receiving the Freedom of Brighton. Quoted by Sir Richard Livingstone in Education: and the Spirit of the Age.

#### 4.5 The Training of English Teachers

Many teachers were perturbed at the shortcomings of English Method courses and the practical training given at teacher training institutions. From all accounts it would appear that few advances have been made, over the years, to diversify and enrich the training period. A number of teachers with more than 25 years of experience reflected upon the shortcomings of their own training, while some teachers with 4 years or less of teaching experience voiced the same complaint.

I am not convinced, however, that weaknesses in a newly-trained teacher of English may be entirely attributed to a deficiency in professional training. Many inadequacies among young, newly-qualified teachers are, I believe, the result of deep-rooted personal attitudes which are not always easy to eradicate within a short period of training. An alarming number of

young teachers-in-training cling to these mistaken attitudes throughout the training year; very often the student teacher is prepared to change his attitude only after watching experienced and successful teachers at work. Some of the attitudes and beliefs are astonishing.

'Do you really think it is so important that we should be able to read aloud well in a class?'

'Surely it is not essential to enjoy poetry oneself if one is going to teach it successfully?'

'I don't think the poem is nearly so important as the way I explain it to them.'

Some students, having selected school teaching as a professional career, show only a luke-warm interest and are prepared to sit back in the expectation that a year's training will bring about some kind of wondrous transformation in their attitude.

On the other hand, it is possible that English Method courses at some teacher-training centres may have remained too conservative and conventional in outlook over too long a period. It is possible that an undue emphasis upon rigid methods and approaches may have led to the neglect of more recent and significant trends in the teaching of English. Certainly, there is a vital need to lay more stress upon practice teaching, the trying out of promising ideas and approaches, and the observing of lessons given by experienced and accomplished teachers. Speech and communication, in-service training and regularly held refresher courses (see: Conclusions and Recommendations) are also important yet neglected areas.

I should like to record a few observations drawn from my own experience with three successive English Method classes at Rhodes University, Grahamstown. These students - nearly all of whom graduated with English as a major subject - were members of the University Education Diploma class.

A clear distinction should be drawn between teaching English literature at the university level and the teaching of this subject, as part of English studies, in schools. If the kind of rhythm outlined in Chapter

Three has been followed, then the precise analytical study of literature should continue at the university level, shortly to be overtaken by the beginnings of a mature period of generalisation. And this is nothing less than a return to an earlier broad attitude of wonder - but now based upon the firm foundation of a maturing critical approach, a discerning taste and an analytical inquiring judgment. It is proper, therefore, that the university lecturer should devote himself to talking about literature. It is his duty to comment upon literature, on the assumption that his students are doing something about it; that they are reading and conducting research for themselves.

But it is the school teacher's principal aim to ensure that his pupils become acquainted with literature. The teaching of English literature in schools has suffered for too long from this malpractice; that teachers have carried into the classroom the approaches and principles practised upon them in the universities and training colleges. It is easy to see how a vicious circle is perpetuated and re-inforced. Young teachers leaving a training institution to enter the teaching profession imitate their own teachers and lecturers in talking about literature. They are determined to instruct. It is nothing less than tragic that the majority of newly-fledged teachers about to start their careers appear to consider it a little naïve to allow their pupils to become widely acquainted with literature first and foremost as an experience; an experience accompanied by pleasure, relaxation and an excitement to explore further afield. It is quite clear that the overriding aim of many English teachers to instruct pupils in literature involves children in precise specialised techniques long before they are ready to begin the analytical study of literature. And the kinds of questions appearing in many external examinations (see Chapter Six) with their emphasis upon countless, detached exercises of a mechanical nature only serve to aggravate the situation.

Consequently, and in the teaching of poetry in particular, teachers are too prone to teach all the time; to snuff out the poetry and light up their own candles of knowledge. Poetry, more than any other literary form, calls for the teacher to act the part of a skilled mediator between the poet and the young audience. The teacher is really no more to the poem than an experienced producer is to a play. The successful experience

of poetry flows from a rapport established between the children and the poet. Similarly - to carry the analogy to its logical conclusion - the successful and satisfying experience of drama comes from the absorption of the audience in the play and not from any pre-occupation with the producer.

We must further guard against inflicting our own knowledge, opinions and prejudices on children before they have had a chance to experience a poem for themselves. This practice, which is commonly termed 'background', is not background at all. It is foreground of the worst kind. It is sometimes nothing less than the dropping of our own curtain of beliefs between the poet and the pupil; and many teachers, in doing this, often unwittingly, are cutting off valid opinions that might have been suggested by the pupils.

'... 'Tis with our judgements as our watches; none  
Go just alike, yet each believes his own ...'

Pope: Essay on Criticism.

The following written assignment was recently set to one English Method class of 32 graduates.

Sketch a lesson on ONE poem from EACH section of the list below.

Section A (Standard VI)

Noyes: The Highwayman; Masfield: Cargoes;  
Anon.: The Wife of Usher's Well; Browning:  
The Pied Piper of Hamelin.

Section B (Standard VIII)

Newbolt: He fell among Thieves; Spender: The Express;  
Lawrence: Bat; Shakespeare: Julius Caesar, Mark Antony's funeral speech.

Section C (Standard X)

Chaucer: Selections from the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales;  
Gray: Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard;  
Arnold: Dover Beach;  
Owen: Miners.

Now there is something to be said for giving some relevant background information to a class before a poem is read, and there is also something to be said for a certain amount of explanation and discussion following the reading of a poem, but there is really nothing at all to be said in favour of smothering the poem with a load of extraneous material, intrinsically interesting in itself, but not in the least relevant to the experience of the poem. Most of the students seemed fearful that their lesson would fail

unless propped up by an extraordinary array of ingenious devices and aids. With such simple poems as Cargoes and The Highwayman, a third of the class gave detailed accounts, under the heading Introduction, of visits to museums to study the design of a 'quinquireme'; of complete lessons devoted to the history and geography of Mediterranean lands; and of twenty or thirty minute historical introductions to highway robbery in 18th and 19th Century England. This apparent need for instruction and realism, or a talk about and around the real aim of the lesson, became progressively more evident in Sections B and C of the assignment. One student intended to display a stuffed bat before the class during the reading of Lawrence's Bat 'so that the children could grasp more easily the images that Lawrence is trying to project ...' It was difficult to believe that this student was not being frivolous, until questioned about the matter.

It is not that such introductions, aids or devices are merely irrelevant. Untold harm is being done by drawing attention away from the poem towards other subjects. One could even imagine a class wondering what relevance the poem bore towards the introductory talk.

Teachers should aim to reverse the unbalanced ratio between talking about the poem, its elements and its background, and the speaking of the poem itself. And it must not be imagined that this approach is ~~only~~ used <sup>only</sup> by a new generation of teachers. Many of the student teachers admitted later that they had patterned their lessons on 'the way our teachers used to teach us when we were at school.'

In order to restore a sane, balanced ratio between commenting upon literature and the actual experience of literature, teachers should be prepared more often to present nothing but a skilful reading of the poem. Any critical discussion of the poem should spring from the skilful reading alone. Miss F.M. Stevens (1953), in an essay entitled Leaving It Alone, makes just such a plea to teachers :

'...there is a danger inherent in every activity connected with poetry just because it is activity: the danger that, in the multitude of enjoyable and exciting pursuits encouraged by the teacher, children may by-pass the very theme of the lesson, the poem itself, or may find, perhaps much later, that the essence of it has eluded their search. It is not merely, or

even chiefly, in unsuccessful or boring teaching that the danger lies. I can think of many an excellent, stimulating lesson, in which teacher and children are alive, mutually responsive, and doing all sorts of exciting things. Everything is there - except the poem . . . . I am going to suggest some times, situations, and stages when poetry should be left alone, and shall try to show that on some occasions the very refraining from action - the decision not to do anything with the poem, though it seems to ask to be declaimed, or painted, or acted, or discussed - may itself be the most positive of all means of arousing appreciation.'

In passing, we should note the commendable approach to Wilfred Owen's Miners summed up by one student in his introduction.

"At most I would supply the class (or better still, get them to supply me) with a few vivid, relevant details emphasizing the appalling struggle during the Second World War. Then I would read to the class an extract from a letter written by Owen to his mother in which he throws some interesting light on the thought of the poem :

'Wrote a poem on the Colliery Disaster: but I get mixed up with the War at the end. It is short, but oh! sour!'

Letter to his mother (January or February, 1918)

Immediately following this I would read Miners aloud to the class from beginning to end without interruption."

Here is a student whose aim is admirably simple and clear. He has minimised his introduction to a few short, interesting, relevant details. He has attempted to draw attention towards the poem and allows the poem to be the focal point of his lesson. Unlike another student who also chose to teach Miners, he has resisted the temptation to exhibit maps showing coal-producing areas in Britain or to talk about typical rescue operations following a colliery disaster.

The same group of 32 teachers-in-training revealed, in varying degrees, a number of further defective aims, many of which could be traced to the recollection of unsound approaches used during their own school days.

Far too many student teachers indicated that they would interrupt their first reading of a poem to explain a point or ask a question. If the aim - which it must be - is to allow a poem to be an unbroken experience, a certain created atmosphere has to be preserved. There is no place in

the reading of poetry for any kind of interruption. Many poems create the atmosphere of an incantation and call for what Coleridge has described as 'that willing suspension of disbelief <sup>which</sup> for the moment <sup>which</sup> constitutes poetic faith.'

An analogy with music is not out of place. During a symphony concert, for example, the audience takes pleasure <sup>in</sup> ~~from~~ the total unbroken effect of the whole. The reason for the wood-wind's entering at a particular moment should not tease the audience during the performance. Somehow, analysis is willing to remain at rest and only familiarity with the work should assist our recognition of such details and their significance.

Poetry, with its imaginative, concentrated appeal to the emotions, requires a certain preservation of a special, sensitised atmosphere. Such an atmosphere is not nearly so marked or sustained when one is reading aloud a novel or short story. Certainly, a teacher conducting a lesson in music appreciation would be rightly condemned for lifting the needle from the record in order to ask a listening class: 'What new instrument has just taken over the playing of the theme in a new key?'

A number of student teachers believed that even the shortest poem had to occupy an entire school period. Some students were even prepared to stretch Masefield's Cargoes into two lessons. Student teachers frequently set up an unfortunate ratio between the total experience of literature and the total time spent in talking about literature. These students who were prepared to spin out Masefield's short poem over two periods were aiming to balance TWO minutes of reading (literature) with SEVENTY to EIGHTY minutes of illustrations and investigation (talking about literature).

Is it any wonder that many children are apparently indifferent towards literature while still at school? If acquaintance with literature and criticism of literature exist in such proportions, there is every need for concern about the declining interest in poetry shown by the masses.

It is easy to see how such a recipe of 'one poem equals one lesson' has arisen. There appears to be a general assumption that teaching science or mathematics and teaching literature is one and the same thing. The student teacher may be told in his General Educational Method classes to

plan his lesson on the neat logical lines of Introduction - Exposition - Development - Recapitulation - and Conclusions or Application. The arrangement works admirably when it fits a subject where the logical, orderly presentation of information and material is essential. In science and mathematics the concept of the lesson as an instructional unit with a pre-ordained pattern of instruction cannot be questioned. Such lessons begin with a certain proposition; let us say the production of Chlorine gas through the inter-action of Ferrous Sulphide and Hydrochloric acid. An experiment is conducted, following a logical procedure, to prove the proposition. The gas is collected, tested and its reactions with other substances noted. It is the teacher who conveys, step by step, some principle to his pupils. He possesses something which they, for the time being, do not possess. He talks and demonstrates. They watch, listen and absorb.

Now this procedure, sound as it may be in the teaching of science or in teaching abstract principles in mathematics, logic or grammar, has been misapplied to the teaching of poetry. Even with the shortest lyric, teachers mistakenly feel that they must teach something; that the poem must be stretched out to satisfy the traditional lesson pattern beginning with a detailed Introduction and ending with a Recapitulation. This leads to an obvious danger; the poem, however short, is made to supply a seemingly infinite number of subsidiary exercises - word meanings, antonyms, paraphrasing, figures of speech, literary devices, parsing, memorising, or speech training.

Mr James Britton warned, at a conference of English teachers (Grahamstown, September 1963), of the danger of this sort of approach when he said :

'...I can't help a certain feeling of impatience when poetry lessons become matters of metrics and figures of speech, or even "literary qualities" in the broad sense. Of course these things have a place, but they have a place very much later, when we have secured the essential, individual response to poetry of every child.' (Italics mine)

It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that no uniform approach should be used in the teaching of poetry. When dealing with the arts,

uniformity is deadening to appreciation. The traditional lesson pattern must be discarded. A successful poetry lesson certainly does not depend upon: Introduction - Development - Application - and Recapitulation. One can never be certain what will happen from one moment to the next in a successful poetry lesson. Pupils might request a re-reading of the poem. They might wish to draw comparisons with a poem read weeks earlier. They might ask for several more poems by the same author to be read. They might split into several camps over the theme of the poem and prolong such a discussion for over half the lesson. They might even 'switch off' after the reading of a long or difficult poem and that is the end of that lesson.

The following formulation of intentions is quoted below as a typical example of the aims suggested by 11 members of the class of 32 student teachers.

'AIM: To read He Fell Among Thieves by Henry Newbolt and to demonstrate to the pupils the moral behind the poem, the author's dramatic power and the fact that a story told in verse is often more effective than a prose version.'

Why demonstrate anything at all? (The 'science lesson' method should be noted in the selection of the word 'demonstrate!')/ What is the purpose of searching for a message or moral in the poem? What is the moral anyway? Surely it is quite sufficient to present the poem as it stands, and no other aim is needed than that the class should enjoy it? If English teachers are being launched into the teaching world armed with such incongruous and irrelevant aims, it is little wonder that there is a need for an investigation into the problems of teaching poetry in South African schools.

Closely allied to these irrelevancies is yet another mistaken view. This is the habit, revealed quite clearly in the lesson plans submitted by student teachers, of focussing attention upon scraps of general knowledge. This can be illustrated by a lesson during which a student teacher succumbed to this distressing temptation. The poem chosen was Roy Campbell's Autumn. After a skilful reading the teacher in question began to draw from the pupils a number of penetrating observations on the imagery and thought of the poem

and a really successful lesson was under way until attention was drawn to the last stanza :

'Soon on our hearth's reviving pyre  
Their rotted stems will crumble up;  
And like a ruby panting fire,  
The grape will redden on your fingers  
Through the lit crystal of the cup.'

The remaining twenty minutes of the lesson was taken up with some detailed discussion centred around harvest festivals; the custom of burning the dead in India over a funeral pyre; the special qualities of the ruby and other precious stones (including a word on pearls in answer to a question from a pupil); the types of red wines and sherries produced in Spain (from the word redden); a word on Mediterranean climate; and a brief explanation of cut-glass (from crystal).

There is a subtle danger behind such digressions. The teacher is all too often aware that the lesson he has given has succeeded - that is, as a lesson in general knowledge. This particular class had been interested and alert. Some intelligent questions had been asked. The lesson had a vital, efficient air and appeared neatly finished by the time the bell had rung. But, in truth, the experience of poetry had ended twenty minutes before the close of the lesson and the poem lay forgotten beneath many layers of general knowledge and economic geography.

There is no room in the teaching of poetry for any kind of digression which does not bear directly upon a greater understanding of the poem.

It is also apparent from student assignments that every poem is supposed to contain some hidden didactic message. Even with the simplest poem many students showed that their aim was to encourage their pupils to find some moralistic platitude which could be clearly stated in prose and used as a guide in life. Surely this erroneous practice defeats the spirit of poetry. Pupils will be led to assume that, firstly, all poems are written in order to enshrine some message and that such pills of wisdom are more important than the poem; and that, secondly, any poem which fails to yield a moral message is a superficial poem.

The discovery of any 'moral' in a poem can never replace the total

emotional, imaginative and intellectual experience involved. Much of the greatest poetry is, in Milton's words, 'simple, sensuous and passionate', and its greatness lies in our total experience of all its elements.

It has become clear that a large proportion of students in an English Methods class may :

- (i) Show little desire to read any poetry for pleasure.
- (ii) Look upon the teaching of poetry simply as a 'syllabus duty'.
- (iii) Display little inclination to explore beyond the limits of a prescribed school anthology.
- (iv) Show little evidence that their academic training has assisted in developing any kind of discrimination or literary taste.

Ironically, there are a few students who show at least an implicit prejudice against poetry of any kind. And these attitudes among teachers-in-training are confirmed by several overseas investigations :

'It is a sad indictment of our teaching that out of twenty-five first-year students at a Men's Training College only one student admitted to an enthusiasm for poetry, while eight expressed indifference, and eight positive dislike.'

Poetry and Children: A Report Prepared by the Central Committee on the Teaching of English in the East and West Ridings of Yorkshire. (1956)

A more recent survey of the attitudes to poetry of 173 students at the Nottingham College of Education (E. Wainwright: 1966) reflected only a slightly more favourable set of attitudes. Even 'favourite authors and poems' listed by these students is revealing (see Chapter Three).

Coleridge:	<u>Ancient Mariner</u> (14 mentions)
Keats:	<u>Nightingale Ode</u> (11)
Keats:	<u>Autumn Ode</u> (8)
Tennyson:	<u>Morte D'Arthur</u> (6)
Wordsworth:	<u>Michael</u> (6)
Keats:	<u>Eve of St. Agnes</u> (5)

The stock, anthology of poets and poems listed, and the very low frequency of mentions, both suggest that the majority of students were exposed to the narrow range of well known texts which form the core of an

accepted tradition and little else. It is hardly surprising that the investigator says :

'I suppose the most platitudinous supposition is that somewhere between the beginning of junior school and the end of secondary school, poetry becomes progressively the minority interest it is to remain, henceforth catered for largely in the debased form of pop songs, advertising jingles, the In Memoriam Column and the Christmas card.'

Wainwright (1966).

A further weakness among many student-teachers - a result of their limited literary interests and explorations - is very obvious when they are asked, at short notice, to present a poem of their own choice to a class. The consternation which follows cannot be ascribed merely to lack of experience or nervousness. Student teachers simply do not have a rep<sup>er</sup>toire, however small, of suitable poems for various age groups. Worse still, these graduates have no vivid recollections of poems read during their own schooldays :

'Please, I've been asked to do a poem with 8A at School X. Can you suggest something? I've taken out a whole lot of anthologies from the Department library but I can't think of anything.'

Consternation only increases when I reply in this vein :

'Well, I can suggest about 30 or 40 poems. What are your tastes and preferences? Who are your favourite authors? Which poems did you most enjoy in Standard 8? Which poems do you most enjoy reading aloud? How interested are you in ballads and folk songs? What about poems which have interested you recently? Have a look through these collections of poems written by Australian and Canadian children; you will certainly find a number which will interest you and the class. Finally, if you are really stuck, some of these by Guy Butler, Roy Campbell, Ted Hughes, Edwin Muir and Andrew Young are worth trying.'

Fortunately, by the year's end the position improves. But to achieve this takes a year of lecturing, suggestions, ideas, demonstration lessons and a mass exposure to a very wide range of poetry suitable for various age groups.

But perhaps the most serious defect among large numbers of would-be teachers of English is the inability to read aloud with clarity, fluency,

sensitivity and interpretative understanding. There are very few balanced readers, among student teachers, who would command a short or sustained listening attention. Many who at least can claim audibility, fail hopelessly on pace, rhythm, understanding and on subtle variations of tone and pitch. The need to develop this important speech skill cannot be over-stressed. The following extracts from Poetry and Children (1956) points to this deficiency :

"Mr L. A. G. Strong, in a letter to us, stressed the need for 'teachers who love and understand poetry, and are capable of communicating what they feel about it. The great need is for trained speakers of verse, who can present poems to children with intelligence and beauty of tone.' "

"Lionel Hale compares poetry readers on the air with, 'those citizens who do not often go to church, and who when there for a christening or Christmas, behave with an exaggerated, tip-toeing reverence.' "

"Bonamy Dobrée points out: 'One of the gravest defects in verse broadcasts has been the failure to read quietly and naturally.' "

"Mr C. Day Lewis, in a letter to us, suggested also that schools might take more advantage of the facilities offered by ... societies ... for hearing good speakers in varied programmes. "

Some teachers-in-training, however, question the importance of good reading aloud. For them, reading aloud has a minimum value.

'As long as the pupils can follow that's the main thing.'

What can be done about the matter? Do teacher-training institutions give sufficient attention to the skills of speech? How much can be accomplished by a weekly practical of 40 minutes during the course of a year?

Whether sufficient emphasis or not is given at present to speech skills during teacher-training, it is my contention that little progress will be made while only marginal attention continues to be given to speech activities in the schools. Even if it is not absolutely agreed upon that, '... of all the different aspects of English, speech has by far the most significant contribution to make ...', (Newsom Report: 1963 para 467) it seems generally

accepted today that oral communication is at least as important as written communication. Speaking and listening is a vital area of English as firmly accepted as reading and writing. Yet the failure to pay much serious attention to the examining of spoken English in schools has led to its lack of status and consequently to its neglect in the classroom. How articulate are most school-leavers? Can the majority be described as easy conversationalists - able to discuss anything with clarity and feeling? How easily can young people today describe an idea or situation with fluency and interest; give clear directions or information; listen intently with full attention and comprehension?

These questions reflect ordinary, dynamic, day-to-day speech confrontations, let alone good reading aloud which is an accomplished skill.

It is not often enough remembered that teachers are - or should be - professional communicators. No one will deny that any teacher is a better teacher if he can read and speak with clarity, interest, expression and vigour. And in certain fields such as literature the ability to listen, to speak, and to read aloud well becomes supremely important. If this seems a platitude, I can only reply that many young teachers going out into the schools are not much better equipped, as professional communicators, than any of the children they will be teaching.

Those who clamour for concentrated attention upon speech skills during the short period of teacher training are apt to forget that the skills in question (or rather, the lack of skills) are acquired many years before teacher-training begins. Consequently, the Training College or University Education Department is forced to telescope the acquisition of these skills into a year or two. Worse still, is the period of 'undoing' which must take place before any positive accomplishments are achieved (and this applies equally to faulty attitudes, poor literary taste and discrimination and the disinclination to read for pleasure). It is not simply a question of cultivating or encouraging new skills; it is more a question of hasty remedial action; of 'de-educating' before any kind of re-educating can take place. And this is thoroughly wasteful, for the prime function of higher education is to consolidate, to extend and to refine. It should not be the rôle of the training college - far less the university - to fulfil a remedial function of any kind.

Serious consideration should be given to the suggestions made by Branford (1966) 'that speech should be studied in the wider context of communication, and that it should not be relegated to an ad hoc presentation in the U. E. D. course.' This plea asks for speech activities to be woven into academic studies as a natural extension of what should be taking place in the schools. But instead, the skills of speech are largely ignored for the best part of 15 years before being parcelled out for attention during a comparatively short period of professional training.

It is also singularly unfortunate that the ideas and approaches (however imaginative and enriched) given to student teachers in English Method classes are largely ineffective in day to day practice. It is difficult to break through, much less break up, a notorious and vicious educational circle. New teachers cannot be criticised for ploughing back into their teaching the unsound approaches remembered from their own schooldays. Students - themselves products of a rigidly controlled system of prescribed syllabuses, external examinations and, in the main, undifferentiated courses - find themselves re-entering the same system and caught up by the same uniformity which demands 'less imaginative, less creative teaching; a wariness to experiment ... memorising by repetition ... more of the kind of drillwork, repetitive revision, that does not foster the development of real study.' J. F. Swartz (1961).

It is a danger signal too, when young teachers (many of whom have freshly experienced the beginnings of effective and creative teaching) are warned by senior teachers to heed the demands of an inflexible system.

'Forget about all those fancy methods. We've just got to get these kids through their exams and the way to do this is to grind away all the time; give tests every week, check the marks carefully, go over old papers, make up model answers, dictate notes on those tough poems and revise, revise, revise. You might try to get the standard Sixes keen on some of your ideas but ...' A Senior English Master in the Cape Province (1966).

This exhortation is not far removed, in spirit, from a more familiar one :

'Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls

nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir.'

Dickens: Hard Times (1854).

Perhaps there is some truth in the assertion made by B. F. Skinner (1967) of Harvard University. He argues that the idea of effective teaching is the very thing which precludes its implementation. It is quite conceivable that a system of regimentation and prescription is tolerated - and therefore resistant to change - not despite, but because of, its inflexibility and ineffectiveness.

'We fear effective teaching, as we fear all effective means of changing human behaviour. Power not only corrupts, it frightens; and absolute power frightens absolutely. We take another - and very long - look at educational policy when we conceive of teaching which really works.'

B. F. Skinner (1967).

Confirmation for this is not difficult to find. And teachers are hardly to be blamed for conforming to an educational pattern which has little room for 'all those fancy methods'. The reform of English studies must be accepted as a long-term problem. Not only will reform depend upon an influx of highly qualified and well trained teachers who can teach; but <sup>also</sup> it will ~~also~~ depend on whether the authorities, who devise 'systems', are on the side of flexibility.

'It is so easy, you know, to keep on doing and thinking the same things just because for generations those are the things that have been thought and done. And it is also very dangerous, because left to itself, humanity has a tendency to keep grinding around in the same grooves.'

A. N. Whitehead (1954).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TEXTS

5.1 The Problem

It was noted in the previous chapter that a very great number of complaints was lodged by teachers against texts, anthologies and syllabuses. This occurred at all levels; and at least 6 high school teachers criticized the poor quality and range of texts used in the upper primary school classes. Poems prescribed for matriculation were those most frequently and severely criticized. A significant number of teachers requested lists of suitable fresh poems, from the Institute for the Study of English in Africa, which would be likely to appeal to pupils at various levels and which would relieve the boredom 'of doing the same old poems over and over again.' Seven teachers submitted lists of poems not usually found in school anthologies, which they believed would prove useful to other teachers. Some of these lists contained as many as 65 poems which had proved consistently successful with various age groups. Two teachers suggested, independently, that as a result of the survey an anthology containing a great deal of new material should be published. (See Section 5.3.)

It also became clear, as noted in Chapter Three, that hundreds of pupils variously used the words, 'too difficult to understand', 'not interesting', 'too old-fashioned', 'needs too much explaining' and 'boring', to describe those poems least enjoyed. Equally, a very large number of boys and girls described the texts most enjoyed as 'easy to understand', 'exciting', 'interesting', 'different', 'having a good story', and 'full of feeling'.

These two independent surveys of attitudes towards poetry showed some close correlations in the matter of texts most liked and most disliked. This was particularly evident in the upper school. For example, poems such as Robert Browning's My Last Duchess; D.H. Lawrence's Snake, and T.S. Eliot's The Journey of the Magi, were very highly rated by both pupils and teachers. On the other hand, a poem such as Wordsworth's Immortality Ode presented the greatest difficulty to both teachers and pupils and consequently was rated, on the whole, as amongst those least enjoyed, by the groups.

It was also very noticeable that many teachers were at a loss to find sources of suitable material. Others appeared unable to distinguish between good appropriate poems and poor unsuitable verse. Many teachers who strongly favoured 'new stimulating material' submitted lists of poems which they most enjoyed teaching; yet, in nearly every case, the listed poems did not show a single departure from the traditional school anthology pieces.

Choice of texts is a problem which teems with difficulties. What exactly is meant by a suitable text? Is there such a thing as an ideal poem for a particular age group? The answer from some teachers 'Well, my pupils enjoy it' is not a reliable criterion of the goodness of a text. Many children will enjoy third rate counterfeit poetry as long as it has a racy mechanical rhythm and a flashy story. On the other hand, if a teacher thinks entirely of the supreme poems of the tradition, he may fail to make any contact at all with his pupils.

The teacher's attitude towards a poem must also be considered. A poem is only completely satisfying to most children when the teacher's attitude to the poem is the right one. What may be an ideal poem in the hands of one teacher may turn out to be an unfortunate choice when presented by another teacher. (See Chapter Three and Table I School A: 'I detest Browning's My Last Duchess'.) A poem may be an excellent choice only if it is read aloud really well and left alone 'to do its own work.' T. S. Eliot (1960). Yet the success of the same poem, at a different level, may depend almost entirely on the way a teacher leads a class towards an examination of the theme, imagery and tone.

It may appear that I am describing methods rather than texts, but, as I see the matter, the two are inter-dependent; and in the final analysis what the teacher does with a text will determine its suitability or appropriateness.

One could continue to speculate on the many possible ways in which a text may be appealing and appropriate or unsuitable and repelling, ~~Simply~~ by juggling with variables such as the teacher's attitude, personality, reading voice, methods and approaches; the text itself; the attitudes and personalities of the children; the number of times the same text has been

previously presented by different teachers (see Chapter Three) and the general subject or theme of the poem, irrespective of its greatness. Which of these poems, for instance, would probably be more appropriate for a rather tough, hostile class of 14-year-old boys - Keats' The Eve of St Agnes or Frankie and Johnny?

'When all is said, however, it must be admitted that there are certain subjects in poetry which have more appeal than others. Narrative poems of action go down better with boys of nine to fourteen years old than most other kinds of poems. Love poems may be disliked by school-children not only because they are often badly taught, but also because the subject is embarrassing. It is all a matter of suiting the poem to the child. This is not in the least the same as saying that we must lower our standards for children. It means, rather, that we must continually study the nature and interests of the children, their emotional development, their maturity or immaturity of outlook, their range of vocabulary and intelligence; then out of our stock of available poems of good quality and varied kinds we can choose those which best suit a particular class at a particular time.'

Reeves (1958) p. 9.

An ideal situation may be described as follows: A teacher has a large repertoire of poems and each poem in the words of James Britton (1963) is 'worthwhile in itself as poetry yet at the same time embodies an experience that is within reach of the children.' These are poems which the teacher knows he can read aloud really well; they give him satisfaction and enjoyment. He has collected poems which he knows, from experience, have proved successful, because over the years they have pleased or excited most of his pupils. The teacher will know that some poems consistently fail to arouse interest amongst children of a certain age range. He recognizes that these failures may be due in part to his own deficiencies and he will avoid presenting these texts. The situation is fully under his control for he is permitted to draw up his own syllabus and set his own examination.

But a move from the ideal to the actual brings to light a number of unfortunate restrictions. A teacher, faced with the prospect of teaching English to a Junior Certificate class in a Government School (Cape Education Department), will hear the Voice of the System saying :

'Here <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ an X number of poems. You must try to like them all and you must encourage your pupils to like them. You should present these poems only in the final year of Junior Certificate (Standard 8). With each poem you should stress the retention of content, figures of speech and other examinable facts. And your pupils will need plenty of revision for there is much to remember. You are reminded that the examination of these poems is based upon an explicit system of markable points and upon prose renderings of the contents of certain poems.'

(See Chapter Six)

The many teachers who complained about unsuitable texts and a restrictive syllabus undoubtedly spoke from within the confines of a situation similar to the one outlined above; and, as long as the choice of texts and the manner of examining them remain beyond the control of teachers, there is little hope of improvement. Here one might recall the following words :

'I think that the choice of poems to present to a class, should represent the taste of the teacher, not be set by a board.'

T. S. Eliot (1960).

## 5.2 The Junior School

The years in the primary school are uncomplicated by examinations; free from the rigid prescription of texts; and well beyond the long shadow cast by Matriculation.

'We may have to do some serious marking time in the secondary school - with the thirteen or fourteen year olds perhaps - but the years in the junior school are, as far as poetry is concerned, the golden years.'

Britton (1963) p. 239.

The chief aim here - as indeed at all levels - is to expose children to a wide range of poetry of the right kind and at the right moment. This is the age for appetite rather than taste. Children should become acquainted with poetry along a broad front, never dwelling for too long on any one text but continually ranging through and encountering fresh material. This is not the time for the single set anthology which is made to last for a year by reading a poem or two each week. This is the time for activity in and

with, poetry; for listening to it, reading it, making it, singing it, speaking it, collecting it in a personal anthology. It is a time for endless excitement whenever poetry is presented. In this way children will grow to feel, in later years, that poetry, even when set for examinations and requiring intensive study, is not consumable stock; it is not something 'done', but something to return to with renewed pleasure. The experience of poetry in the primary school must be an extensive experience to open up vistas of imagination. There is little room for the intensive study of texts. Precision and analysis can be positively harmful. Nothing else should be required but that young children should enjoy, for as long as possible, the experience of delight and wonder; and this extended experience of enjoyment with poetry is the best possible foundation for later literary criticism and intensive textual studies. There is little room at this level for questions such as 'How is this effect achieved?' or 'What is the poet's intention here?' The experience of poetry should be in great unanalysed wholes, which means - emphatically - that literary inquiry is postponed until later years.

A further aim - perhaps the most important - is that pupils should be exposed to poetry that is worthwhile in itself as poetry; poetry that falls within their experience and yet has the power to extend present experience. In the matter of texts we should think entirely in terms of goodness and immediacy rather than greatness and its attendant danger of remoteness.

In this respect, I should like to make a special plea which I have made elsewhere in this thesis (see Chapters One, Two and Seven) for a greater use, in the classroom, of outstanding poems written by children. Far too many people - including most teachers - labour under the mistaken idea that children's verse writing can never rise above doggerel. Nothing could be further from the truth. (See Appendix A) Many poems written by children are ideal texts for children. The feelings expressed, the idiom, brevity and vision of many children's poems have a directness and immediacy which show a passionate involvement with life as seen by the child. What better material than this, especially for recalcitrant children?

'... children's ways of looking at the world and children's

use of language have very much in common with a poet's viewpoint and poetic language.'

Britton (1963) p. 231.

During the past year I encouraged students taking the Higher Primary Teacher's Certificate to introduce their pupils to good poems written by British, American, Australian and South African children. The response from their pupils, aged between  $10\frac{1}{2}$  and  $12\frac{1}{2}$ , was immediate and enthusiastic. (See Chapter Seven.) Many began to write in verse themselves and every student teacher reported that nearly all ~~their~~ <sup>his</sup> pupils showed a new excited interest in poetry. That this was not merely an interest in novelty is proved by the fact that this high degree of interest was maintained throughout the year. From the vivid descriptions of successful lessons and from my own observation of a great deal of stimulating work in the classrooms, I could sense that the student teachers themselves were equally excited by this work.

The inclusion, in teaching, of the best writing by children should also be accompanied by the exclusion, in teaching, of what the Flowden Report (1966) paragraph 597, describes as 'too much tinkling verse about fairies and elves written specially for children.' The effect of this kind of facile, sentimental verse upon children can only be described as devastating, for it successfully inoculates them against poetry. Worse still, when these debased effusions are found side by side with genuine poems, children are led to believe that any sort of rubbish may pass for poetry. The fact that such vapid sentiment still appears in school anthologies only serves to show that some misguided adults firmly believe that young children benefit from childish verse rather than genuine poetry which is child-like in its direct imaginative power and wonder. Perhaps one of the worst features of most school anthologies is their tendency to perpetuate counterfeit verse. This in-breeding has continued for over a century. It was patriotic whimsy in Matthew Arnold's day which aroused him to exclaim, '...it is provoking to think that such rubbish as this should be palmed off on a poor child...!' (Report of 1867. See Chapter Two p. 34.) And the verses quoted by Arnold are no different in sentiment from those appearing in a book of verse used as a Junior Certificate text in 1948. Two extracts are quoted below for comparison.

[ 1867 ]

MY NATIVE LAND

'She is a rich and rare land,  
Oh! She is a fresh and fair land,  
She is a dear and rare land,  
This native land of mine.'

[ 1948 ]

THE SUNSHINE LAND

'Blue skies burning above  
Leagues of brown earth and sand;  
This is the land which we cherish and love,  
This is the Sunshine Land ...'

Perhaps the validity of my plea for the use in schools of poetry written by children/ may be strengthened by the following contrasts between 'tinkling verse' which passes for poetry and some poems written by young children.

'It is time they awoke us,  
Said the bluebell to the crocus  
For I feel the warm spring rain.

Get up and don't be lazy,  
Said a primrose to a daisy,  
And they pushed with might and main.

Said a goblin to an elf,  
Can't you feel it for yourself,  
And they listened to the strain

Of the skylark upward winging  
The gladsome news a-bringing  
That spring is here again.'

Some Poems by Young Australian Children

MIDNIGHT

It was midnight,  
the sky was dark, black,  
the stars were threepenny bits  
and the sea  
was making a sound  
like a silk dress.

Linda Driver, aged 8.

The river strides on  
singing the dim song of night  
to the sleeping fish.

Meredith Hamilton, aged 11,

THE BEE

The bee is a merchant.  
He trades among  
flower planets.

Peter Kelso, aged 12.

ONCE AROUND THE SUN

Once around the sun  
White washed wands of wondrous blossom  
Will wave to the westward winds.

Once around the sun  
Green glassed water will erupt  
Beneath a burning sun.

Once around the sun  
Mixed myriad leaves  
Slither into slippery smoke.

Once around the sun  
Cold clustered cut icicles  
Will hang in the clammy air.  
Once around the sun.

Andrew Kelso, aged 11.

From: Once Around The Sun (1966).

It is not practicable in this survey to examine or recommend many of the texts that could be used in the primary classes. Neither is it desirable perhaps to give an exhaustive list of poems suited to young children, when so much depends upon the attitudes, temperaments and tastes of particular children and particular teachers. Nevertheless, the following general recommendations are made :

- (i) It would be a serious omission to ignore poems by the following writers:

John Clare, Walter de la Mare, Emily Dickinson,  
Robert Frost, Rudyard Kipling, John Masefield,  
James Reeves, Christina Rossetti, James Stephens,  
Robert Louis Stevenson, Sara Teasdale and Arthur  
Waley's translations from the Chinese.

- (ii) Children in the junior school should not be exposed to poetry merely during a single, weekly school lesson. The unfortunate result of this practice is that poetry comes to be regarded as something apart from the rest of English studies. Moreover, the single lesson encourages a concentrated attack upon poetry rather than a leisurely, unhurried approach.
- (iii) Every effort should be made to select texts which may be used, directly, to encourage choral verse speaking and creative verse writing. With regard to the former activity, it is not recommended that two-part rhymes be used, initially, with older children as is suggested in the Cape Education Department handbook entitled Language in the Primary School: Syllabuses and Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers (1957). This publication suggests that, with children between the ages of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  and  $12\frac{1}{2}$ , two-part rhymes, such as the following, should be used to introduce choral verse speaking :

THE THREE KITTENS

'The three little kittens  
Lost their mittens,  
And they began to cry:  
"Oh, Mother dear! ..."' etc.

Modern practice suggests that, with older children, rhymes of this kind should be avoided and should certainly not be associated with the poem selected for choral speaking.

- (iv) The extended use of a single anthology for any class in the primary school is restrictive and highly undesirable. At least several sets of anthologies should be in circulation; in addition, children should be encouraged to compile their own anthologies. Inaccessible texts should be cyclo-styled by the teacher and, after being read, these may be added, if desired, to the personal anthology.

Education authorities, acting on the advice of specialist teachers or teacher-training institutions, should recommend that schools should obtain inspection copies of three or four different anthologies. Each teacher should have in his classroom complete sets of several anthologies of his own choice. In addition to the

school library, each class should have a small library. The teacher himself should compile a personal anthology of suitable poems which he enjoys presenting and which have proved consistently successful with his pupils. In this way, no teacher or class is saddled for a year with a single anthology, which may contain as few as ten suitable poems.

After consulting many primary school teachers in Britain and South Africa, it is my considered opinion that the tradition of the single class anthology and the single weekly lesson have, together, been ultimately more destructive of poetic taste than anything else. Nothing is calculated to produce more distaste, apathy and boredom. It is a tradition which must be broken.

A final word on the right choice of poem for the young child is best left to James Reeves :

'The ideal poem for a child is one which at once delights him by its originality and makes him feel almost as if he might have written it himself. It should enter his consciousness almost unawares and be immediately accepted so that it comes to be something which, like the nursery rhymes of his infancy, he cannot remember ever having not known.'

From: Young Writers and Young Readers (1965).

### 5.3

#### The Senior School

It is a pity that the experience described above by James Reeves appears to be an uncommon one in the senior school. All the evidence in Chapter Three and Four points to the fact that the experience of poetry amongst senior school pupils largely ceases to be a happy, satisfying event. Curbed by the restrictive tradition of a prescribed syllabus and dominated by the rigours of an external examination, the exciting experience of poetry - if it ever were such in the junior school - dwindles to a painful drudgery as the majority struggle to understand that which is often too remote from their experience.

Ideally, there should be a continuation of the aims followed in the junior school. The only major difference is that the extensive acquaintance<sup>ance</sup> with poetry should become gradually more balanced with

the intensive study of more and more poems; and in time this leads towards a more critical and discriminating attitude towards literature. There are, of course, minor differences. For example, an activity such as choral speaking should begin to recede - growing sophistication and fewer suitable texts demand that it should.

It was pointed out in the previous chapter that the school teacher's chief aim is to ensure that his pupils become acquainted with a wide range of literature. What really matters most in any poetry lesson is the moment, when, for some pupils at least, a poem relates significantly, and in a personal sense, to their lives. To achieve this effectively calls for the same aims outlined in section 5.2. It calls for the same wide exposure to experiences of many different kinds of poems; it calls for the same range of resources and the same emphasis upon the goodness and suitability of a text rather than <sup>upon</sup> ~~an~~ overwhelming <sup>ly</sup> ~~great-~~ness or downright counterfeit verse.

Yet, as I emphasised in earlier chapters, it would be a mistake to impose prematurely upon children the precise, analytical study of texts which are beyond their experience of life and outside their interests. To do this, is likely to destroy, permanently, the very thing we are aiming to establish - that is, the development of sensibility, taste and discrimination. And the development of taste is linked and matched with experience of life and experience of literature. It is not an overnight achievement.

I believe that, when it comes to the selection of texts in the senior school, the following statement by T. S. Eliot is supremely important; and it is upon his contention that the main argument of this chapter rests.

'The poets we frequent in adolescence will not be arranged in any objective order of eminence, but by the personal accidents which put them into relation with us; and this is right. I doubt whether it is possible to explain to school children the difference of degree among poets, and I doubt whether it is wise to try; they have not yet had enough experience of life for these matters to have much meaning. The perception of why Shakespeare, or Dante, or Sophocles holds the place he has is something which comes only very slowly in the course of living. And the deliberate attempt to grapple with poetry which is not naturally congenial, and some of which never will be, should be a very mature activity indeed; an

activity which well repays the effort, but which cannot be recommended to young people without grave danger of deadening their sensibility to poetry and confounding the genuine development of taste with the sham acquisition of it.'

From: The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism,  
(1933).

I confess that I am repeatedly astonished by much of the material prescribed in past and current syllabuses for both middle and upper school forms. Selection committees in charge of drawing up lists of prescribed texts, and external examination boards, would do well to give serious attention to Eliot's penetrating observation.

The argument above may be illustrated by Milton's Lycidas. There is certainly cause for grave concern when teachers at 26 schools appear bewildered by the difficulties of this text.

'What is it all supposed to mean?'

'Would some one in your Department be kind enough to give me some notes on the allusions?'

'How does one set about teaching Lycidas? Is it possible for children to gain any kind of satisfaction from this poem?'

'I've tried hard but all my pupils have an intense dislike for this poem.'

'Please won't you try to influence our Department not to set Lycidas and other difficult poems. For the pupils and for me these are just brain puzzles and my guess is as good as theirs. Why should these be set for the examinations?'

Why, indeed, should a poem of this complexity be set for the examinations? And what of the scores of similar complaints from teachers about the difficulties of understanding - let alone teaching - other unsuitable, demanding texts by Donne, Blake, Wordsworth, the Pre-Raphaelites, Yeats, Eliot and Dylan Thomas? And are we also to ignore the repeated requests from teachers during refresher courses?

'Could we not be given a lecture on Wordsworth's Intimations Ode? My classes realise that I do not understand it!'

And what about the evidence from hundreds of pupils? Are we

to ignore the overwhelming frequency of <sup>complaints about</sup> ~~remarks against~~ such poems?

'too difficult to understand', 'needs to be pulled to pieces', 'old-fashioned', 'too involved and subtle', 'boring', 'needs too much explaining.'

In the face of such evidence is there any good reason for the continued prescription of these texts?

And, as mentioned in the previous chapter, if these texts present so many problems to a great number of teachers, what effects do these poems have on children - other than that of consolidating prejudice, distaste and boredom and 'deadening their sensibility to poetry'?

The amount of time and annotation needed to elucidate difficult texts causes incalculable harm and turns many senior pupils against poetry. This is clearly pointed out in a recent report drafted by P. Doughty (1966) for the London Association for the Teaching of English. The report summarises a ten month study on the teaching of poetry.

'We want to begin by setting out the orthodox position, as we see it - how many teachers, especially perhaps in Grammar schools, feel that they ought to teach poetry. For them poetry is exclusively the poems of the tradition, the body of finished work by adult poets that constitutes, if you choose to see it that way, the heritage of English poetic literature. The poem on the page, the poem as a written text, is the centre of attention. This view leads to the necessary adoption of various analytical techniques, all of which aim at expounding the text. Talking about the poem unavoidably leads to the need for some kind of descriptive vocabulary, which in turn leads to a concentration upon formal features of the text such as rhythm, rhyme and image, the elucidation of which is regarded as the equivalent of a proper response to the poem. It is not unfair to say that for many pupils, especially in the 6th form, poetry is reduced to a matter of problem solving by these means. They come to regard any poem as a code to be cracked in order to yield its hidden meaning, which in turn, is regarded as the one right meaning. [*Italics mine.*] Moreover, they rapidly learn to regard any poem that does not provide this kind of activity as necessarily an inferior poem.'

Milton's Lycidas is a good example, at the school level, of '...a code to be cracked.'

In response to a great number of requests, I have appended (See<sup>s</sup>)

Appendix C pp.258-267) some notes on this poem which I have used in my own teaching. It should be pointed out that any good<sup>1</sup> matriculation class will demand this kind of analysis, not from the prospect of any pleasure a deeper understanding may bring, but through fear that an external body may set questions on the meaning and significance of the allusions. And pupils will not be fobbed off by any vague generalisations.

'Sir, won't he ask us some of those funny meanings and those things about the Church?'

'Can't you have some notes typed out listing the exact meanings, sir? There's so much to remember.'

And I agree. There is certainly a great deal to remember and 'he' could quite conceivably ask questions on 'those funny meanings' or the 'things about the Church.'

There would be no problem at all if the study of fine texts such as Lycidas were delayed until the university years; and the university is surely the right place for this 'very mature activity.'

But that Milton's Lycidas - and a great many other texts of comparable difficulty and remoteness - should continue to be prescribed in South African matriculation syllabuses, is nothing short of crass stupidity. The difficulties become even more insuperable when these texts are prescribed in those provinces where there is no sign, as yet, of a differentiated education. While the present system prevails in many schools, whereby all and sundry sit for a final examination misnamed 'matriculation', there is no possibility of introducing alternative syllabuses or separate 'O' and 'A' level 'streaming'. (See Chapter Six.)

Apart from the system of examining, far too many texts which are beyond the comprehension and interests of most pupils are prescribed in Matriculation. In my experience, and from the evidence of many teachers, one of the main causes of apathy towards poetry in the upper senior school is that the classroom experience of poetry is nearly always such a deadly serious business. Everyone is trying to find 'meanings'; teachers and pupils are working through old examination papers to discover what 'he' is likely to ask; others are 'revising literature' - whatever

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1 A poor or average class will remain stunned.

this may mean; some are busy copying out notes about 'meanings'. There is a grim sense of duty and toil about the whole business; in fact, everything is there except the pleasurable, satisfying experience of literature.

A great deal should be done to try to restore the pleasure principle in the teaching of literature. Unsuitable texts coupled with solemn seriousness and far too much teaching and explaining - the 'chatter-patter' referred to by Sir Winston Churchill in order to pass an examination - all these do nothing except drive out interest.

'...more than one advantage is to be looked for in the study of music (Literature). These advantages are education[; release of emotion; cultivation of the mind, together with recreation and relief from the pressure of work.'] [*Italics mine.*]  
Aristotle: Politics, Book VIII (1342).

It seems that there is little time for reading and discussing poems for sheer pleasure and interest; discussing poems because the pupils are intrigued and not because they are fearful that 'he' may ask what this difficult line means or what the poet intends by a particular image.

If full account were taken of the principles of 'readiness' and interest, most unsuitable texts and the techniques of examining them would be postponed. Perhaps there is more room, at times, throughout the senior school, for less emphasis upon extractable meaning. Perhaps A. E. Housman's statement is more applicable to the teaching of poetry in schools than is generally realised :

"Poetry is not the thing said but a way of saying it.

.....  
... Even when poetry has a meaning, as it usually has, it may be inadvisable to draw it out. 'Poetry gives most pleasure' said Coleridge 'when only generally and not perfectly understood'; and perfect understanding will sometimes almost extinguish pleasure."

The Name and Nature of Poetry (1933).

It seems a pity too that some of the best and most appealing narrative poems should not be given a more prominent place and status in the matriculation syllabus. There seems to be a mistaken notion in some circles that the appeal of the ballad, for example, ceases abruptly

at the end of the Junior Certificate year. Perhaps the main reason for this idea is the equally mistaken belief that senior pupils should only make an intellectual study of more difficult 'classics of the tradition' and no more. Perhaps narrative poems are largely excluded from matriculation syllabuses because they tend to have immediacy and give more pleasure to most school-children than the texts of the tradition; perhaps 'immediacy' and 'pleasure' are suspect features in the academic study of literature which only lightly stresses direct, intuitive appreciation but gives great attention to a mode of approach which is more cerebral, intellectual and examinable.

As regards the kind of poem which should be recommended or prescribed in the senior school, the answer is that all kinds of poems should be made familiar to pupils at all levels.

Many syllabuses - and anthologies - show an extremely unbalanced selection of material. Committees responsible for compiling syllabuses would do well to steady a pendulum which tends to swing wholly towards the familiar, well-established poems of the tradition or wholly towards untried, contemporary material. In his essay, The Appreciation of Poetry (1960), T. S. Eliot's central argument is a plea for a balance between poems of the heritage and contemporary poetry. He also argues convincingly for a familiarity with contemporary texts, initially, in order to lead young people towards the poetry of earlier times.

'This... seems to me to suggest that at that age - from fourteen to sixteen I should say - when the sensibility begins, if ever, to respond passionately to poetry, the poetry of our own age may be able to make a more immediate impact than that of earlier generations. ... I think that young people often recognise obscurely that the poet speaking to them is of their own time and that his sensibility and theirs have something in common . . . . .  
. . . the pupils who have some aptitude for enjoyment and understanding of what is good in literature (and as this is a question of degree, there can be no clear division between the sheep and the goats) will find that their knowledge of the great poetry which has had the approval of successive generations will sharpen their discrimination and refine their enjoyment of the poetry which is being written in their own time, and their enjoyment of the poetry written in their own time will help them towards enjoyment of the classics of literature.'

There is much to be said for this approach. There are many situations and occasions, too, where it is better to move upstream - avoiding some of the notorious cataracts on the way - rather than follow the strict, chronological 'down the river of English poetry' approach. Children, dwelling far too long upon poems of the past with a less familiar idiom, are apt to satirize the situation with a comment such as :

"Well, we've just 'done' Fope so we should make Keats by August and Hopkins by October."

Balance, freshness, number and variety should be prime considerations when prescribing a collection of poems at any level of the senior school. Unless there is a change of policy on the part of selection panels and examining boards, even the best 200 poem anthology becomes a collection of '...the same 35 poems which we have been grinding through during the last 5 years.' (A teacher in the Cape Education Department.)

Of course, a few sensitive and resourceful teachers will supplement a prescribed syllabus anyway with a wide number of poems of their own choice. But what of the majority of teachers? And is enough teaching time allocated to English teachers to enable them to introduce their own selected material? What is to be done about harassed, examination-conscious children who exclaim, 'But these poems are not set. We haven't enough time to do these and they're not going to ask us questions on these.' Many teachers described the cries of alarm and dismay from pupils whenever an attempt was made to read poems outside the prescribed choice.

There is an urgent need for differentiation in all South African schools. It is only when a distinction has been made, in all schools, between 'School Leaving' and 'University Entrance' standards that the way will become clear for the introduction of separate syllabuses. Some Boards in Britain presently offer alternative syllabuses for the 'O' level examination. For example, the London University Board offers the following 'O' level Syllabuses :

Syllabus A

1. The Poet's Tale: (10-15 selected poems).
2. Ten Twentieth Century Poets: all poems by Auden, Betjeman, de la Mare, Frost, Hardy, Thomas.
3. Milton: Paradise Lost Book IX.
4. Pope: The Rape of the Lock.

OR

Syllabus B

'A set author, OR a set anthology OR an unseen poem.  
Robert Frost: Selected Poems (Penguin) pp. 33-84 inclusive (and also Fire and Ice; Dust of Snow; The Runaway; Stopping by Woods...; Goodbye and Keep Cold; Two Looks at Two; Two Tramps in Mud-Time; At Woodward's Gardens; Desert Places; A Considerable Speck) Rhyme and Reason (R. O'Malley, D. Thompson) - the sections entitled Sea, War Country Life, People, Animals.'

The Northern Joint Matriculation Board syllabus (G. C. E., 'C' level 1968) is equally interesting.

Paper A ' Rhyme and Reason; pp. 45-76 and 170-188 OR 16 poems by Browning from Thirty Poems by Robert Browning (Mackie) OR selected poems of Auden, Graves, Larkin, A. Lewis, C. Day Lewis, MacNeice, Muir, Read, Roberts, Sassoon, Spender, Hughes.'

There is nothing comparable in South Africa. The above syllabuses show a move away from restriction and the single anthology containing the inevitable selection of texts for examinations. The triple choice in some of these syllabuses would satisfy most teachers. There is flexibility throughout in the broad, balanced sweep or the emphasis on a single author or on modern texts alone. Moreover, teachers are at liberty to devise their own syllabuses and may submit these to the Board for approval.

Following requests from many teachers for a wide selection of appealing, modern poetry 'in a familiar idiom and therefore more mean-

ingful and immediate to young people today, ' I have compiled an anthology for the middle school entitled Two Roads (See References). Mindful too of the evidence which clearly showed that many teachers favoured familiar, traditional texts, I have attempted as far as possible to cater for both groups by including all the well-known poems most frequently listed, while at the same time offering a large selection of modern verse which has repeatedly proved successful in my own teaching. Consequently, the publication has some measure of balance between a representative and a personal choice. The volume contains 160 texts. I have not tried to preserve a balance between the number of poems in each section. Instead, I have taken account of the greater demand from teachers - and from past pupils - for fairly recent writing, especially by South African, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, American and British authors. I have not attempted to use arbitrary subject groupings of the kind Animals, War, People, lest irrelevant attention be given to subject matter. It is best left to individual teachers - or pupils - to point out similarities or contrasts and to make comparisons between poems.

In response to many requests I have included some twenty poems by South African writers or by writers who have been associated in some way with this country. Eight of these South African poems are by contemporary writers and were selected from New Coin Poetry (See Appendix D: Recommended References). I have included only those poems which have proved most popular amongst pupils in the middle school.

Nearly all the standard authors usually found in anthologies for the Junior Certificate are represented. In addition, many less familiar texts, of good quality and proven appeal, by the following writers have been included. (The names of South African authors or authors associated with South Africa are marked with an asterisk.)

W. H. Auden, William Rose Benet, Guy Butler\*, Roy Campbell\*, R. N. Currey\*, Charles Causley, Charl Cilliers\*, C. Day Lewis, Emily Dickinson, Ruth Dallas, Walter de la Mare, T. S. Eliot, J. G. Fletcher, Robert Frost, R. Griffiths\*, Thorn Gunn, Thomas Hardy, William Hart-Smith, A. E. Housman, Flexmore Hudson, Ted Hughes, Robinson Jeffers, Jill King\*, Rudyard Kipling\*,

D. H. Lawrence, Vachel Lindsay, Charles Madge\*, John Masefield, Ruth Miller\*, Edwin Muir, Wilfred Owen, Vance Palmer, William Plomer\*, E. J. Pratt, Elizabeth Riddell, Carl Sandburg, Robert Louis Stevenson, Douglas Stewart, Sara Teasdale, Ronald Scott\*, Stephen Spender, Louis Untermeyer, Arthur Waley (Translations), Rex Warner, Walt Whitman, Judith Wright, W. B. Yeats and Andrew Young.

In my choice of the title Two Roads taken from Robert Frost's poem The Road Not Taken, I do not mean in any way to imply a strict division of material, but the existence of two equally appealing and satisfying routes pointing towards a common poetic horizon - the counter-balance T. S. Eliot suggests between the familiar texts of the tradition and the best and most suitable contemporary material. And perhaps this should be our chief aim when selecting texts for children.

'For our own poetry of today and that of our forefathers, the foundations upon which we build and without which our poetry would not be what it is, will eventually be seen as forming one harmonious whole.'

T. S. Eliot (1960).

CHAPTER SIX

THE EXAMINATIONS

6.1 The External Examination

This chapter is focussed upon a comparatively small area - external examinations during the Junior Certificate and Senior Certificate years. Yet, it was this issue which sparked off the greatest number of complaints from the 199 teachers whose opinions were analysed in Chapter Four. Most of the memoranda submitted by these teachers adversely criticised present systems of external examining or were concerned with the problems of examining literature. (See Appendix B, p. 255.) Moreover, poetry and examinations drew at least a very widespread, if not explicitly stated, reaction from many pupils.

These attitudes strongly suggest that the teaching of literature in the middle and upper forms of most South African schools is largely dominated by the inflexible demands of prescribed syllabuses and external examinations.

Accumulated feeling against external examinations and prescribed books presents a formidable front. The findings of official reports and the opinions of writers over the past 30 years reveal a remarkable unanimity :

'We believe that prescribed books do more to injure the growth of a budding sentiment for literature than to encourage it, and therefore recommend that books should no longer be prescribed in the School Certificate Examination.'

The Spens Report (1939) p. 175.

'... we would assert our belief that premature external examination of pupils at school in English literature is not only beset with every difficulty but is productive of much harm in its influence on the teaching of English literature and eventually upon English as a whole; and for that reason we would advise against any such form of examination.'

Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools (1941) p. 96.

'External examination of pupils in literature has a cramping effect upon both pupil and teacher. The finer qualities of successful literature teaching cannot be tested by external examination . . . . If the work must be tested, he [ the teacher ] and not an external examiner is the person to judge what progress the pupil has made . . . .'

Province of Natal: Report of the Provincial Education Committee (1946) Para. 212, p. 97.

'The majority of those who gave evidence . . . strongly condemned an external examination on prescribed books. . . . The kind of question set . . . required an intensive study of the books prescribed. In order to enable pupils to memorize minor details, each book had to be read repeatedly . . . which induced boredom and excited prejudice against prescribed books. . . . .

It was contended that the external examination did not only fail to test the pupils' reading ability, but also neutralised the objects of the teaching of literature.'

Orange Free State: Report of the Provincial Education Commission of Enquiry (1951) Paragraphs 664-668.

'Poetry should not be made the subject of written examination, except perhaps in the sixth form of Grammar Schools, and only then in the Advanced English Course.'

Poetry and Children: Prepared by the Central Committee on the Teaching of English in the East and West Ridings of Yorkshire (1956) Chapter 2. Recommendation 10.

'...I have no useful suggestions to make about how to pass a public examination in poetry.'

James Reeves (1958).

'I do not believe that the work of living poets should be taught formally. I do not believe that youngsters should take examinations in it. I think that the choice of poems to present to a class should represent the taste of the teacher, not be set by a board.'

T. S. Eliot (1960) On Teaching The Appreciation of Poetry.

'We do not feel that the teaching of English in the secondary school requires what is erroneously called the 'stimulus' (or 'pressure') of an examination . . . . An external examination will restrict experiment in the secondary school, and cramp fluency.

A really creative, flexible and stimulating external examination is virtually impossible for administrative and financial reasons.

(Internal school examinations are perfectly possible and beneficial.)"

English in the Certificate of Secondary Education  
(1964).

'The fact is that all past experience suggests the existence of a deep and inherent incompatibility between external examinations as we know them and the essential aims of good English teaching.'

Frank Whitehead (1966).

With one or two exceptions, most of these opinions condemn the external examining of literature and it seems that Frank Whitehead's view is the best summary of the overall situation.

But condemnation of external examining should not suggest, as one recent writer does, that literature cannot be examined; or that if it is examined it will necessarily be taught badly.

'An attempt is now being made to improve the teaching by altering the character of examination questions; but it has yet to be shown that a vernacular literature is capable of being made an examination subject. Teachers are in a dilemma. If it is not examined, while other subjects are, it probably will not be taught at all; if it is examined, it follows that it will be taught badly.'

R. L. Archer (1966).

True, if literature is not examined it will certainly lose status, and, as with spoken English and dramatic activity in schools, the loss of the all-important examination status inevitably leads to a lack of attention or even complete omission from the English studies curriculum. But to examine literature does not necessarily mean 'that it will be taught badly.'

What are the objections to external examinations? How do they differ from any other form of examination? If, as we are led to believe, the external examination is so restrictive, why has it continued to flourish?

The chief objections are, I believe, three-fold and inter-dependent.

- (i) To out-wit the external examiner, or rather, to please him with the desired set of answers, literature lessons become, as previously described, a deadly serious business. Scores of teachers answering the questionnaire (Chapter Four) complained in a familiar

pattern. Months, or even terms before a final examination is written, a feverish round of non-literary activities begin. Pupils and teachers make summaries, revise all the texts over and over again, work through previous examination papers, copy out model answers, acquire second-hand opinions and potted answers from published pamphlets described as 'aids'.

- (ii) External examining is linked with prescription. Consequently, not only does the examination in its present form promote bad, unimaginative teaching and the repetitive, mechanical routines already described, but also the rigidity of its partner, the prescribed syllabus, shackles teachers and pupils to a selection of texts which may hold little interest for either teacher or pupil. (See Chapters Three and Four.)
- (iii) External examinations are designed to fulfil a mass predictive function and as Frank Whitehead (1966) points out '...the predictive rôle thus forced upon school examinations is necessarily in direct conflict with educational values - and nowhere more nakedly so than in the sphere of English teaching'. Many thousands of candidates write the same paper and answer, within prescribed limits, the same questions. A high degree of consistency and reliability in marking can be maintained only when an arbitrary set of standardised opinions or easily distinguishable facts has been drawn up (in the form of a marking scheme). This reliance upon facts, standardised opinions and other mechanical activities such as being able to spot - and label - synecdoches from some distance, is non-literary.

An unfortunate effect of an external examination is that teachers are obliged to conform to its demands. During literature lessons teachers find themselves forced to emphasise fragmented meanings in a text :

- (a) Explain the meaning of the allusion in line 7.
- (b) What is a metaphor? Find one in the last 5 lines and explain its meaning.
- (c) Write down an antonym for the word 'boon' used in this sonnet.

And teachers cannot be blamed for these exercises when the examination which employs them continues to hold sway. Never mind doubtful educational practices when all the social pressures favour a good examination 'symbol'.

It is also distressing to note that, for many years, a poem was invariably set in the language papers of the C. E. D. Junior and Senior Certificate examinations, and treated as a language exercise. Yet, this deadening emphasis upon content, factual recall, and isolated language tests is part of a long tradition, as the following extracts show :

- (a) 'Name any poem you have particularly liked and give a summary of its content. (Not more than 15 lines.)'  
Junior Certificate: English Higher (Cape) 1931.
- (b) 'From which poems are the following extracts taken? Give an account of the historical incidents which form the background of any three of them. (About 10 lines for each.)'  
Junior Certificate: English Higher (Cape) 1934.
- (c) 'State in your own words the moral of the 'Pied Piper'.'  
Junior Certificate: English Higher (Cape) 1937.
- (d) 'Mention any FIVE poems dealing with acts of patriotism. Tell the story of ONE of the poems you have mentioned.  
.....  
Classify the following poems as being either (a) humorous or  
(b) pathetic....'  
Junior Certificate: English Higher (Cape) 1942.
- (e) 'Tell the story of the Lady of Shalott.'  
Junior Certificate: English Higher (Cape) 1951.
- (f) 'Write down in full the subordinate clauses in the first stanza. Name each clause and show its relationship to the rest of the sentence (12 marks). [ The poem set was Roy Campbell's Autumn. ]  
Senior Certificate: English Higher (Cape) 1962.
- (g) [ Poem set: First 25 lines of D. H. Lawrence's Snake. ]
- (i) What sort of day was it?  
(ii) How was the author dressed? Why?  
(iii) What sight met the author as he came down the steps?  
(iv) In what country did this incident take place? .... etc.  
Junior Certificate: English Higher (Cape) 1964.

It is this kind of destructive, irrelevant questioning which hinders the progress of what should be taking place - that is, the beginnings of sound practical criticism. Questions that call for answers such as 'hot' and 'pyjamas', certainly do not point in the direction of appreciation and discrimination.

Even an examination in literature internally controlled by teachers is based upon factual recall. In the Cape Province the Junior Certificate literature examination will be approved by a school inspector only when built upon a system of markable facts centred upon the content of a poem, short story or novel.

It seems then that there is little room in the large-scale externally controlled examinations for the personal responses which really matter.

'Obviously the accomplishments which can be reliably measured in a mass examination of this kind are not those which the good English teacher sets most store by. We value not so much the easily-assessed fragments of knowledge and skill which are common to thousands but, rather, those qualities of observation, imagination, perception, and judgment which are individual, which are rooted in the particular boy or girl's own experience and environment, and which relate to the concerns which really matter to him.'

F. Whitehead (1966) p. 235.

It is my contention that teachers tend to undervalue a pupil's personal, subjective response to literature - poetry in particular - simply because present methods of examining do not encourage teachers to ask children the right kind of questions. Given any sort of a chance, the majority of children are capable of a surprisingly sensitive response to literature (see Chapter Seven). And perhaps one of the best ways of assessing a child's judgment and perception is through oral questioning and the spoken reply. But this kind of dialogue or exchange between teacher and child appears to be rapidly dying in an educational system which is becoming increasingly dependent upon standardisation and the stock response.

### A Better System?

The selection and examining of texts at all levels of the senior

school should be an internal, teacher-controlled responsibility, subject to approval by some suitably qualified external body. The implications, of course, are far-reaching and do not affect only the teaching of literature. The entire school curriculum and the present system of syllabuses and examinations would need complete revision.

The idea is by no means a new one; it was put forward as a recommendation over 50 years<sup>ago</sup>, when Professor A. N. Whitehead stated :

'Each school should grant its own leaving certificates, based on its own curriculum. The standards of these schools should be sampled and corrected. But the first requisite for educational reform is the school as a unit with its approved curriculum based on its own needs, and evolved by its own staff.'

Again, in his essay The Aims of Education, Whitehead repeated his appeal :

'...no educational system is possible unless every question directly asked of a pupil at any examination is either framed or modified by the actual teacher of that pupil in that subject.'

This system would bring the school into line with the practice at most universities where syllabuses, and the setting and marking of examinations are lecturer-controlled with external moderation. A reversal of this system would result in uproar in most university circles. It may be argued, of course, that the school and the university <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ not one and the same thing. Nevertheless, and with due respect to the universities, it may also be argued that the schoolmaster has a better claim to personal control; he has at least a closer knowledge of his pupils and their responses and capabilities, over a longer period of time.

It is recommended that :

- (i) Full responsibility should be given to schools and teachers to select texts of their own choice, devise their own syllabuses and set and mark their own examinations.
- (ii) This four-fold responsibility should be subject to approval and advice at each stage by external ad hoc panels. Al-

ternatively, any school may elect to align itself with a conventional but more flexible system of external control.

- (iii) The system of differentiation practised in Transvaal and Natal schools should be adopted by the remaining Provinces.
- (iv) The results of the experiment in a school-controlled curriculum and system of internal testing, as practised by the 20 selected 'Project Schools' in the Transvaal, should be given very close attention.
- (v) External ad hoc moderating boards should be fully representative and should consist of highly experienced, specialist teachers of English drawn from schools, training colleges and universities.

'I believe that for English the educational need can be met fully only by adopting a system of internal examinations with external moderation. Despite what the cynics may say, this is not impracticable. . . . .  
. . . . .  
What we stand to gain here is the liberation of good teachers from externally imposed shackles, and an immense impetus to all teachers to accept a fully professional responsibility for their own pupils. It would be worth paying for this by accepting some reduction in the predictive efficiency of the examination results; in any case it should be remembered that the reliability of our present external examinations . . . is probably largely spurious anyway, since it has been gained by concentrating on inessentials.'

Frank Whitehead (1966) pp. 237-238.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CREATIVE VERSE WRITING

#### 7.1

##### A Review

The idea that children should write verse in the course of their English studies is not a new one. Certainly, during the last sixty years, much attention has been given to original verse-writing by children. In Chapter Two, it was noted that a well-known manual for teachers of English by A. Roberts and A. Barter (1908) devoted a fifteen-page chapter to the teaching of English verse composition. The authors listed a host of advantages which would accompany such an activity and they felt that verse writing was 'as essential a part of the literary training as prose composition.'

It was also seen in Chapter Two that there were, at the turn of the century, a number of schools throughout Britain, mainly preparatory and grammar, where the writing of verse was as common as prose composition. Nevertheless, verse composition at that time was regarded as a highly skilled accomplishment. A premium was placed upon correct, disciplined writing; upon the mastery of rhyme, metre and form. Considerable and detailed training in prosody was given and this preceded even the most tentative first attempts at verse writing. It may be noted, too, that in their book the above authors 'do not advocate trying to teach the subject before the children reach the age of twelve or thirteen.' It is reasonable to assume, then, that the ability to write sonnets, triolets, ballades and some blank verse was so much dependent upon a mastery of techniques that successful composition in verse lay beyond the powers of all but the most talented pupils.

Previous reference has also been made to some of the interesting and successful pioneering work conducted by Caldwell Cook at the Ferse School, Cambridge, and by Guy Pocock at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. These men were probably among the first teachers of English literature who, with the right individual

approaches, were able to encourage young children to write freely, voluntarily and without much direct prompting or disciplining. Nor should the convictions held by Greening Lamborn be overlooked after his successful work in this field at the East Oxford School. He believed (1916) that :

"...poetry, its rhythm, its music, its imagery, its figures of speech are instinctive in children, that they have a natural appetite for them, and an intuitive gift of using them. The reader will therefore not be surprised if I suggest that children can express themselves better in verse than in prose.  
.....  
... It is thus a complete mistake to regard original verse as an 'accomplishment' like the things taught in Miss Pinkerton's seminary,...."

Later, Greening Lamborn was to repeat this contention in his book, Expression in Speech and Writing (1922): "I believe that rhythmic language, which we call verse, is a more natural medium than prose at the stage of school life."

Some of the official educational documents of the period gave clear indications of the changing attitude towards the writing of poetry by children. The well-known Newbolt Report of 1919, The Teaching of English in England, summarised the position as follows :

' Some of our witnesses set great store by the composition of original verse as an aid in the study of English composition and literature. Where boys and girls are ready to write in verse, nothing but good can come of their spontaneous efforts. It is clear, too, that some teachers can best impart the sense of form and of the value of words by this method. But verse-writing can only be a special tool in the hands of a limited number of teachers, and the danger is great that principles of prosody, only half understood, or perhaps entirely erroneous, may be enforced in such a manner as to reduce the lesson to a mere mechanical drill.'

Three distinct attitudes are apparent in this statement. Collectively, they form the broad view held today, of personal writing of any kind, by children. These are :

- (a) The widespread, beneficial effects of this activity upon English studies in general.
- (b) That some teachers appear better equipped than others to set children free to write in verse.
- (c) That to emphasise prosody and mechanical correctness would almost certainly defeat the educational value of spontaneous verse-writing.

In more recent years official reports have argued even more pointedly for an initial freedom in the writing of poetry by school-children. 'Let the children's own poetry be free and spontaneous, at least until the age when they are ready to discipline themselves.' Language, Some Suggestions for Teachers of English and Others (1954).

During the past ten years there has been an astonishing increase in the output and quality of poems written by children. In many instances, children pursue verse writing as a voluntary, unprompted activity. In a growing number of British and American schools today the idea that any number of children will, at any time, choose to write in verse, is accepted as normal. Good creative verse-writing is becoming less a phenomenon of the gifted child and more of a natural expectation from the majority of ordinary children. Anthologies of children's poetry are rapidly multiplying. A number of books about children's poetry <sup>has</sup> been published. Literary competitions for children's writing are organised by mass-circulation newspapers. In many British and American journals of education, a great deal of attention is given to "free", "personal", or "creative" writing by children - both prose and verse. Growing publicity is given in the press, in broadcasts and over television, while a great many overseas schools issue special publications to cope with the output of poems written by pupils of all ages and abilities. There may even be, in certain quarters, a danger, as one observer puts it, "that this form of written expression is becoming something of a fashionable cult, as stereotyped and set in its contemporary way as the more formal verses of fifty years ago." Clark (1968).

It would be impossible to list the innumerable articles and books written, in recent years, upon this subject - accounts written mainly by practising British and American teachers. And, while a wide variety of approaches have been used to stimulate the writing of poetry by school-children, most accounts of successful programmes tend to reflect the following common features :/

- (i) Many children - certainly a far greater number than previously suspected - not only enjoy writing poems at some stage of their school lives but frequently write poems of remarkable quality.
- (ii) Interest in creative verse-writing is apparently not confined to any particular age group, although studies of primary school children, notably those of Arnstein (1963) and Thompson (1966), have clearly shown that the younger child between the ages of six and twelve is often capable of sensitive expression and imaginative perception of unbelievable quality.
- (iii) Interest and ability appear to be equally spread among boys and girls.
- (iv) Successful verse writing of merit is not confined to any select group - those children, for example, possessing high intelligence or those with special home advantages.
- (v) In general, poems written by children of all ages tend to be short and compressed; reflective of experiences meaningful for them at their stage of development; concerned with a single idea or theme.
- (vi) Some sort of atmosphere congenial for poetry and its composition existed in the classroom before children were easily encouraged to write poems.

Apart from the few, isolated instances of teachers who have encouraged verse-writing among their pupils [ Chapter Four ] it appears that, until recently, no large-scale investigation into the matter has been conducted in any school in South Africa.

Some of the more prominent teachers and investigators in this field are listed in an Appendix, but special mention should be made here of the important work done in overseas schools by Arnstein (1946) (1963), Hourd (1949), Mearns (1958), Reeves (1958), Baldwin (1959), Holbrook (1962) and Thompson (1966).

7.2

An Experiment in Creative Verse Writing at Queen's College

'We attempt to teach children to write by making them write in prose. We should teach them to write verse. My years of teaching poetry were wasted because I did not realise this simple but revolutionary truth soon enough/....

'I am certain that what children of twelve ought to be writing is not colourless, though perhaps ungrammatical, prose compositions on "My Favourite Hobby", "Pets" or "Our Garden" - and thousands and thousands of these things are turned out weekly - but rough, vigorous, lively, possibly ungrammatical and unrhythmical verse about - what? Anything and everything under the sun - it does not matter what, because a poem is always about itself; that is, the subject is subordinate to the treatment, the interest is in the handling of language.

'I believe that some such revolution as this in teaching methods would do much to re-vitalise the attitude our own language current in schools. It would also restore the prestige of poetry by enabling children to approach it not as the remote pursuit of impossibly gifted eccentrics, but as something they themselves were accustomed to practising, however inexpertly.'

Reeves (1958).

An experiment in creative verse writing at a large, non-selective senior boys' school in the Cape Province was prompted by the increasing number of overseas reports all pointing to the remarkable success of verse-writing among school children. The programme was begun early in 1966 and by the end of the year 1,846 poems had been handed in by 217 schoolboy writers and there was little sign that this output was likely to diminish. This number does not include the many hundreds of poems written and kept privately. During the last term of the experiment at least a dozen boys were writing several times more verse than prose. Considerable interest has been shown in this project by a number of schools and by teachers

attending conferences. Following the publication of an article and about forty poems, many teachers have asked for hints on 'how to teach children to write poetry.'

I am convinced, however, that spontaneous, creative writing at its best is largely an unteachable activity. Admittedly, many approaches in overseas schools have made use of various stimuli, team writing or direct, planned guidance in order to start children off as verse-writers. But, in the final analysis, the best writing seems to be the result of independent, voluntary, unguided effort. Ideally, good creative writing seems to spring from the example set by children in other parts of the world, from the enjoyment of literature in the classroom, from an exposure to a very wide range of fine, suitable poetry read aloud in class and from steady yet unobtrusive encouragement to write, given by a sympathetic teacher. I do not believe that lasting and genuine creative writing is best encouraged either as a compulsory exercise or by rule or precept. Once children, as writers, have enjoyed a considerable amount of voluntary practice <sup>in</sup> ~~at~~ expressing themselves creatively and freely in verse, they may wish, at a later stage and with profit, to accept guidance and suggestion from a teacher towards more disciplined expression. This is as it should be. Any attempt to demand "correct", disciplined verse writing at too early a stage can easily lead towards frustration and a stunting of the creative spirit. It is the unselfconscious writing of poetry that allows a natural, accepted tradition of personal verse writing to develop. The cart must be set firmly behind the horse and, judging from this experiment, it seems that one of the best ways to achieve this is by encouraging free, original expression without any insistence upon conventional forms, rhyming schemes, strict rhymes or stanzaic lay-outs.

Hence, most of the poems handed in [ See Appendix ] were of the free verse type with unrhymed or loosely rhymed lines, irregular line length and no fixed stanza pattern. That most of the poems were fairly short came as no surprise. I believe that the majority of these young writers were relieved and excited by the possibilities of concise, freely personal expression. Part of the

attraction that verse-writing, as opposed to longer prose composition, holds for children is that a short, intense experience or a sudden burst of feeling may be easily and completely captured in a few lines. The satisfying brevity, for example, of Japanese Haiku appealed strongly to most of the verse-writers, yet no insistence was made upon their mastering the syllabic form until they were ready to do so. It was enough to suggest that a single, vivid experience or image expressed in two or three lines could be called a Haiku. The following poems are good examples of this disregard for strict form. Both were early attempts written by boys in the middle school after each had shown a great interest in Haiku and in some of Arthur Waley's translations from the Chinese.

POOL

Still, evening mirror.  
Pebble,  
And my water-face crept away in silken rings.

Rob, aged 14.

HAIKU

Sudden thought, a quick nakedness  
Beneath icy, blue-cold needles of an autumn-whispering  
Waterfall,  
And I suck my breath with shock.

Harold, aged 15.

A progressive and rewarding programme of verse-writing, spread widely throughout the school, seems to flourish best when the presentation of poetry in the classroom is regarded as a delight - almost as a recreation - by both teachers and pupils. Clearly, the demands of the externally-set Matriculation examinations made this a difficult proposition in the upper school, yet the mere mention and occasional reading of personal verse-writing from the lower and middle school was sufficient to spark off excited comment and some surprisingly fine writing from older pupils in their final school year.

I have used the phrase 'spread widely throughout the school'

very deliberately. Teachers of English are familiar with the occasional poem or pastiche contributed by a gifted pupil for publication in the school magazine (with or without apologies to some well known author). This has always seemed to me a strangely patronising and restrictive attitude towards the making of verse. The chief aim of this experiment was not to direct undue attention towards these few select writers who would probably speak out anyway, even under circumstances where verse-writing is not actively encouraged. Nor was this free expression programme directed at any select or talented group of boys or "A" stream classes. On the contrary, the sensitivity and response of the 'average' and 'below average' boy was astonishing and I should like to re-emphasise that this remarkably prolific output of personal writing was largely gathered from a predominantly unremarkable group of boys who simply enjoyed reading, discussing and listening to poetry in class, who often read poetry in their leisure time and who tended to write in verse whenever taken by the mood.

It seems clear, therefore, that if any teacher can establish a conviction with his classes that poetry is a natural, meaningful and stimulating form of expression he will also create amongst his pupils a demand for a wider experience of poetry. The demand for more poetry and a desire to try writing it are, I believe, complementary experiences. It does not matter, at first, how slight or inferior the verse-writing appears to be from an adult view-point. It is important, though, that a young writer has chosen to write in verse, that what he writes involves him in a satisfying experience, and that his act of writing reveals that he does not look upon poetry as 'the remote pursuit of impossibly gifted eccentrics.'

I have little doubt, that the right kind of poetry, successfully presented by a discerning teacher who is alert and sensitive to the needs of his pupils at any particular stage of growth, is the best encouragement for creative verse-writing. From my observations it appears that every school-going child - and not merely the obviously talented pupil - is the keeper of some latent reserves of imaginative power and unexpressed feelings which do not easily find full expression in the formal type of prose composition referred to

by Mr James Reeves. And is it really so surprising that most children between the ages of 12 and 16 should find conventional prose composition such a difficult, dull, unrewarding activity? Teachers attending refresher courses and English conferences regularly complain that the fortnightly prose composition of a recommended standard length is, for the most part, a drudgery, a lifeless exercise, often mechanically correct, but lacking in vitality and personal force. Many pupils will admit openly that such work is nothing more than a tedious, mechanical routine. And if the writing of such exercises is the monotonous task it appears to be for many children, how equally drear and frustrating is the marking of these unsatisfying compositions?

Not only is the writing of a good, clear prose composition an accomplished and mature discipline but 'composition' as it is practised in many schools today, seems to be less aimed at allowing children to be involved with the satisfying act of creative experience and more concerned with mechanical correctness. While children still crave for vital personal expression, we prematurely demand that they should master the art of exposition. While children often long to express themselves in short, intense units they are instructed to 'Write a composition tonight of about 400 words on ...' Under these conditions it might be well to ask whether a pupil is not turning out something to order, - something largely detached from his interests and needs. How often does such writing suggest that the writer was fully engaged by it? Will he not be tempted to reproduce attitudes, situations or a sequence of events which have previously gained acceptance or approval? And if he is drawn to treat dilapidated topics such as 'My Last Holidays' in this way, (it is) not likely that the writing will have a hollow ring of routine lifelessness about it? The selection of poems appended shows that the majority of writers preferred short, concentrated expression. Brevity seems to be more satisfying and congenial to many children in the lower and middle school, and yet the longer unit of expository prose writing is so often the exclusive demand.

An alarming feature of 'personal' writing as practised in many

schools today is that insufficient freedom and encouragement is given to children to be completely personal. Before a child is ready to receive the drills and disciplines of correct expression imposed from without, his own spontaneous giving from within is stunted. Much so-called 'creative expression' is nothing but an imposition, regardless of whether or not children wish to write in such a manner, on such a subject, at a particular time, along suggested lines and for a certain prescribed length.

This is not to suggest, of course, that school-children should cease writing prose compositions. Every child should be given sufficient practice in writing an assignment or dealing with a theme that is not entirely of his own choosing. Nevertheless, formal prose composition should not continue to remain the sole outlet or mode of written expression. Verse writing and prose writing should be encouraged in schools as complementary and alternative activities. If a young person at any time chooses to write in verse, let him do so. Teachers and parents often wonder why children, who are given so much opportunity to write prose should continue to write such bad prose. But do children always desire to write in prose? Are they sufficiently aroused and motivated by the topics usually prescribed? Is it wise to stipulate a certain length for written expression and are children primarily interested in exposition, correctness, syntax and a 'good, clear, simple style'? Finally, how far does prose composition allow children complete freedom to draw upon and fully express their personal feelings and experiences and to come to terms with whatever is meaningful to them here and now?

Pedagogic arms need not be flung up in horror at the idea that a child might temporarily favour verse <sup>rather than</sup> ~~against~~ prose. We should draw re-assurance from the child himself. Wisest of all, perhaps, to his own creative needs, he is chiefly concerned in discovering his own powers and in exploring the marvellous potential of language to express those things which matter most to him.

Nor should we be too perturbed if, judged by adult standards, the first contributions appear clumsy and inept. In a remarkable

publication devoted to creative verse-writing in the elementary school, Flora J. Arnstein (1963) points out that first attempts are naturally uneven.

' All of us make use of the phrase, "it just came to me", without questioning the authenticity of ideas arrived at without deliberate planning. The best we teachers can offer the child is the opportunity to draw upon his native gifts in an atmosphere in which they may continue to flourish. We need not be concerned if some of what "comes" in the beginning is awkward or naive. For it is only by the exercise of his own powers that a child becomes proficient; Hughes Mearns speaks of the "muddy water" that must be allowed to flow before the stream becomes clear. '

Teachers may be inclined to ask, 'Can any of this writing be considered poetry, and if not, is there any use in encouraging it?' (Indeed, from time to time, several teachers questioned the value of this programme, or described it as a time-wasting 'gimmick'.)

' Why bother with verse-writing when we need to direct all our attention towards correct prose expression? The world turns on prose today, not verse. In any case, it is futile to aim at turning out a generation of poets. '

These arguments, I believe, reveal a number of misconceptions. Firstly, unconvinced teachers should re-assure themselves that if such expression is not poetry it is at least the stuff from which poetry is made. Secondly, because these young writers are tapping their creative resources, they are writing at least in the same spirit as the poet writes. They wrote because they had something to say. They were not asked to give explanations or reasons. They came to regard their newly-found voices as a natural, vital, pleasing way of expression; certainly, they chose to write only when caught by the mood. And as they were never required to write poetry as an exercise, their productions were completely spontaneous.

' A man cannot say, "I will compose poetry" //... this power arises from within like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either

of its approach or its departure.'

Shelley: A Defence of Poetry.

'If poetry comes not as naturally as leaves to a tree  
it had better not come at all.'

Keats: Letter to John Taylor,  
27th February, 1818.

During this fleeting period of their lives, many children seem to be capable of personal, imaginative writing which is not yet dulled or smudged by cliché, preconceptions or abstractions. 'If the doors of perception were cleansed', said Blake, 'everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.' It seems that the child is never really concerned with the cleansing of his 'doors of perception' as the serious, adult writer is forever doing; nor is the young person faced by the host of complicated choices in language which plague the adult writer who is striving to capture sharp, clear definition in his expression. Far more than we can imagine, the language of children and the language of poetry are bonded closely together. I have been repeatedly struck by the precision of children's writing when the experience they have been writing about has engaged their attention and imagination. Precision, in turn, will usually involve a natural reliance upon metaphor. 'Try to be precise', Mr Middleton Murray has said, 'and you are bound to be metaphorical'. A seven-year-old South African boy, for example, enjoying his first ride upon an unsaddled horse, was heard to exclaim excitedly, 'I can feel the meat moving underneath his peel!'

Many pupils found it difficult to suppress their enthusiasm for free verse expression. Danny, a backward pupil, aged 13, writing his first poem, says :

#### WHAT IS POETRY

Is not poetry a thought  
An inspiration  
Something alive in you?  
Is it just a composition-on-a-few-lines  
Or is it - a thing which wants to be on paper?

Scores of these young writers admitted that they found verse expression novel, exciting, rhythmic and concentrated. The discovery that much could be said in a few words to express the 'something alive in you' intrigued many of them. One boy said, 'Like woodwork, poetry lets me carve my thoughts in words.' Some, obviously delighted by seeing poems by e. e. cummings, enjoyed making their own typographical experiments. A number of boys tried writing at all angles; some along downward, curved lines - notably for describing lightning or waterfalls - and, in one instance, an interesting balance revealed itself in a diamond-shaped poem :

LIFE  
Born  
To grow  
Laugh, cry, live  
Tasting the sweet years  
Before becoming a man one day;  
To know warm years of life, at home, with a few friends  
And to work, give, rest, take, grow tired  
Fade richly in the evening glow.  
And, when light departs,  
To lie down  
And quickly  
Die.

André, aged 15.

Some answer should be made to the assertion, '...it is futile to aim at turning out a generation of poets.' True, such a development should not be envisaged, but neither does anyone believe that the writing of various forms of prose in schools will result in a new generation of essayists, short-story writers, letter-writers or diarists. Whether children choose to express themselves in prose or verse is immaterial. The fact that they have chosen to explore language as a means of expression, is alone important. It is through such exploration that children can best make their experiences and feelings communicable. At the same time these young people can only be widening and enriching their proficiency as writers. Given the encouragement and freedom to express themselves at school, children will more easily carry

into life a delight, a wonder and an increasing facility in the use of language to communicate feelings. Such free, personal expression in language, be it spoken<sup>or</sup> written, prose or verse, can only encourage growth in the individual and an awareness of the things that really matter. Whether children grow up to become serious or successful authors, however, will depend on their natural ability in the ebb and flow of a multitude of circumstances. But it is my contention, from the evidence of this one-year programme, that voluntary verse writing aroused a fresh interest in poetry, liberated unsuspected ideas and attitudes, and generated a new excitement for writing amongst hundreds of children, many of whom were regarded as having 'little sensitivity'.

It should be borne in mind, too, that no rigid demarcation exists between prose and verse. This is particularly true when children practise free verse composition. It would be difficult to refute the claim that some of the examples of free verse appearing in the Appendix are, in fact, prose compositions in all but typographical lay-out. Yet, as Reeves (1958) points out :

' A line of free verse, much more than a prose sentence, can become the unit of thought, the vehicle for expressing a variable amount of observation or feeling. . . . The approach is different. The mere demand to break up the thought in this way acts as a check on vagueness and rambling; it gives free play to a latent sense of verbal rhythm; it encourages brevity and succinctness; but above all, the feeling that what is being written is poetry of a sort, not simply narrative or description, is a spur to creative expression; the lines are there for what they are, not only for what they say. '

In many instances, personal verse-writing afforded these pupils an obvious and satisfying emotional release. This is not easily attained in longer prose composition, which clearly demands close attention to syntax and relevance to an artificially contrived situation imposed from without. Writing as a release can only best flow from a source of inner tension and no 'set' topic can be expected to encourage this. Many poems were handed in which confessed to some personal problem, conflict or moral dilemma. Among the most favoured themes and subjects were the following :

War, Death, Unhappiness, Violence, Jealousy, Bad Dreams, Accidents, Home Conflict, Stealing, Lying, Anger and Cowardice.

With all such expression, the teacher has only one rôle to play. He can only accept, show understanding, and give encouragement where needed (although, in such situations it would hardly be wise for a teacher to act as psycho-therapist). No criticism, or suggested changes of theme can ever be encouraging to any young person who feels, at the time, that he must write about the things that matter most to him.

The following two poems are given here as examples of writing as an emotional outlet. The first was handed in by an Italian-speaking boy, who had been classed by several teachers as 'practically illiterate'. It represents his first attempt at verse-writing :

THOUGHTS IN BED

Flynn, what a name  
grabs my sweets today  
and I stood there like a fool today  
trips me  
fools me

Today he hit my sister  
Why didn't I belt him  
Why didn't I throw him  
and thrash him  
but I stood there  
Like a fool,  
but if he was here now  
I would make him bow  
Like a king, I would make him bow.

Sigh wish I had a big built  
and have my belly filled  
with sweets  
and all his eats  
Id swiped of him  
One day I'll get him. . . .  
. . . . One day I'll get m m m. . .  
. . . . One . . . day . . . zzzzzzz

Alan; aged 15.

This second poem was written in a few minutes during a library period by a fourteen year old boy, who, for obvious reasons, prefers to remain anonymous. Some months earlier he had been caught stealing a set of darts from a sports shop. (It is interesting to note that he has substituted 'sweets' for the articles actually stolen.)

CAUGHT

They were so inviting  
Those darts sweets  
Then they were in my pocket.  
Had somebody seen me?  
No, no I was quite safe.

Walked past the gay, young cashier.  
A man stopped me.  
Fear.  
'That all you have, son?'  
'Yes!'  
'Come with me please.'  
Blood to head  
Fear to feet  
Panic!  
Caught!

Five cuts!  
Was it all worth it?  
No!  
Never again.

Anon., aged 14.

7.3

Details of the Programme

'By indirections find directions out.'

Hamlet, Act II Scene i.

This programme was begun gradually and only after I had sensed that there was some interest in poetry throughout the school; it was not begun primarily to foster a new delight in poetry, but was rather the natural result of a certain enjoyment already there.

The approach used to encourage verse-writing was one of indirection. I avoided the use of any kind of stimulus, such as music, or any special techniques involving direct instruction; not

only because I believed that genuine, personal writing is largely an unteachable art, but<sup>also</sup> because I was also mindful of the plea made by Martin Buber (1947):

'For if the educator of our day has to act consciously he must nevertheless do it "as though he did not".'

I set out with the belief that I was not going "to teach" creative, written expression in verse. Any influences would need to come from an exposure to poetry and through encouragement from me. Pupils were free to be influenced by any experiences, techniques or ideas gained from the wide variety of poems which, at first, I selected to read in class. Deliberately, I included a wide range of poems written by young people throughout the world - poems which would clearly show that these young writers were expressing themselves vigorously and freely upon the experiences of life today. And, clearly, this was a point of strong contact; there was no need for me to point out to the boys that these authors were contemporary with them, and that they had found voluntary writing in verse a vital, exciting kind of self-expression. I suggested - almost unobtrusively - to the boys that they might feel like doing the same; that if they wished to hand in any of their poems, I should be glad to receive them.

But apart from accepting every piece of writing with encouragement, respect and interest, I did not try to originate creativity; I did not tell any pupils how to fashion; how to discover significant personal experiences which called for shaping and 'fixing' from an infinite system of words available. Exposure to poetry, encouragement, acceptance, personal discovery and development-through-practice were the broad guide-lines. The only direct advice<sup>given</sup> to the boys given at the very outset, was the reminder that many of the poems which had delighted them were unrhymed and without strict metre - so-called 'free verse'.

This was done because children will, at first, experience the greatest difficulties if they attempt to give special attention to rhyme and metre. In my experience, it is rare for a young person

to use either rhyme or metre in such a way that each appears to be an organic part of the poem. Most children, if encouraged initially to use these skilled techniques, will seize any word available to complete a line. It is this useless subtraction and addition of language and meaningless juggling with words that has perhaps been the cause of much discouragement among teachers who have tried to <sup>stimulate</sup> interest children to write poems.

Significantly, many boys began writing in a highly experimental manner, enjoying a great deal of preliminary freedom and voluntary practice before seeking any guidance or settling for more disciplined expression. I observed, though, that at first a number of writers ignored the 'rhyme' and 'metre' advice, while an even greater number felt compelled to use archaic language such as 'hath', 'perchance', 'o'er'. Most noticeably, the more senior pupils concentrated their attention upon 'poetic subjects' and upon the use of inversions and invocations.

O mist-shrouded Drakensburg! Where art thou?  
Hid in thy upper majesty and surroundings sylvan  
Hast thou seen me, perchance...

To overcome these artificial restrictions, I used two approaches, ~~to shift attention away from these mistaken conformities.~~ Firstly, and with permission from the writers concerned, I read aloud to all classes some of the best free verse poems handed in to me. Whenever possible, I wrote most of the shorter poems on the blackboard - in particular, all the successful attempts at writing haiku. Secondly, I tried to eliminate some of the restrictive ideas about poetry which were held by the majority of older pupils in the Standard IX and Standard X classes. The following suggestions were given :-

' Disregard "poetic subjects", "poetic language", inversions, invocations; for the time being ignore rhyme, strict metre, figures of speech, "devices", stanzas or any kind of strict form unless you find yourself using some of these easily and naturally. Simply write as you wish, in your own free time, following your own inclinations; write on whatever experiences, ideas or feelings please you, at whatever length and in whatever personal form you wish. '

During the next few weeks of the programme I continued to encourage the boys to write freely and accurately; to jot down ideas, observations, feelings; to explore the rich potential of language and to experiment with words and the sound of words. To the few remaining writers who were still hampered and blocked by rhyme and metre, I continued to suggest the use of free running, unrhymed lines of any length to capture feelings and thoughts on any subject or experience.

Gradually, I added some direction by stating that the best verse-writing was economical, vivid, fresh and personal in vision. By this stage, I was reading aloud, to all classes, the best poems handed in to me. I did this partly to illustrate the suggestions I had been making and partly to satisfy an insistent, growing demand from the pupils to listen to poems written by other boys. In the course of the one-year programme, I felt that this reading aloud of two or three outstanding poems at the beginning of most English lessons was perhaps the greatest single stimulus in encouraging others to write in verse.

From this stage onwards, in the programme, any advice given was largely in answer to questions put to me by individual writers.

- ' Yes, of course, you must feel free to re-arrange, re-draft or even destroy your first attempts. '
- ' Certainly, you can be as inventive as you like. When you feel like doing so, you may wish to imitate a particular style or poem you have admired. '
- ' I agree with you that you need a faster rhythm. Keep the rhyme, which you handle very well, but try shortening the lines until the rhythm feels right.' [ See Poem No. 6 ]
- ' No, it does not matter if you have imagined yourself as an American soldier in Vietnam. It does one a great deal of good to become somebody else.' [ See Poem No. 28 ]
- ' Yes, I do like the poem very much. I think it is the best one you have written. Would you mind if I read it to some classes? No, I don't think you should change any part of it; I'm glad you told me that you wrote it after I had read Wilfred Owen's poem [ Futility ] to the class. Yes, I do

like your excellent image of the wheel at the end. It is very memorable; I wish I had thought of that myself. No, I don't think you should change your rhyme at the end... No, you think of a reason for my advice... Yes, of course. "Dead" and "bled" gives your poem a quick, clipped, neat ending.' [See Poem No. 39.]

When approached by these individual writers, I suggested that the best work would show unity, control and precision; that particular rhythms, rhyme, stanzas and images were signs of such control and could be used to secure certain effects. I stressed that these features should grow naturally in the process of composition and that, collectively, they should form an organic part of any poem. Once each writer began to realise that this kind of writing was enjoyable, satisfying and relaxing; that he was not an eccentric since everybody else seemed to be doing the same sort of thing; that pattern, rhythm and the selection of 'the right word in the right order' resulted in memorable expression, then the rate of writing rose steadily to 30 or 40 poems a week. (The greatest weekly number of poems handed in was about 85, and this high peak was reached usually during the first week of any new term.)

During the programme I did not use any group writing methods which have proved successful in some overseas schools. This approach would seem to provide an excellent start by leading individual pupils towards personal expression; thereafter, I believe its value is limited. (Group writing is based on teamwork and group suggestion. Often a visual or auditory stimulus is used and a poem is begun and developed on the blackboard according to the suggestions received from members of the class. Ideally, most members of a small or medium-sized class should participate by suggesting or rejecting words, ideas, lines, rhymes and rhythms until the poem is completed. The strength of this approach lies in its 'involvement' value; its obvious weakness is that it can never be wholly satisfying to any one member in a personal sense. Unless handled with the utmost skill, nearly all the work devolves upon one or two pupils while the rest sit in passive silence.)

At no time did I require the writing of verse as a class exercise, nor was verse composition ever set as an exercise for homework. Throughout the year I avoided setting or suggesting any topic or theme for writing. Once the idea of making one's own poetry had been accepted as a natural act of communication and had begun to develop into a tradition, I established a set of rules for my own observance :

- (i) Be prepared, always, to listen, to accept, to praise and encourage and to give advice (criticism is very frequently requested).
- (ii) Do not fuss over outstanding work; equally, do not be harsh over any appalling attempts.
- (iii) Do not correct, mark, alter, compare, read aloud, or publish any poem without invitation or permission.

In spite of my reluctance to correct any poem - in any way - the verse writing throughout the school showed a marked, progressive improvement. The majority of boys painstakingly re-drafted many of their first attempts, correcting or improving upon language, punctuation, spelling, word selection, form and typographical lay-out.

The writing of pastiche or any imitation of a strict disciplined form such as the sonnet was not encouraged. A number of boys, however, showed (Poems 39, 41, 48, 52, 53, 54, 55) the influence of poems or forms they had come across. It would seem, on close examination, that most of these poems are not copies but reflections and ideas transmuted by personal attitudes and experiences. The haiku remained the most popular single form throughout the programme. The reasons for this, perhaps, can be summarised as follows. Haiku is a three line Japanese verse form. Correctly used, it should contain 17 syllables - five in the first line, seven in the second and five in the third. No rhyme is used. This particular form helps, more than any other perhaps, to break the rhyming bonds; to give a satisfying sense of completeness in stating a sharply felt idea or experience; to call for accuracy

in word selection and concentrated imagery. Above all, most children seem to find the brevity irresistible; and the framework which is both infinite and definite helps to preserve the right balance between freedom and discipline. Some boys admitted that they were able to 'carry' an idea in mind until the right words 'fell into place'. On a hot day early in December, a 13 year old boy looking out of a classroom window at a Jacaranda tree in full bloom, wrote this poem :

FLOWER-BELLS

Mauve Jacaranda  
Bells fall as a soft carpet  
Silently ringing in Christmas.

Keith, aged 13.

From a 13 year old, this is a fine, happy vision, captured in a few minutes. It should illustrate, too, how mistaken a teacher would be to suggest the deletion of <sup>the</sup> word 'silently' in order to preserve a more accurate 5 - 7 - 5 syllabication.

Poetry lessons continued much as usual throughout the year except that the exposure to a great variety of poetry now included many of the poems written within the school - yet, if anything, I kept the increased demand for poetry somewhat short-supplied, in the belief that to touch upon poetry during every English lesson might easily blunt the mounting enthusiasm.

Nevertheless, an unprecedented demand for poetry was maintained throughout the year. Hundreds of poems were 'discovered' in the course of voluntary, out-of-school reading. Most of these were brought to me to be read aloud in class. At the request of pupils, a special poetry section was formed in the School Library. (See Appendix: Some Suggestions for Teachers.) An activity of the greatest value throughout the year was the exploration and sharing of poems by authors such as: Ted Hughes, Robert Frost, e. e. cummings, William Carlos Williams, Robinson Jeffers, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Judith Wright, Carl Sandberg, Rudyard Kipling, Roy Campbell and Guy Butler, together with translations

from the Chinese by Arthur Waley and from <sup>the</sup> Japanese from The Penguin Book of Japanese Verse.

I am convinced that the continuing urge to write poetry depended a great deal upon the experiences stirred and transmuted by this exposure to fine, meaningful poetry; any 'guidance' received during the programme was largely gathered from this wide range of poetic experience. And, as the programme gained momentum, I became more convinced that 'appreciating' the poems of others sparks off an urgent, natural desire to write poetry for oneself; that the two activities are complementary and regenerative. For an active involvement in the making of poetry will lead directly to a wider, expanding appreciation of the poetry of others and vice versa.

By the end of the year, 42 boys had bought anthologies of verse - mostly paperback editions of modern British, American and Commonwealth verse - while most pupils were reading, voluntarily, at least some poetry during their leisure time. Over 100 boys began to make up their own anthologies. Some 20 to 30 pupils - notably those who were responsible for founding an informal Ballad and Folk Song Group - clubbed together to buy recordings of ballads, folk-songs and spoken poetry. These included recordings of Dylan Thomas and Robert Frost reading some of their own works and a recording of some of the poems and prose of the First World War (See Appendix: Some Suggestions for Teachers).

By the end of the second term, so much interest had been generated for reading, writing and listening to poetry that I felt obliged to devise some additional methods and approaches. Each of these is outlined in the Appendix: Some Suggestions for Teachers. In addition, a monthly publication of selected poems written by pupils, entitled New Voices, proved to be most popular.

#### 7.4

#### Some of the Poems

84 poems have been included in the Appendix entitled Examples of Unguided Verse Writing. The poems appearing in this

collection are mostly from pupils between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. Older boys expressed great interest in the verse written, but wrote little themselves. Only eighteen of these senior boys (out of some 217 writers in the school) submitted more than one or two poems throughout the year.

Of the poems included, 56 are from boys in "C" or "D" streams - boys who were considered average or below average in their general school studies. This would seem a fair representation when it is considered that over 1,000 poems were received from pupils within this ability range. About 35 of the 84 poems are first/ or early attempts/ at verse writing.

It has been difficult to select 'typical' poems from such a large output submitted to me. Within the range of this selection, I have tried to select poems which reflect some of the following general characteristics which prevailed :

- (i) 'Typical' themes, ideas or subjects most favoured by the majority of writers.
- (ii) The economy, freshness, precision and brevity of most of the poems. This marked tendency towards brevity/ can be gauged, for example, from my inclusion of the longest poem handed in during the year (Poem No. 19).
- (iii) The predominance of unrhymed or loosely rhymed poems.
- (iv) The large number of poems reflecting personal experiences and feelings or direct, first-hand observation.
- (v) The surprisingly large number of poems which reveal a depth, maturity or vision not usually associated with children within this age group.
- (vi) The fine use and control of rhythm and the vivid naturalness of the language and imagery.

With some poems there is an unmistakeable exuberance in the musical quality of words. One writer said, of his poem :

'I can't really tell you what it means. It's like coming out of a day-dream suddenly and being surprised. But I just like splashing around in the sound of new words.'  
(See Poem No. 38/.)

I have included a number of poems written by Alan Olivato and Raymond Edwards, beginning with their first attempts and ending with some of their last poems handed in to me.

Alan Olivato, aged 15. (His first poem, Thoughts in Bed, was quoted earlier in this chapter. Other poems of his are numbers 13, 35, 61 and 68 in Appendix A .)/

Alan's home language is Italian. He started speaking and writing English only seventeen months before the programme was begun. His weak grasp of English was a severe handicap and, by the middle of the year, he was still unable to write a coherent prose composition. He was rated 'practically illiterate' by other teachers, and progress in all his school subjects was severely affected by his language difficulties. His unhappy experiences in the Belgian Congo during the Independence upheaval are revealed in poems 61 and 68. Alan was the most prolific writer of verse in the school and he was one of those who, towards the end of the year, was writing more verse than prose. He handed in more than 60 poems and his personal anthology contained over 200 of his own poems. The poems appended reflect his growth as a writer and the facility of his poetic expression. As with all other poems, no changes have been made except for author-controlled revision and correction of spelling errors.

Raymond Edwards, aged 15. (Poems 4, 8, 27, 29, 47, 48, 49, 70, 72, 73, 76 in Appendix A .)/

An intelligent, gifted boy most talented in English studies. From the outset of the programme he wrote fine poems with astonishing ease, fluency and frequency. For him, the writing of poetry was an absorbing passion. It can be seen that much of his work has a vivid, sensuous appeal and a distinctive South African mood. He was very conscious of the need for accurate, freshly-minted expression and one of his remarks shows his concern for precision.

'Words are like thousands of jig-saw puzzle pieces and when I get a really strong urge to write something, somehow the best words begin to fall into their right places and my poem starts to grow.' Italics mine (c. f. Coleridge: 'Poetry = the best words in the best order'.)

7.5

Some General Conclusions

- (i) This one-year experiment strongly indicates that the encouragement of creative verse writing stimulates an urgent excitement in written expression of this kind.
- (ii) The programme provided unmistakable evidence that the writing of poems generates a new, vital interest in the appreciation of poetry. Closely linked with this, is the widespread evidence of a voluntary urge among pupils to read, listen to and discuss poetry.
- (iii) Some of the best work was received from boys in 'C' and 'D' classes. Many of these writers of good poems showed also the greatest delight in poetry and many were previously regarded as 'weak at English'. This encouraging tendency is also reflected in an excerpt, quoted by Reeves (1958) from a bulletin describing an experimental syllabus designed for ordinary children in New Zealand :

'The writing of poetry by children has been one of the most successful things in the trial syllabus work. It is remarkable that some apparently non-literary children have found in this their most satisfying form of written expression.'
- (iv) The most productive and interested age group was 13-16 years. It was most noticeable that boys in their final school year contributed little. This, perhaps, may be attributed to a variety of factors such as an ingrained prejudice against poetry; changing attitudes of late adolescence ('What's the use of it?' 'It's not going to help you in life.') and the academic pressures of the Matriculation year.

(v) Although too many variables prevent <sup>one from reaching</sup> a valid conclusion being reached, I believe that many boys will write better prose compositions as a result of extensive practice in verse-writing. Many hitherto poor or average prose writers showed a new interest in any kind of personal writing and many prose compositions began to show greater imaginative power, sensitivity, accuracy and neatness. Also noticeable was the new brevity of most compositions. The usually dull, rambling assignments of about 400 words tended to drop to 220-280 words and showed more sparkle, life and personal conviction.

(vi) The results of this experiment tend to refute the suggestion made by many teachers (Chapter Four) that boys, on the whole, are 'self-conscious', 'suspicious' of 'art' and 'emotions', and that 'girls read and write verse more frequently than boys.'

Similarly, the evidence of this programme tends to contradict the views of 129 teachers (Chapter Four: Table 9) who believed that the more intelligent <sup>of</sup> their pupils were, on the whole, more responsive to poetry than the less intelligent. (That is, if 'responsive' is taken to mean <sup>having</sup> delight in, and feeling for, poetry, and <sup>practising</sup> not literary criticism or <sup>gaining</sup> high marks in the examinations.)

(vii) No special methods, techniques or stimuli need be used to encourage children to write verse. There is no mystique to be acquired by the teacher and no set of rules to be followed. It would appear that some writers on the subject (Huggler, 1966) have over-stressed the myriad stimuli that can be used. Other investigators have, as Baldwin (1966) says, 'nearly all contrived to suggest that the persuader possessed special gifts, and that without these gifts the process is difficult.' I would say that there are only two essentials: a congenial climate where poetry is enjoyed as an experience and as an activity; and a teacher who is sincere in giving praise and encouragement and who, at all times, is prepared to accept any poem gladly and with interest.

- (viii) There is good evidence to suggest that the preferences, tastes, and attitudes of children towards poetry, can show radical changes within a comparatively short period. (See Table 18 March, 1965, and Table 19 August, 1966, pages 322 and 323.) Table 18 reflects those poems most enjoyed by 277 boys before the commencement of the verse writing programme. Table 19 shows the poems most enjoyed seventeen months later, by a similar group, 123 of whom had given preferences in the previous year. The top rated poem in 1965 - Snake by D.H. Lawrence (mentioned 89 times) - falls in 1966 to 13th place with 54 mentions. The top rating, in 1966, is given instead to 'Out, Out' by Robert Frost (112 mentions) - a poem encountered for the first time some six months earlier. Some of the 'displacements' are remarkable. For example, a poem such as Horatius, which was very familiar to both groups and which was highly rated in 1965, fell 24 places in 1966 and is mentioned only 27 times as opposed to 72 times the previous year.
- (ix) The ease with which so many boys were able, initially, to write so well and the steady improvement made through self-found discipline, strongly suggests that the best way to encourage the writing of poetry might well be through freedom, non-direction and the writer's personal discovery.

'There is a period of aimless activity and unregulated accumulation . . . There is a period of orderliness, of circumspection, of discipline, in which we purify, separate, define, select and arrange.' (Coleridge: Biographia Literaria.)

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The general conclusions which may be drawn from the above investigation are as follows :

1. Texts presented to children in the senior school are frequently ill-chosen, difficult, too mature and intellectually demanding, and largely unrelated to children's development, natural interests and accumulated experience of life. This is not to suggest that pupils in the upper school should not experience the close textual study of some demanding poems; nevertheless, there is cause for grave concern when large numbers of teachers admit their own inability to comprehend some of the texts prescribed for children.

Teachers should be allowed to select those texts - possibly from a recommended list - which appeal to them and which they feel would be best suited to the development, tastes, and capabilities of their pupils.

It is strongly recommended that the study of texts of the difficulty of Milton's Lycidas and Wordsworth's Intimations Ode should be deferred until post-matriculation or the university years when they may be presented at the discretion of a specialist teacher or lecturer. With regard to pupils in their final two years at school, this investigation fully supports the argument put forward by many writers (see earlier chapters) that the tendency, to introduce pupils to mature, elevated texts before they are sufficiently mature to appreciate these, is almost certain to produce apathy and distaste :

'It is the dull and tedious over-emphasis upon the intellectual elements in works of literature that deal with subjects outside children's interests and beyond their imaginative grasp that is responsible for their distaste of what they would appreciate readily enough if it were presented later and in happier circumstances.'

A. F. Watts (1944).

Our aim throughout the school - and indeed beyond the school years - should be to maintain a spirit of delight while extending the range of literature and the gradual need for discrimination and criticism. It seems that this spirit and range is largely absent at the matriculation level. Pupils and teachers appear to be tied to a narrow prescribed syllabus. Further, the demands of the public examination leave little room for the occasional, unanalytical enjoyment of literature.

The reaction of pupils is worth noting again. From the survey of pupil attitudes it became quite clear that :

- (i) Texts which may have given children some pleasure at an earlier, appropriate age are being re-presented too frequently in the senior school without due regard for the changing interests and advancing maturity of adolescent boys and girls.
- (ii) In the middle and upper school, texts are given to boys and girls which are clearly too difficult and mature, in thought and language, for the various age groups; too remote from the natural interests and tastes of the majority of children; and requiring too much detailed explanation and annotation.
- (iii) For many boys and girls the stage of delight in poetry is cut short by methods of teaching and an examination system which make 'premature demands for evaluation and analysis'. It would even appear that many children, for various reasons, have never experienced a stage of delight.
- (iv) The process of evaluation and analysis appears to be wrongly conducted as a series of separate activities largely unrelated to the total significance of the poem and not contributing to the appreciation of poetry. Consequently, (and especially with inappropriate texts) it is clear that a great number of boys and girls fail to see the connection between the experience of literature and the need for critical techniques to explore, understand and evaluate the texts.

The reaction of teachers is also worth noting. Many felt that enjoyment was destroyed by 'grinding' through<sup>d</sup> an inevitable core of 'traditional classics'; that too many unsuitable texts are prescribed; that the need to deal with such texts analytically 'for examination purposes' destroyed interest. Many felt that more good South African and Commonwealth poetry should be recommended; that teachers should be free to supplement the syllabus with their own selections of poems. More than 20 teachers felt that the question of internally set examination, moderated by an external examiner, should be investigated. Others suggested that more organised, functional co-operation should exist between teachers, examiners, departments, training colleges and universities; that more recognition should be made of successful or promising examination techniques and teaching methods currently practised in Britain. Thirteen teachers felt that not enough encouragement is given to creative verse expression in the lower and middle school. A significant number of teachers felt that poetry is given very scant attention at the Standard 6 level; and that the teaching of poetry in junior schools is generally neglected, <sup>treated</sup> <sub>as</sub> unimaginative<sup>ly</sup> and regarded as a nuisance.

It is significant that 36 teachers made various appeals for advice and assistance from the Institute (<sup>which was</sup> conducting the survey)- notably for recommended texts, texts by contemporary South African writers, refresher courses, notes, recordings, lists of useful references and critical commentaries.

2. A marked distaste for poetry among pupils is caused by the premature imposition of close studies of texts and from a confusion of language exercises and 'analytical techniques' often referred to under the spurious description of Critical Appreciation. These practices should be carefully revised. In general, the beginnings of critical discrimination should not be commenced much before the final year of Junior Certificate (Standard 8). The practice of setting a poem or extract from a poem in an examination paper and treating this text as a language exercise (e. g. material for

clause analysis) is to be deplored and should be discontinued.

3. Evidence throughout this investigation strongly suggests that prescribing one anthology of verse - especially a single anthology prescribed for two years - is a highly restrictive tradition which leads inevitably towards boredom. It is recommended that several sets of suitable anthologies should be used at all levels in both primary and secondary schools. The practice in Natal of setting separate syllabuses for Standards 9 and 10 is seen as a step in the right direction.
4. It is recommended that a move be made, however gradual, to introduce differentiated education into all schools. A great deal of evidence from teachers shows that the same syllabus and the same examination for all pupils, irrespective of their intentions or abilities, results in a ridiculous compromise between the educational aims of the syllabus and the capability of the average pupil. The system of streaming and differentiation in Transvaal and Natal schools deserves the closest attention from other Provincial Departments of Education.
5. The ability to read poetry aloud well cannot be over-emphasised. Yet, a great deal of evidence shows that many teachers or intending teachers are largely unskilled in this respect. It is not the proper function of teacher-training institutions to remedy the long term neglect of speech skills. Accordingly, more emphasis should be given in the schools to the spoken word; it should form an examined part of English studies. Furthermore, it is recommended that speech skills should be developed in the larger context of communication and should form an integral part of language studies at the university level. The professional training period for teachers should be regarded as a time when specialised speech skills are developed; it should be a period during which the spoken word is <sup>repaired</sup> refined, not remedied.
6. There is an urgent need for student teachers in training to observe accomplished and experienced teachers of English at work in day

to day classroom situations. Training Colleges and University Departments of Education are urged to give serious consideration to this need.

7. It is recommended that the highest priority be given to the frequent holding of Refresher Courses for teachers of English. More courses should follow the pattern of the Conference of Teachers of English organized by The Conference of Headmasters and Headmistresses of the Private Schools of South Africa which was held in Grahamstown from 23rd to 28th September, 1963. At this Conference, specialist teachers of English read papers or formed symposia. It is important to note that the selected speakers were drawn from Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, Training Colleges, and Universities, and included inspectors and chief examiners in English. In addition, a number of well-known overseas educationists were invited to read papers to the Conference after having spent some time visiting all types of schools in South Africa, and acquainting themselves with the system of education in this country. At the special request of the 216 delegates attending the Conference, the 15 lectures and papers given during the course were published for the information of teachers throughout the country.
8. It is suggested that there should be some kind of organisation of teachers, inspectors and examiners of English. Members forming this organisation should be drawn from schools, training colleges, Departments of Education and Universities. It should be the aim of such an organisation to establish close ties between the four groups named above, and to plan, co-ordinate and organise in-service training of teachers and refresher courses and conferences. It is believed that reform depends entirely upon the co-operation and interchange of ideas between teachers and administrators at all levels.
9. Texts which may have given children some pleasure at an earlier, appropriate age are being presented too frequently in the senior school without due regard for the changing interests and advancing

maturity of adolescent boys and girls. It is recommended that the greatest care should be taken to ensure that senior pupils are not made to return too frequently to the texts of primary school years.

10. The selection of texts and the setting and marking of examinations should be internal and teacher-controlled with external moderation - or at least <sup>this should be</sup> offered as an alternative to full external control.
11. From much of the evidence, it would appear that the teaching of poetry in the upper levels is altogether too serious in its intensity and too highly geared to examinations. While not wishing to underestimate the value of literary criticism and the close examination of texts, I feel it is a pity that more time cannot be given to poetry for pleasure and relaxation.
12. It is unfortunate that the study of narrative poetry should not be continued into the upper senior school. This omission is regarded as serious as it intensifies the situation described in 11 (above). It is recommended that good narrative poems should form a significant part of any selection of texts for Matriculation classes. It is further recommended that more emphasis should be given to ballads and folk-songs at all school-levels.
13. It is recommended that the experience of poetry should extend beyond the confines of the single/ weekly lesson. Teachers of English are urged to present poetry, as a surprise, at any time.
14. More time should be given, in the school time-table, to English studies.
15. More frequent use should be made, especially in Junior schools, of outstanding poems written by children.
16. It is recommended that in-service training of teachers should be established as soon as possible in order to introduce new methods,

ideas, approaches and texts into the schools.

17. More general use should be made in schools particularly at the upper levels of good, suitable texts by South African writers.
18. The resources in most school libraries are hopelessly inadequate. Steps should be taken to ensure that a wide range and variety of texts and recordings is easily available in school and class libraries.
19. The evidence in this investigation strongly suggests that differences which supposedly exist between boys and girls in the matters of taste and attitude towards poetry, are largely exaggerated.
20. Throughout this survey it is very evident that the <sup>present</sup> experience of literature in schools - both primary and secondary - is less a matter of enjoyment and more a matter of analysis and instruction. It is<sup>I</sup> strongly recommended, as other writers have done, (Mittens, (1959), Quirk (1959)) that to encourage children to take ~~x~~ delight and pleasure in poetry should be a teacher's prime aim; that this aim should be extended to include the lower and middle forms of the senior school. If this aim <sup>is</sup> ~~were~~ to be followed, it is more likely that pupils, once having reached the most senior forms, will begin to take an equal interest and delight in precise, critical textual analysis.

But, as Mittens (1959) points out '... teachers forgo or shorten the stage of delight at their peril'.

21. It is recommended that the greatest care should be exercised when setting a poem, or extract from a poem, in an examination paper on language. The questions set should be directed towards the comprehension of the poem or extract and not towards isolated and irrelevant exercises <sup>whereby</sup> the pupil is asked to paraphrase, to make a clause analysis, or to supply 'words of opposite meaning'.
22. It has been established by many teachers and investigators that the

compilation of a personal anthology - by both teacher and pupil - is highly rewarding and satisfying. It is recommended that this should be more generally practised.

23. The memorising of verse is to be recommended. It is unfortunate, however, that knowing verse by heart should be linked, invariably, with the requirements of examinations. Compulsory learning of texts not selected by children themselves is tedious and distasteful. It should be left to each pupil<sup>s</sup> to make his own choice in <sup>the</sup> matters of inclination, the poem selected, the number of lines learnt, and the time taken to do this. The fact that a few children will show little inclination or aptitude to memorise any poetry at all<sup>s</sup> should be respected.
24. From the evidence of this investigation, and from all overseas reports, it is quite clearly established that personal expression in verse, widely encouraged among all children at all levels, is probably the most important<sup>s</sup> single activity leading directly to a genuine interest in, and appreciation of, poetry.

Consequently, the strongest of all the recommendations in this investigation is that opportunity, advice and encouragement should be given to all teachers of English to regard creative verse writing not as some kind of luxury or 'frill', but as an activity equal in importance to the writing of prose.

APPENDIX A

AN EXPERIMENT IN CREATIVE VERSE WRITING  
AT QUEEN'S COLLEGE

EXAMPLES OF UNGUIDED VERSE WRITING

1. WATCH

Watch a craftman's hands,  
And you will see  
love.

Watch his fingers closely,  
And you will see  
A gift from  
above.

Watch a craftman's work  
taking slow shape,  
And you, too, will  
dream.

Watch a craftman's eyes  
lit with absorption,  
and yours too will  
gleam.

Martin, aged 16.

2. POETRY

Poetry is born from the soul,  
It does not generate from others,  
From one's own mind it originates,  
No one can spoon words into your mouth,  
Words, thoughts come from your heart,  
and yours alone.

Trev., aged 15.

3. SYMBOL OF OUR LAND

We had a Springbok once,  
Captured.  
She shared our narrow world  
Bounded by ten feet or so  
Of Garden.  
This was our own way of life  
For that doe.  
Long I lay and watched her  
Eyes - black buttons of water,  
Desiring the distance;  
And long I lay and watched her  
Nose, wrinkling and twitching  
To catch the hot-earth scent  
Of rain from far-off  
And then I saw the tremble  
Of her sleek body as  
She picked up some sound  
Not for our ears;  
And quickly, with my penknife,  
I set her free.

Richard, aged 12½.

4. THOUGHT

A flight of shrieking mouse-birds tore the noonday hush,  
As a small party came up from the bush  
Up from the shallow valley below the house  
Between wilted blue gum trees,  
Past the wagon shed with its sun-warred planks  
And doors sagging on rusty hinges.  
I recalled the fruity popping of fleshy prickly-pear leaves  
The electric buzz of Christmas beetles,  
And the mouth-drying-taste of spek-boom leaves  
And the acidity of a newly-fired cartridge  
And above me the sky was a hard, washed out blue,  
Faling to an almost white on the far horizon.

Raymond, aged 15.

5. THE DEATH OF A STAG

The stag is flushed  
Its antlers swaying  
The hunt is on  
The hounds are baying  
The thundering hooves  
Go galloping on  
As red-clad huntsmen  
Join the throng  
On pounds the stag  
With racing breath  
Submitting to the natural  
Hate of death  
Through budding thickets  
Past luxuriant valleys  
Past bubbling streams  
Through fern-walled alleys  
At last it stands  
With its back to a tree  
Then the hounds pounce  
And the blood runs free.

Chris, aged 15.

6. THE CONQUERER

Swiftly he straddles  
His well-waxed board,  
And enters the deeps  
Where the heavies are stored.

He is part of the wave  
As he carves his way  
Down the surface of combers  
That break in the bay.

The whipped-cream surf  
Avalanches down  
On his foam-flecked board  
As he rides the crown.

The power and strength  
Of the closing green jaws.  
Sends him shooting on  
Without falter or pause.

Like a God of the sea  
He rides a wave  
A titanic monster  
So awesome and grave.

The frowning brow  
He treats with contempt  
And he rides the crest  
Till it's utterly spent.

He masters these giant  
Monsters at sea,  
He's the reigning king  
Of surfers to be.

The unleashed fury  
Of the waves he controls,  
As though he has knowledge  
Of their inner souls.

He rides these heavies  
Till they die on the sands  
And exhausted he lies  
With out-stretched hands.

Chris, aged 15.

7. HAIKU

Shell held close to ear  
Between dumb, unbroken waves  
And silent seas spoke.

Peter, aged 16.

8. FUN IN AUTUMN

The early autumn days had been timeless and sweet  
With smoky, still air and a sense of aimless freedom;  
We had ridden our chariots hard  
Standing on the pedals for speed  
As we went down the road  
Covered with dust and autumn glory;  
Off to search for treasures in the dump,  
Or to spear frogs with markers  
Or just the excitement of seeking adventure.

The winter has now set in.  
The snow blankets every beautiful creature,  
The big oak stands bare and neglected  
Before the old dilapidated barn  
Abandoned and desolate in the falling manna,  
And the leaves and beauty have left  
With transparent protests of reluctance.

Raymond, aged 15.

9. HAIKU

Sudden thought, a quick nakedness  
Beneath icy, blue-cold needles of an autumn-whispering  
waterfall  
And I suck my breath with shock.

Harold, aged 15.

10. BOMBER RAID

Far below  
The glinting snake  
Winds its way  
Through the steaming jungle  
Left,  
Left,  
Steady.  
The gauntleted hand tightens:  
Far below a red bud blooms  
To blossom into a hell  
Of screaming shrapnel.  
Mission successful.

Chris, aged 15.



15. A ROVER'S SONG

From the mighty Drakensberge,  
To Agulhas rollers dread,  
I have roamed this wide land over,  
And I'll roam until I'm dead.

From the huge, high, rock mountains,  
And the Boland's waterfalls,  
To the ostrich farms of Oudtshoorn,  
And the mighty Congo halls.

From Natal's green-grassy hilltops  
To Karroo plains flat and bare,  
From Knysna forests onwards,  
Till I'm not here but there.

From the Zoutpansberg so lovely  
To Capetown's Table Bay  
I'll roam until I'm finished  
So I'll be on my way.

For I've a rover's head and body  
And a rover's heart and mind.  
I'm always looking forward  
But I'll never look behind.

Stuart, aged 14.

16. HOSPITAL THOUGHT

Voices surging, figures drifting  
White clad,  
Cream and white and . . . lifting.

R. E., aged 15.

17. HAIKU

Blurred, rain-swept windscreen  
Smashed with sudden shock into  
My pain-darkened face.

Andrew, aged 15.

18.       SPRING

Tender, succulent  
Re-birth  
The inevitable rhythm of the earth  
Has opened before my eyes.

Onlooker, aged 16.

19. MY DREAMLAND

The grass folds underneath me,  
To make a comforting bed,  
For my weary body,  
Flowers blush, and shyly turn their faces,  
Always nodding their heads to the wind,  
Ants take their time, have a chat,  
As they carry the heavy burden of food homeward,  
Birds gather together in groups,  
To put their own versions to the chorus,  
The swallow broadens out its wings,  
To make yet another daring dive,  
The bird of prey circles out of the sky  
To dig his claws of destruction  
Into the unsuspecting prey,  
Lazy vulture's keen eyes survey the world below,  
On the lookout for its daily meal,  
All this occurs while the smiling bright sun  
Keeps watch over its domain.

My eyelids closed automatically,  
Like that of a doll's,  
Words hanging in mid-air,  
Suddenly fell into my lap,  
In my mind I connected them together,  
To give different kinds of meanings.

That's how I write poems,  
That's how I pen my books,  
That's how I soothe the burning ulcer of trouble.

There in the quiet and blissful fields,  
Where the grass is my comforter,  
And the sky my adviser,  
Yes, that is the only place where one is  
Free from the bustle and roar of the city life,  
The only thing that resides there is, peace,  
Also nature's creation which you can enjoy,  
It can help you indirectly to solve questions,  
Probing your mind for the correct answer,  
Your thoughts you can ponder over,  
Answers found in nature's innocence,  
Pleasant memories brought back to life,  
Relived once more,  
And the wise blue sky acts as your father,  
You go to it as a son with your mounting troubles,  
To help you with your burden, so that you might face  
The merciless world without shame,  
When problems rise again,  
You might be able to survey your little kingdom,  
And let it help you solve your troubles and cares.

Trevor, aged 15.

20.           BURG WIND IN A FOREST

Fouring across a dormant landscape  
A hot river of maddened breath  
An endless sweep of unseen force  
Hot anger from a cold-locked winter.  
Resenting the loss of its warmer days.

Descending from calms in higher places  
Destined for death in Madagascan Seas,  
The plunge of a wind that hotly races  
Unchecked through a scorched nudity of trees.

Peter, aged 16.

21.           CAN THERE BE NO ANSWER

When you fall in love,  
Is it forever?  
How can you know  
Where love goes when it dies?  
Must love always hurt  
When it leaves you?  
How many times must you be hurt,  
Before love dies?  
Where does love go,  
When it leaves you?  
And how many times  
Can it return?

M. J., aged 16.

22.           LYING DYING

Once I saw a man lying dying  
In the middle of a big dark road,  
I stopped and I saw a deep dark gash.  
The blood looked like slippery and cold jelly.  
I offered him some wine  
But he said nothing and lay dying.

Ritchie, aged 13.

23. POEM BY THE SEA

We are all children by the sea,  
Finding in the sun-white sand  
Something of an Eden Garden;  
Where our ever-open-flowing waves  
Wash and scrub our endless-reborn shores.

John, aged 16½.

24. LIFE

Born  
To grow  
Laugh, cry, live  
Tasting the sweet years  
Before becoming a man one day;  
To know warm years of life, at home, with a few friends  
And to work, give, rest, take, grow tired  
Fade richly in the evening glow.  
And, when light departs,  
To lie down  
And gently  
Die.

André, aged 15.

25. POEMS

When I listen intent to a poem read  
I feel it frees my thoughts unsaid  
It gives to me  
That I might see  
(And it's all for free)  
But, best of all, I've begun to feel  
That what I thought had little appeal  
Is a whole new world that's suddenly grown  
As a part of my life I'll never disown.

Tony, aged 14.

26. LEAF IN THE STREET

A single, dead leaf fell before my feet  
Small, sienna-brown and cork-screwed into  
Crisp brittleness, now light upon the concretes.  
But there was not a tree in sight;  
How strange, I thought, and up to what height  
This leaf must have struggled to go  
Only to fall, now, so low  
And to be crushed  
By my feet in this street.

John, aged 16.

27. LULL

The battle was waged with skill and imagination  
But there followed the briefest moment  
Of comparative quietness.  
Only the click of bolts jolting  
Then, secondly, the hot air  
Was tortured and torn  
Under the exploding crash  
Of compressed cordite.

Raymond, aged 15.

28. HOME

I sat there restin' my achin' back in that slimy ditch.  
Drizzle blotted out the hell and mangled bodies behind me.  
It dribbled down my neck.  
My thoughts strayed.  
Home.  
Kentucky.  
The bluegrass state.  
What were Ma and Pa doin' now?  
Feedin' the hosses most likely; maybe havin' a small meal.  
I shivered.  
What did my room look like now? Was my bed made?  
Probably empty.  
Deserted.  
Tears squeezed from my eyes and carved paths  
Through the grime on my face.

Christopher, aged 15.

29. CATTLE KRAAL

Driving the cattle home  
These November evenings of red horizons  
With obscure shadows mingled in bush;  
And the noise and the dust  
And my horse underneath steady and true,  
A long "soohh" of the stock whip  
With the bustle of the kraal  
Oaths, laughter, curses and gay conversation  
There, bellowing, jostling, snorting, foaming  
In an atmosphere of sweat and dust and warmth  
There, where the dust lingers  
Over the fresh manure.

Raymond, aged 15.

30. SIX THOUSAND MILES TO GO

The watery sunshine of late afternoon,  
    was sinking to eve,  
I held you so near,  
Yet it was time to part.  
    A kiss, a sigh,  
It broke my heart  
To see you cry.  
Crystal tears  
Running down your cheeks.  
But I had no time  
To kiss them dry.  
    Time waits for neither you  
        Nor me.  
In thirteen hours  
Six thousand miles away.

Anon., aged 16.

31. AUTUMN

An avenue of copper glistening in yellow sun  
Trees standing bare, facing oblivion  
Exposed branches hanging naked  
A crisp, sharp wind steals through my gold  
With copper shining and gold sparkling  
Leaves rustling with age in the wind  
Moaning with agony as they drift groundwards  
Groaning the trees sag, drooping homewards.  
This is my autumn of the modern age  
My avenue of copper and gold  
For I alone stand with the trees  
Facing oblivion.

Edward, aged 15.

32. HUNDRED YARDS FINAL

Six runners. Starting line. Tense, sick  
Slightly weak. Dry mouth - roll your tongue.  
Circle-round-walk. Kick a chalk line.  
Called up. Glance. Five there, lane  
Two yours. Glance, grin. Got to win  
Please God. Crunched cinders, dry. Fancy  
Damn fool ant scrambling out and in  
Easy, breathe deep. Remember training,  
Set! Dry swallow. Gunshot!  
Blurred-fight-forward-chest-spring-thrust  
Legs. White lines. Suck air. Shoulders  
Touched. Bunched. Breeze-fanning cheek  
Half-way. Chest-tight. Tape coming.  
Thrash it on, NOW. Tape gone, but  
Figure ahead. You're second. Positive  
Must be, got to be. Jelly-legs, no  
Feeling. Arms. Thanks, chum. Second?  
Thought so. Fool. Left it too late.  
Relax. Grab knees. Walk easy. Glad second. Glad.

Peter, aged 16.

33. DAWN

Dawn.  
The gallows stand  
    silent  
    alone  
Stark against the red sky.  
    Footsteps  
    People  
They mount the platform.  
    His hands are tied.  
    The noose,  
    Around his neck.  
    The trap door falls,  
    The noose  
    tightens,  
    His life . . .  
    Ends.

Keven, aged 15.

34. GHOSTS

Like golden ghosts they lie  
Upon the calm floor of the sea.  
Unheeded, undaunted,  
They have ever haunted  
The gloom and depths of the sea.

Michael, aged 15.

35. LISTEN

O Southward sea  
Listen  
The wind is silent  
The clouds are still  
The sands are printed  
By my own.  
You bring to my rusted thoughts,  
A time of home,  
And dreams I long to happen,  
Though you still go restless on  
O, will you never listen?

Alan, aged 15.

36. DREAMS

The dreams  
    Of far distant lands  
    Of gondolas and watered paths.  
In the sombre brown  
    Of the Sphinxes,  
Or the violet-blue tinge  
    Of foreign grapes.  
Blazing sunsets,  
And scented caviare.  
. . . Dreams these all are  
And dreams they shall remain.

Ray, aged 15.

37. IS HE GOING TO CHOOSE ME?

While I swim beyond that reef,  
I think of all the things deep down in that blue water.  
Will the shark choose me?  
I shiver  
What will I do if I see the fin?  
Gliding at me,  
coming nearer,  
nearer,  
I will walk the water  
Stand on my halo.  
Well, it may happen  
If it is my day,  
Just my day.  
I shake myself, am I awake  
or just day-dreaming?  
I then swim on forgetting the sharks  
Thinking of the poor fish about to die,  
To die when my spear goes in  
And comes out the other side.

Robert, aged 15.

38. ALONE

He emerged from silent, dark depths  
A fish slow-gliding upwards in silence  
From dead, mysterious waters,  
Up from the bottom of a soundless sea;  
Then, in an explosion of furious sound  
And battered sensation  
He stood alone.  
Across the street, a stone fountain rose,  
An incongruous note of tranquillity.

Ray, aged 15.

39. BROKEN, HE LIES

Broken and torn and cold he lies;  
If a surgeon in this age of miracles  
Could place him together, whole again  
My friend and I would sit on pinnacles  
Of warmth and easily-shared laughter.

But this cannot be.  
This is the end,  
For him, and for me.  
A life-time separates  
A time for life  
And a time for death.

Yet, in the slow-falling sunsets ahead  
I shall always remember the turning wheel,  
Turning, slow for me, but not for the dead  
The same wheel, that spun fast, as he bled.

Gordon, aged 16.

40. KAFFIR DANCE

There, they gathered  
In a circle of splendour  
The maidens, their heroes to choose,  
Stepping forth, beads gleaming  
Hearts flowing to the setting sun  
Only to rise at the dawning of day.

They play as deer play  
Till the last has fallen,  
Then the victor is cheered and embraced.  
And, now with the moon setting,  
All joy has left the clearing  
The dust slowly settles  
Upon battle-sticks;  
Cracked, splintered  
Possessions of the losers.

Duncan, aged 15.

41. UMZIMKULU

Night, and I training,  
Native hut in the dark veld  
Lit by a gold-copper blaze;  
Mingled scent - of thorn-wood smoke  
Yellow-cooked mealies.  
Calabash and battered paraffin tin;  
A Zulu voice, in pain.  
Wondering, I move on  
Into the cool night,

David, aged 14.

42. DROUGHT

Silver drops exploded soft upon the waiting farm;  
Then they broke their rich, dust-scented promise  
And moved away again.

Oh, all the land had waited  
While we had knelt for rain,  
But  
Nothing happened.

New this; this was worst of all.  
For was it just a parting gift  
Or a promise of more to fall?

Ian, aged 15.

43. HIGH TIDE

Alone, I hear the ceaseless, rhythmic roar and suck  
Of breakers, punishing resistant rock;  
I see the simple intimacy between surf and sand.  
And of these three - sea, rock and sand  
I think I know which one must win.  
For this soft, feminine mushed-up sand  
Was once darkly proud defiant rock,  
But the sea  
Is, was and ever shall be  
Just the sea,  
Eternally.

Clive, aged 15.

44. HOOPOE IN DECEMBER

A summer-searching hoopoe  
Nodding, bead-eyed in long-headed thought of ants,  
Pondered carefully behind a richly brown-barred featheriness  
Then, with expert beak, flipped my sixpence-on-the-lawn  
For better  
Luck.

Kevin, aged 14½.

45. I AM THE BREAD . . .

If we are all the crumbs of life  
Broken minutely from the bread of Christ  
Why must ~~we~~<sup>we</sup> struggle in hatred and strife  
As if our own petty greeds sufficed?

But, of course, He has ordered it so  
For, to be placed again beside His seat  
He has to try to make us know  
That He requires not scattered, fallen wheat

But a whole, new loaf together again.

Roger, aged 16.

46. DROF

After the fear-tight, icy leap  
I slowly spun  
Down, down  
Slipping downwards in silent, sunlit spaces.  
I saw, far below  
The revolving pattern of earth's geometry;  
Slow turning fields - brown, green  
Yellow, living quilt-work,  
Factories, river, woods and lanes  
All rising to receive me.  
How easy, I thought, to over-delay  
My pull for life.  
Four thousand was enough to fall.  
I jerked.  
What a pistol-crack of silken sound!  
A wrenching of shoulders  
A standing on air  
A pendulum suspension beneath  
The slow, silent labour of millions  
Of cocoons - who toiled in an eastern darkness  
For me.  
Below, clearly visible now  
The coarse, calico cross of  
The target.  
Soon I'll straddle it  
For all is well.  
But for others!  
This same descent was  
A swift plunge to  
Crucifixion.

D.L., aged 15.

47. MEMORIES

Beside the river  
In remorse.  
Watching swans  
Glide away.  
She has gone;  
I am left behind  
In memories.

Raymond, aged 15.

48. GALE FORCE

The year of my twentieth mortality,  
Stuck somewhere in Germany.  
With me, an unholy, Godforsaken army.  
Outside, in the snowy night,  
I stood sentinel over the arms depot.  
Teeth chattering unmusically together  
And shivering uncontrollably in issued boots.  
All around me, snow was falling  
From the dark, molesting sky.  
Opposite me, the officers' mess rocked  
From merriment on its unstable fortifications.  
I watched the snow.  
Before, it had been falling almost vertically  
In thick, heavy flakes.  
A wind had sprung up.  
Creeping through my icicled body.  
Breaking the falling crystals  
And driving them now slantwise  
Fully into my unprotected face  
Over piles of ruin and stone.  
Far across our accursed march  
Through France, this the uncouth land.  
The wind increased to gale force  
Howling like a hungry dog  
Whipping at the barren earth from all sides.  
The blizzard swept through everything.  
I shut my eyes.  
I opened them once.  
Before me, it was a valley of snow,  
A white, unbroken stream.  
The snow was seen  
In rising walls, in slowly rolling waves.  
Under the eaves the snow  
Hung in garlands  
Only to be broken by the ever  
Penetrable force of the wind.  
I was cold.  
But dreaming of home  
Blessed sunshine  
And just of lovely  
South Africa . . . . .

Raymond, aged 15.

49. REMEMBER

Do you remember,  
When with surf stinging,  
We clambered the waves,  
Still and silent.  
All that is gone now  
But,  
Do you remember?

Raymond, aged 15.

50. IS IT JUST

Should a man be made  
to live by his choice  
when he was not  
in his right mind to make it?  
To be in love is one matter  
To live with her all your life  
Is another.  
To be in love,  
is to be blind when you look at her  
is to see what is only in your mind.  
To be in love,  
is to be deaf when you hear her voice,  
is to hear her ignorant remarks as delightful wit.  
To be in love,  
is to be dumb when you try to speak first,  
is to be unable to say what your lovesick eye does not see.  
In this state,  
Is it just  
That a man should have to choose  
his female partner till death them do part?

M. J., aged 16.

51. THE BLIND CHILD

I dread the golden velvet  
of unruffled, morning sands,  
While booming breakers foam  
Spilled from Nature's hands.

The shriek of a swooping seagull,  
The roar in the pearly shells,  
The rasp of pebble on pebble,  
The gently rolling swells.

The heaps of slimy seaweed  
On a corrugated beach,  
The slowly crawling sea-snails  
That slip over out of my reach.

The plume of smoking sand  
From a dune's wind-swept crest,  
The laughing, scrambling children  
Who play with vigour and zest.

All these things  
Are lost to me  
For I am blind,  
I no longer see.

Christopher, aged 15.

52. HAIKU

New-blossomed peach tree.  
Scattered, red-pink blooms like bees  
Still to come for honey.

Alan, aged 15½.

53. HAIKU

Freezing autumn winds  
Undressing yellow leaved trees  
For new summer clothes.

Gerald, aged 16.

54. HAIKU

Descending red sun  
Quenched beneath a cooling sea  
To rise tomorrow.

Roger, aged 13.

55. COLLISION COURSE

Flying in brown, untidy jerks at dusk  
Are bats.  
Aiming at me - deliberately or otherwise - but  
Side-slipping in zig-zags to miss.  
Jerky, erratic yet smooth in flight  
Bobbing, leathery-boned brown blobs of wings  
Un-bird-like; displeasing.  
Dimly melting out of sight  
As the little remaining light  
Dilutes slowly  
Into  
Night.

Ken, aged 14½.

56. DRUMS

Night, and I hear those muffled calls,  
Night is the time I most fear  
Those throbbing, beating claws of sound

Day, and all is calm  
Under the innocent sun.

But I know the time will come  
When the drums will sound again,  
And I know my time will come  
When the drums are sounding at  
Night.

Tony, aged 13.

57. A CERTAIN SADNESS

There is a certain sadness about a rusted ship  
Poised upon a blackness of rocks. White - angry  
Seas keep up an endless temper of taunts;  
Once, submissively, they had to pave a way  
For this ship . She had swung through southern seas  
Beneath a stillness of stars patterned in the dark.  
Now, clearly, beneath the sun of this day  
I saw a rusting submission, a lightness  
Fallen to heaviness, all a ruined sea mark.  
And, having once sailed along with her,  
I could not help but feel a certain sadness.

R. W., aged 16.

58. LAST DAWN

The day broke; the sky clear blue  
I stepped forth, stood, to hear the bugle.  
Head bowed. I heard the soothing Voice,  
Oh God, have mercy upon my sinful soul.

Hilton, aged 17.

59. WHAT IS POETRY?

Is not poetry a thought  
An inspiration  
Something alive in you?  
Is it just a composition-on-a-few-lines,  
Or is it - something which wants to be on paper?

Don, aged 14.

60. LONELY SEA

The lonely sea,  
Always tossing and turning,  
Always on the go,  
On until eternity.  
It never keeps still,  
Always fighting,  
Against nature's plan,  
Of wind and sand.  
So think of it,  
Not as full of life,  
With living things,  
But lonely,  
Yes!  
Lonely and sad.

Trev., aged 15.

61. DEAD

The blistering sun shone  
Upon a dark, naked figure.  
His muscular body was swollen,  
One dark hand held a dark spear  
One eye gazed wildly into the sand,  
The other dark hand clutched a hole  
Pierced in his dark stomach.  
I dropped a stone beside him  
And a buzzing swarm of flies  
Rose, and stunned my eyes.

Alan, aged 15.

62. SWIPED

Soft crunch of gravel underfoot  
Quietly!  
Creak!  
You fool!  
Swing door  
Up!  
Quietly does it.  
Into neutral; now  
Push!  
Oh God! A light!  
Sweat, tension!  
Relief, weak-kneed  
Now, more slowly,  
Push!  
At last,  
We're out!  
In you pile boys!  
First,  
Second;  
Third;  
Fourth!  
Foot flat  
Exhilaration!

Chris, aged 15.

63. THE EARTH

The Earth,  
A great big golf ball,  
Hit into space,  
Waiting for a chance to  
Fall from the air,  
and rip away  
From the strong-linked chains of gravity.

Trevor, aged 14.

64. VAN DER MERWE

van der Merwe was a farmin' man  
Who tried his luck at the races,  
He boarded a V 8 - supercharged,  
And went to the race with the aces.

Man dad, when he hit that drag,  
He was doin' thirty-eight,  
An' when he burned up hell past me  
He reached five-over-ton on the straight.

The Galaxie roared, the steerin' bucked,  
van der Merwe swore like hell,  
He took that corner on two discs  
And understeered quite swell.

But dad, oh dad, you shoulda focused the dust,  
When he heaped that stoked up pile,  
Into the railing at B. P. Bend,  
An' ploughed her up in style.

That was the end of his racin' career,  
I'm rather sorry to say,  
Cause he ended up dead - yeah! - stone dead,  
And I'm kinda sad in a way.

Chris, aged 15.

65. SHE'S LATE

Waiting, waiting, people passing  
I lean against the post.  
Why must she always be so lage,  
And I must stand and wait;  
People all pass chattering.  
And their feet are clattering  
Why must she always be so late.  
After all this is our special date.  
Well, now I'll leave  
And then she can stand and wait.

Graham, aged 14.

66. TRIAL

It was twelve noon in the little hot city,  
Karl said please judge, have pity,  
I'm sorry Karl, the judge said stern,  
If you want it repeated, just turn.

He turned and dropped a knee.  
Please jury, it wasn't me  
I'm sorry Karl, the jury said  
You'll hang byyyour neck till ya dead.

Peter, aged 12.

67. DREAM

I sit in bed and think and dream  
Of what I left behind,  
The orchards mild  
The stream that trickles,  
Down the mountain side.  
I sit and think and dream  
Of the Paradise I left behind.

Stephen, aged 13.

68. SHOCKED

She caught my sight  
For beautiful was she.  
I tried to talk to her;  
Far-away was her look.  
Asked, if her arms and eyes  
Were glued to that drum she leaned on  
With a jerk, she turned and faced me  
With tears running from her eyes.  
For, her arms were  
Short stumps.

Alan, aged 15.

69. POOL

Still, evening mirror  
Pebble,  
And my water-face crept away in silken rings.

Rob, aged 14.

70. FASCINATION

A huge one.  
I paddle furiously.  
My fantastic ride begins  
From crouching to standing  
A sensation of riding a heave  
The valley before me glistening  
Clear bottle-blue-green crystallized water  
Suspended on top  
Then skimming down,  
Again, the fascination of speed,  
The time comes when it must end  
A sharp right wheel  
The wave moves shorewards and breaks  
And I paddling back for more.

Ray, aged 15.

71. VUYANE (HE WHO IS GLAD)

The dry and weighty heat of midday  
Shivered on the distant blurring mountains  
Where I saw the lone crow fly.  
The coal-black wings companion to  
Its dry melancholy cry.

And there below the mountain where I sat,  
The cringing dead-brown veld lay sprawling  
As the cruel heat of summer dragged a heavy hand  
Across the smitten stubbles of the grass  
Across the hot and fevered sand.

And then upon that dun-brown canvas of the veld  
Moved a vibrant scarlet daub:  
Small at first, it hurried towards me  
Like a hare, till it was quite close  
And then, only, could I see

A tattered scarlet shirt half-torn from his back  
And long-discarded trousers bunched around his belly  
A dirty face and running nose:  
Yes, I'm sure it's he, the shepherd boy,  
With his horny, scurvy toes.

Little Vuyane are you absolutely sure  
That tomorrow you'll have a little food to eat?  
And what about your father on the mine,  
Do you wonder if he ever will return  
Alive to you some time?

From far the wordless song came drifting  
Free and life-full like a summer swallow;  
High, the lilting tune was flung,  
High to the heavens and the world around  
With which the shepherd boy seemed one.

With naked feet upon the burning sand,  
He slipped from naked rock to naked rock  
Almost if he seemed to thrive  
Upon the barrenness around:  
Thrilled with the joy of being just, alive!

John, aged 16.

72. THE POET

Precautiously perched,  
The poet on a deadwood birch,  
Pensively surveying the scenery  
With its clarity and greenery.

Insects scuttling to and fro,  
Moving with infinite care, with slow  
Deliberate movements in different phrases  
At which the poet amazes.

An adventure on paper written,  
With brutality like meat bitten,  
And over clean ruled paper the ink flows  
And the poet his seed sows.

They seek his wisdom,  
To cure their hearts so lonesome,  
And they know that charity  
Cleansed his heart with purity.

Then the hand of Fate  
Clenched the living bait,  
And the poet perished  
With these meadow insects he so cherished.

His death is not mourned,  
He was forewarned;  
For now only the insects their heads will bend  
For him who was their friend.

Raymond, aged 15.

73. LIFE TO THE FULL

I sleep beneath the stars:  
Their purity  
And fidelity  
Make me wonder at their clarity.  
And my body  
Swirls  
In thousands of whirls like a drunken body  
As they elope with the dawn  
And my soul with them.

Raymond, aged 15.

74. I saw a ship come sailing in,  
Come sailing in from the deep blue sea;  
It anchored a little way from the harbour,  
The harbour police went out to meet it  
And brought a man from the boat,  
Whom I shall never know.

Keith, aged 12.

75. DEATH

Slowly, slowly  
Slow and ghastly  
Descended Death  
Light fled before my eyes,  
It fled into the darkness,  
Into the voids of hell.  
Slower and colder  
Than anything  
Is my wait for the  
Arrival of Death.

Anthony, aged 12.

76. OVER THE CLIFF

The wind soared into a screaming  
Torrential mass of gleaming  
Cream topped sea, green  
With a foamy, boiling cream.

A scourged racing mountain of water  
Shuddering and hammering the rocks,  
Without fail or falter  
Onto the mossy spine which it blocks.

Their myriad flecks of white  
Against the rock cliff fight  
And thereon, gnaw with a deep-throated rumble  
And admit defeat with a heavy grumble.

The cliff breasting meets the sea  
With sturdy and solid defiance  
And those that observe with me,  
Put upon it, reliance.

The sea's main force is spent,  
Its backbone is slashed and bent,  
And upon it the salt-laded spray  
Will lap and fondle with its clay.

Ray, aged 16.

77. LONELINESS

The heart's pain  
Is not a pain at all,  
But an emptiness.  
For how can something hurt  
Which isn't really there?  
Far rather would I bear  
The fullness of misery  
Like an eternal toothache  
Than know the emptiness  
Of loneliness.

George, aged 13.

78. POETRY

I like poetry so  
It is not new and will not pass  
    Like so many things I know  
        It sings  
        It rings  
        It brings.  
How quickly he made us care  
That poetry is always there  
    To help the blind  
        To find  
    To help the deaf  
        To hear.

And when I feel I must write it  
It leaps out of my pen in jerks.

Peter, aged 12½.

79. ME

In a mirror  
What I see  
Is me.  
From a recorder  
What I hear  
Is me.  
Yet, how little do those who  
Hear and see  
Understand of me.

Paddy, aged 14.



83. SURF EXCITEMENT

An exciting feeling,  
Swells up inside  
As he arches his back  
To the mold of the wave,  
And the crest breaks,  
Sliding smoothly, hissing  
As it glides over  
His back,  
Returns to its course;  
An everlasting torrent,  
Raging, fuming over a  
Ragged, flesh tinted rock.

His chalk hand  
Dissolves into the  
Cold green glassy water,  
His board surges  
Towards the unbroken wall  
Of the wave,  
Rolling its way,  
Almost reluctantly,  
But without hesitance,  
Towards the  
Glittering, wan  
Diamond salt-of-the-earth.

Trevor, aged 15.

84. EQUILIBRIUM OF THE WORLD

I stared up at the ceiling  
I had never felt so alone in all my life  
There was a fly on the ceiling as a companion  
Walking upside down  
Dogged by a tiny shadow cast by the vacant mind  
It seemed just then  
That he probably knew  
Quite as much as I did  
About the equilibrium of the world.

R. Edwards, aged 15.

APPENDIX B

MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED BY A TEACHER

THE TEACHING OF POETRY  
IN SENIOR SCHOOLS

I believe that the teaching of literature, and particularly the teaching of poetry, is seriously impeded by the setting of examinations in the subject.

There is surely very little that can be taught, and those few facts that can be taught do not form the heart of the matter. Our task is rather to communicate. The teacher stands as a medium between a poet and a young audience. It is his task to see that the poet speaks clearly to them. It is their reaction that marks the success of his work. The reaction, of course, cannot always be a favourable one, but there is enough poetry available for everybody to find something to enjoy. It is important that the reaction should be a positive one.

It seems to me that the reaction of the pupil to the poet is the crux of the matter. It is a victory for the teacher when the spark caught from a Shakespeare or a Shelley sets the young imagination ablaze.

What examination can test this reaction? What written test can select the pupil upon whom the art of poetry has made the deepest impression? The contextual question has offered some slight advance in this direction, for it has excluded memory as a factor in examination success, but I doubt if it has gone to the heart of the matter. Too often it finds itself reduced to asking for the meaning of a word or a phrase, or the recognition of a figure of speech and comments on its effectiveness. Questions of a critical nature are not easy for school-children to answer; they are at the stage of making acquaintance with literature rather than assessing it critically. Questions which demand the regurgitation of the content of a poem are the worst of all. In what way is a child educated in poetry if he has mugged up, probably from a synopsis, what Shelley is saying in the "Ode to the West Wind"?

We are dealing with an art and the pupil's appreciation of it. Could we dare to handle musical appreciation, or the appreciation of any other art, in the same way? Could we honestly declare that through a written examination we could find the child upon whom Beethoven had made the deepest impression, or who had the most sincere and intelligent appreciation of Raphael?

Because of the examination which they must write, children tend to think of literature as something they must "know", as they know Mathematics or the facts of Geography and History. They lose sight of the fact that poets intended to give delight, and that the reading of poetry, "is one of the purest of all human pleasures" I cannot feel that we are honouring the intentions of the poets by the treatment that we are meeting out to the subject in schools.

Examinations in literature mean revision, which a teacher must conduct with his pupils, if he is to give them the best chance of success in the paper. I have found that this revision casts a blight upon the work in the classroom. On the whole, children seem to enjoy meeting a poet and making acquaintance with his work. There are sometimes those who will be impressed enough to read beyond what is prescribed. This joy seems to vanish when they are asked to plod over the same ground again, carefully noting this detail or that, because "it may turn up in the paper". The teacher naturally tries to avoid this spirit, and perhaps attempts to present this work as a deeper study of the author, but the shadow cast by the examination is large, and difficult to escape.

This revision seriously impoverishes the education of pupils for it limits so severely the amount that they can read. My present Standard X class has not read more than eighty poems in the last two years. Had there been no exam., and no need to turn back in our tracks and revise, we could have at least doubled this quantity, and these children could have gone out into the world with a far wider impression of the range and scope of English poetry.

At a conference of English teachers where this matter was discussed, a number of the teachers present favoured the abolition of the

literature exams. An eminent authority who was present expressed his sympathy, but felt that the only way of guaranteeing a respected place in schools for English literature was to make it an examination subject. Were it not, it was felt that teachers would concentrate only on those aspects of the subject which could gain marks for their children in public examinations. I wonder if this thought does not take too gloomy a view of the many men and women who are eager to share with their pupils the joy that they have found in poetry. In any case, departmental inspectors of schools should be able to take this matter under control.

We believe in the value of what we have to offer; but we have to face strong competition. Cheap films, sensational literature, and all the world of inartistic entertainment, are making a strong bid for the tastes of the child. We must ensure that we present real literature to the child in the most attractive way; above all, in its true colours as an art intended for his delight, not as an examination subject in which he must pass.

APPENDIX C

JOHN MILTON: "LYCIDAS"

In this pastoral elegy Milton bewails a "learned friend", Edward King, a contemporary of his at Cambridge University, who was drowned when his ship struck a rock on a voyage to Ireland, and sank, 1637. He applies the name "Lycidas" to his friend - the original Lycidas was a shepherd who appears in one of the Eclogues of Virgil.

An ELEGY is a mournful or very grave poem in which the poet laments the dead, whether a dead person, or a dead love, or other intangible loss.

The PASTORAL ELEGY is a conventional type of elegy which became popular during the Renaissance. In it, the poet pretends to be a shepherd and in a pastoral setting mourns for a lost companion. In "Lycidas" Milton represents himself as a shepherd mourning for another shepherd; both were "nursed upon the self-same hill, fed the same flock by fountain, shade and rill." The image is sustained throughout the poem, for even in the section dealing with St Peter, the apostle mourns for the loss of one who was to have been a shepherd (i. e. a priest of the Church).

STRUCTURE OF THE POEM: The poem is written in divisions of unequal length - there are no stanzas. Most of the lines are iambic pentameters, a metre well suited to the slow movement of the verse and the reflective sadness of the poem, but there are frequent trimeters occurring at irregular intervals. This construction prevents the plaintive tone of the poem from becoming whining or drowsy.

OUTLINE AND NOTES:

- I. Although the poet had decided to write no more poetry after his masque "Comus" (1634) until he should consider himself

ready and fitted by sufficient study to do so, "sad occasion" had made him break that resolution. The sad death of his friend Edward King, himself a poet, demanded it for "he must not float upon his watery bier, unwept" by his fellow-poet and friend.

Line 1: "The poet will make a wreath of evergreens to crown his dead fellow-poet." - YET ONCE MORE: "Lycidas" was written in 1637, three years after "Comus".

Line 2: myrtles: Guests sang in turn at Greek banquets. A myrtle bough was held over the head of the singer. ivy: sacred to Bacchus, god of wine.

Lines 3-5: He has decided to write poetry again although he fears that the result will be immature and harsh because his art is not yet developed sufficiently to produce good poetry.

Lines 6-7: bitter constraint = harsh necessity; sad occasion i. e. the death of King; have compelled him to break his resolution, and to write again before he feels sufficiently prepared for it.

Line 11: build the lofty rhyme = write verse in the classical style. (At Cambridge both Milton and King practised writing Latin verse.)

II. The poet calls upon the Muses to give him inspiration to write this poem, just as he hopes they will give it to the poet who will one day perpetuate his memory in verse.

Line 15: Sisters of the sacred well: The nine Muses who haunted the fountain Helicon on Mount Olympus and inspired poets to write.

III: Milton and King had been fellow students at Cambridge. Remember<sup>ing</sup> their student days he now describes them in pastoral

terms, and mourns the loss of his fellow shepherd. Just as shepherds tend their flocks from dawn to night, lightening their labour with rustic songs, so he and his friend had laboured at their studies and found recreation in writing verse together when they were students.

Line 33: accompanied by the music of the oaten flute (i. e. a reed pipe, often mentioned in pastoral poetry).

Line 34: satyrs and fauns = Latin rural deities (i. e. elves and fairies).

Line 36: Damaetas: their tutor at Cambridge. (Real name unknown).

IV. The death of his friend has been a severe blow to him and even Nature herself mourns his passing.

(Note how long vowels and repetition slow down the tempo in the opening lines of this section and create a mournful effect).

V. The poet asks where the guardian spirits were when King was drowned, but realises that even if they had been near they could not have prevented his death. They could have done nothing to help him. What could Calliope ("the Muse") herself, mother of Orpheus, have done to save him when she was powerless to help even her own son, whose death was lamented by entire Nature, when he was torn to pieces by followers of Bacchus and his mangled body thrown into the River Hebrus?

Line 50: Nymphs = guardian spirits.

Line 52: on the steep = on the mountains of North Wales, overlooking the Irish Sea, in which King was drowned.

Lines 54-55: Mona = Anglesey, at that time well wooded ("shaggy").

Deva = the river Dee, said by Spenser to be the

haunt of magicians.

Lines 56-57: "I imagine that if you (i. e. Nymphs) had been there you would have interfered - but what would have been the use?"

VI. The poet questions the wisdom of devoting oneself to literature. What profit is there in it? Would it not be better to idle away one's time? The hope of achieving fame is the spur that drives the poet to scorn pleasures and spend his days in hard labour, but before he can achieve his ambition death overtakes him, leaving him to receive his reward in heaven.

Lines 68-69: Amaryllis, Neaera = names of shepherdesses. The fact that "withe" was spelt "with" in Milton's day is worth considering. If "withe" is meant the lines would mean: 'to amuse oneself with Amaryllis in the shade of the trees or bind the locks of Neaera's hair.'

Line 75: the blind Fury - Milton refers here to Atropos, one of the three goddesses of destiny, who cut the thread of life and who here behaves like one of the Erinnyes, the avenging Furies.

Line 77: Phoebus = Phoebus Apollo, god of music and the arts (including poetry).

VII. Milton returns to the theme of the death of Lycidas. He suggests that the vessel in which King sailed was unseaworthy for the ship sank in calm weather.

Lines 85-86: Arethuse, Mincius, refer respectively to the birthplace of Theocritus and of Virgil, both pastoral poets.

Line 88: my oat = my oaten flute (cf. line 33). The line means: "And now I go on with my song (or pastoral poem)".

Line 89: the herald of the sea = Triton who blew on a

shell to still the sea at Neptune's command. He used this method to arouse or to calm the sea. How the oat could both sound and listen is not clear unless oat = "my Muse" in line 89, and "my pastoral song" in line 88.

Line 94: each beaked promontory - the epithet is a powerful metaphor suggesting that the shape of the promontory resembles the beak of a bird of prey eagerly extended to seize and rend its victim.

Line 96: Hippotades = Aeolus, Warden of the Winds.

Line 98: No ship should have been lost on so calm a sea, so Milton concluded that the ship in which King sailed was wrecked because it was unseaworthy.

Line 99: Panope: one of the sea-goddesses called Nereids. Sailors prayed to her in storms.

Line 101: Eclipses were believed both by the ancients and in later ages to be times of ill-omen and to bring a curse upon everything during them. A ship built at such a time would be considered ill-fated.

VIII. The death of King was a great loss both to his old University and to the Church of which he was to have become an ordained minister. Milton felt that the Church could ill-afford to lose a fine man like King, especially as there were so many unworthy men holding high office in the Church. (In this section Milton attacks not the Church but the unworthy bishops - those who "for their bellies' sake creep and intrude and climb into the fold" - and denounces the disciplinary formalism which in his eyes was taking the place of religion in the Church of England.)

Line 103: Camus: the River Cam personified as a dignified old father to symbolise the antiquity of Cambridge University, for whom Milton

and King felt the affection of children for a parent.

- Lines 104-105: inwrought with figures dim: when sedge blades wither in the autumn peculiar markings resembling hieroglyphics appear on them.
- Line 106: that sanguine flower inscribed with woe: = the purple hyacinth, which is said to have sprung up from the ground saturated with the blood of the youth Hyacinth when he was accidentally killed by Apollo. The petals of this flower curl at the tips to form what looks like the Greek letters ai ai (alas!). Apollo is said to have given them this form to express his grief.
- Line 109: The Pilot of the Galilean lake = St Peter. "his mitred locks" in line 112 refers to the tradition that St Peter was the first Bishop of Rome.
- Line 110: Matthew XVI: 19 - "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
- Line 111: Ruskin says of this line: "Milton makes one, of gold, the key of heaven; the other, of iron, the key of the prison in which the wicked teachers are to be bound who 'have taken away the key of knowledge, yet entered not in themselves'."
- Line 113: King was to have been ordained. St Peter feels that he could have spared the bad clergy but not a man like King.
- Line 114: ...such as... i. e. the bishops of the Church of England whom Milton blames for the abuses of the time. It must be noted, however, that Milton does not condemn all bishops - he condemns only

bad bishops, those who abuse their high and responsible office, those who "for their bellies' sake creep and intrude and climb into the fold." Ruskin explains the significance of these three words: "they exhaustively comprehend the three classes of men who dishonestly seek ecclesiastical power:

1. those who intrude, i. e. thrust themselves into the church and arrogantly obtain authority with the common crowd;
2. those who creep into the church, i. e. who want the office for the opportunity it gives them secretly to exercise influence on the minds of men;
3. those who climb, i. e. who labour to attain the dignity for the authority and status it gives them.

Line 119: Blind mouths: Ruskin points out the wealth of meaning that is concentrated in this impressive metaphor:

The office of a bishop (the word is derived from the Greek episkopos / epi- = on; -skopos = looking - hence bishop = overseer) is to see that his clergy feed their sheep. Although these bad bishops were appointed as overseers they turned a blind eye and saw nothing as shepherds or feeders of their flocks (i. e. ignored their needs) and acted only as mouths (i. e. eaters). Blindness and greed are unforgivable in a man who is at once a bishop, whose duty it is to see that the spiritual needs of his people are satisfied, and a pastor, whose duty it is to give them spiritual food.

- Line 122: they are sped = they have gained their own ends and are quite satisfied.
- Line 123: lean and flashy songs: unsatisfying, shallow doctrine.
- Line 126: wind and the rank mist: hypocritical, false teachings.
- Line 128: the grim wolf has been interpreted by some as a reference to the Catholic Church, by others as a reference to Rome's legendary origin (i. e. the she-wolf that suckled Romulus), but it is likely that Milton had neither of these in mind but used the phrase in a general metaphorical sense.
- With privy paw, i. e. about which the bishops are unaware.
- Line 130: that two-handed engine has been taken to mean different things, e. g. the axe of the Reformation OR the two Houses of Parliament, which in 1640 began to reform certain abuses in the church OR the sword of St Michael. Milton probably meant no more than "Retribution".

IX. The poet calls back the Spirit of Poetry which has been frightened away by the stern voice of St Peter, and returns to the subject of his poem. Let us pretend, he says, that Lycidas's body is here and let us gather flowers from all corners of the earth to strew upon his bier, even though, alas, we do not know where on the wide ocean his body floats.

Lines 132-133: Alpheus (a river god)/the Sicilian Muse: the poet Theocritus whose Idylls tell of Sicilian shepherds and their loves. (Note: The vogue <sup>for</sup> of pastoral poetry has its birth in the desire of sophisticated people to escape from the artificiality of the social and communal life of the

city and "return to nature", to a romanticised and highly improbable rural way of living.)

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- Line 138: "whose vegetation is not parched by the heat",  
swart star: Sirius or Canicula, a star just in the mouth of the constellation Canis (Orion's Dog). It rose at Athens about the time of the greatest heat of summer and was therefore supposed to cause the heat. sparely = frugally, i. e. with moderate heat.
- Line 139: quaint enamell'd eyes: flowers of varied colours, attractive because unfamiliar.
- Line 142: "bring the early primrose that (grows and) dies in shady places secluded from the rays of the sun."
- Line 144: pansy freak's with jet = curiously marked with black patches.
- Line 149: amaranthus: a plant with flowers of flaming red that grows in the Elysian Fields, with which "the spirits elect bind their resplendent locks."
- Line 151: laureat hearse = the frame placed over a coffin, here supposed to be covered with laurel (the poet's reward) and flowers (the tribute to the dead) / hence = the poet King's grave.
- Lines 152-153: "And now to draw a little comfort for ourselves let<sup>us</sup> play with the pretence that his body is here."
- Lines 154-155: Note the splendid imagery in these lines.  
shores and sounding seas: the force of the sea and the surf is in the sound of these words, and the movement of the next line suggests the roll of the waves.
- Line 158: Monstrous world: monstrous is a transferred epithet. = "world of monstrous creatures".
- Line 159: moist vows = tearful prayers.

Line 160: Bellerus: a Cornish giant who gave his name to Belerium, an old name for Land's End.

Lines 161-162: Mount St Michael, the Cornish island which faces Namancos and the castle of Bayona on the Spanish coast (marked on old Spanish maps - names chosen by Milton no doubt for their sonority) was said to be the scene of an apparition of the Archangel Michael who, Milton imagines, keeps eternal watch there.

Line 164: dolphins: fabled to have borne Arion the musician safely to shore.

X. The poet draws comfort from the thought that Lycidas is not really dead. His earthly body may be dead but his spirit has found a new and more glorious existence in heaven. From now on Lycidas will be the guardian spirit of the shore near which he was drowned, to make amends for the injury done to him, and will guard against harm all who voyage upon that dangerous sea.

Line 176: unexpressive nuptial song = the ineffable sweetness of the music at the marriage feast of the Lamb. (Revelations XIX: 9: "And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.")

Line 183: Genius = the guardian spirit. A drowned person was supposed to become the guardian spirit of the shore near which he drowned.

IX. The poet's rustic song is now ended and he is ready to begin a new task.

Line 186: uncouth swain = inexperienced young man.

Line 189: Doric = the Greek dialect used by the pastoral poets. Here it means "rustic English". (Note: Milton keeps up the pretence that he is a novice).

APPENDIX D

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

An account of some of the approaches used in conjunction with the verse-writing experiment described in Chapter Seven.

I do not mean to imply that the successful teaching of poetry necessarily depends upon the use of some or all of the suggestions listed below; neither is it my belief that these approaches will generate a new, magical interest in poetry or that they can be used successfully as a remedial treatment when, somehow, the teaching of poetry has "gone wrong". I am also convinced that many teachers do achieve, with their classes, all that can be expected, simply by reading the right kind of poems really well.

Indeed, I would go so far as to cast doubt on the value of any particular methods or approaches unless there already exists, in the school, something of a right climate for the enjoyment of poetry. By this I mean a certain receptiveness on the part of teachers and pupils; and I am sure this capacity exists even when there has been very little contact with poetry. But the best of ideas cannot survive an active, ingrained prejudice against poetry. Distaste arising from prejudice is a cloud obscuring the brightness of poetry; under such a shadow no one reads poetry, writes poetry, talks about poetry, is moved or delighted by poetry. For that matter no one really listens to poetry. Consequently, any new ideas or approaches cannot be expected to flourish.

Yet a prejudice against poetry in children is not difficult to dispel. Because it arises through some fault of teaching ("teaching" in the widest sense which includes the attitudes in the home and in society) it follows that a healthy attitude can best be restored by another kind of teaching influence.

'In these circumstances the first task of the teacher is to supply as far as he can the deficiencies of the environment;

before he can get very far in teaching poems, he must somehow persuade his children to acquire that wide experience of the poetic mode which they signally lack... In the earlier years of the secondary school, ... the teacher will be well advised to devote a good deal of the time available for poetry not so much to 'teaching' particular poems as to creating and fostering a background of poetic experience.'

Frank Whitehead (1966).

I believe that the few suggestions described below, taken collectively, will help to supply something of the "background of poetic experience" referred to by Mr Whitehead. Naturally, these approaches are only to be regarded as means, directing attention and interest towards poetry. Nothing can take the place of the poem itself. There is "no escape from poetry into another thing: no escape into choirs without music; no escape into amateur dramatics; no escape into pure electronics." (Marshall Walker (1965).

1. The Poetry Bookshelf

The strong impulse of many school children to read poetry for themselves is perhaps more widespread than generally realised. But, for most, this desire becomes blunted.

How many schools offer a wide selection of the right kind of material? Are these texts easily available or are they kept perhaps in a teacher's cupboard? Are children encouraged to read poetry in their leisure time? Do teachers recommend anthologies and collected works which contain poems similar to those already enjoyed in the classroom? When pupils examine books of poetry, do such books look and feel attractive and have they been placed at the correct hand and eye level? Have the pupils seen, or heard of, teachers themselves reading poetry for pleasure?

It is all too easy to deny that children have any capacity or inclination to enjoy reading poetry when the inclination is unwittingly discouraged.

I should like to make a plea for attractive, well-stocked poetry bookshelves both in the main school library, and in the English room. Too many schools, I have observed, offer little more than a few vintage volumes of Tennyson and Browning languishing in glass-fronted cupboards. This museum-like presentation of texts, remote from the natural interests of children, is repelling. Is it any wonder that some teachers proclaim, "Children read very little poetry."?

These forbidding archives should be replaced in all school libraries by a new, bright section near the front of the library; possibly a separate, rotating stand can be used holding a wide selection of poetry books placed at the proper eye-level. Descriptions of new additions, recent reviews and dust-jackets should be displayed occasionally. (I have recommended a mixed core of about 30 volumes under Books and References). All books, particularly paper-back editions, should be protected with durable plastic jackets. Emphasis should be placed upon newness and variety: anthologies (including collections of verse written by young people from other parts of the world); collected works; collections of folk songs and ballads; special quarterly publications such as New Coin Poetry; and, to cater for the upper forms, biographies, autobiographies, critical commentaries on poems and the collected letters of some poets - Keats in particular.

Most important of all, is the use made of this material by the English teacher in the classroom.

I am a firm believer in the value of the weekly lesson in poetry; but even more do I believe in the natural, unexpected, appearance of poetry at any time. A teacher will be doing a great service to children if, with complete sincerity, he can select a book from the poetry shelf, before the watching eyes of a class, and begin, "I came across this poem the other day. . ."

What does this show? It shows that, as part of the natural

course of living, a teacher reads poetry for pleasure. It shows that a teacher wishes to share what he has discovered and what has delighted him. If this occurs at the beginning or near the end of any English lesson, it shows that poetry is not necessarily confined, in too sacred a manner, to the poetry lesson. It also makes a class realise that the book is easily available - it was amongst the books on their bookshelf. Above all, this sort of approach if conducted in a natural, almost casual manner, will clearly prove to the teacher that children are interested in reading the right sort of poetry for pleasure. Typical responses might be: "Are you using that book tonight, sir?" "What page is that one on, sir?" "Sir, hasn't Ted Hughes also written about a soldier who was scared in battle?" (Bayonet Charge).

To sum up, then. Establish bright, appealing poetry sections in both school library and English room. Use a great variety of good texts largely selected from publications of the last decade or two. By your own example, and, if possible, by the example of other teachers, encourage children to browse, explore, read and talk about poetry. The poetry shelves must be used. It is all too easy, without some unobtrusive "selling", for these shelves to become untouched exhibitions goggled at from afar. Read aloud in class poems selected from your class or library shelves, and do this at least several times a week. Be something of an exploring student yourself - which of course you should be in any case - and be prepared to advise and encourage the hesitant ones, to answer questions, to recommend and discuss poems and to read what pupils recommend themselves. Link this reading programme as closely as possible with everyday classwork, creative writing, the poetry card system and the personal anthology.

I should like to offer, however, some words of caution. Clearly, one is aiming to encourage children to read, to explore, to discuss and even to write poetry. In order to persuade

children to accept these things naturally and eagerly, I would recommend that the approach be natural not forced; unobtrusive and indirect rather than too apparent or frontal. Any display of excessive enthusiasm is more than likely to produce an amused apathy on the part of most pupils. Similarly, because individuals vary, it is not for us to decide upon the degree of interest that should be generated or the pace of such activities. Instead, it might be best for teachers to follow a rule of indirection, which I have already indicated in the verse-writing programme (Chapter Seven) and which is neatly summed up in Martin Buber's words :

"For if the educator of our day has to act consciously he must nevertheless do it 'as though he did not.' "

Between Man and Man (1947).

## 2. The Personal Anthology

During the verse-writing experiment, I discovered to my delight, that many pupils had begun keeping personal anthologies. I began to encourage this idea among all pupils. Whether or not verse-writing is practised on a large scale, the compilation of a personal anthology by each pupil is an excellent plan. The more widely this activity is encouraged the more natural, acceptable and creatively satisfying does it become. A loose-leaf folder, of foolscap or quarto size, seems best for the purpose, but any suitably durable exercise book may be used. The choice of plain or ruled paper is best left to individual pupils. In most instances, personal anthologies will grow into prized possessions reflecting, in many cases, a extraordinary neatness and order. Entries need not be limited to favourite poems, so that extracts from prose or drama and a pupil's own creative writing may be added. Many pupils will show an artistic bent and their work is often beautifully inscribed or decorated with drawings and lettering in indian ink.

I never collect these anthologies for a formal inspection nor do I censure any pupils for "too much of this" or "not enough of that." If I am pressed by pupils to keep their anthologies overnight I feel quite genuinely privileged. But, I never award marks; or been critical of the selections made; or judged such personal, voluntary work on a competitive or comparative basis. But praise and encouragement I have always given. Similarly, when pupils ask for my comments or corrections - which they often do - before preparing their fair copies, I show the greatest interest in their work and give as much advice as needed.

Although these individual records are particularly cherished by 12 to 14 year olds, I see no reason why more senior pupils<sup>1</sup> should not be encouraged to start, or continue, their personal anthologies. Over a period of years such a file will reflect an interesting development and maturing of taste.

### 3. Poetry on Cards

This is perhaps one of the best ways of catching the immediate attention of pupils and interesting them in new poems. Texts were copied out, each on a separate, stiff, white card, about 15 inches by 10 inches, using a felt pen and a reasonably neat, italic script. The poems selected were not excessively long; few exceeded 25 lines. I selected poems, not often found in school anthologies, which I felt would appeal strongly to the various age groups. It was through these cards and through my own reading to classes that I was able to introduce pupils to a great deal of fairly recent Commonwealth verse and to the work of other writers such as Guy Butler, e. e. cummings, Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, and William Carlos Williams. Some cards had translations from the Chinese by Arthur Waley or illustrated particular forms such as Japanese haiku. In some respects, this approach was an

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<sup>1</sup> During a recent tour of some schools in Britain, I observed with great interest that the keeping of personal files by senior pupils at the Wyggeston Boys' School, Leicester, has been a notably successful experiment; furthermore, each boy presents his file to the Examining Board before the final oral examinations. Part of the oral examination of each pupil is based upon the contents of his file.

integral part of the verse-writing programme, for I was trying to expose pupils to a great variety of poetic experience, styles and genres.

The response to these poems, (which were pinned up on the walls of several classrooms) was immediate and enthusiastic. A number of boys suggested that I should display four or five cards in every classroom, rotating each group of cards twice a week. This scheme worked very well. Altogether, some 118 cards kept each class supplied with new poems for over four months. With a particularly short poetic form, such as haiku it is possible and perhaps desirable to display several poems on one card. Of their own accord a number of boys showed a great keenness in copying out neatly any new poems I selected, and in organising the rotation of the cards. There was never any need to draw attention to the poems. Occasionally, I would remark upon a poem, perhaps at the end or beginning of a lesson. But throughout the school day, in between lessons and during the break, it was noticeable that pupils, in groups or singly, would drift over to the cards displayed to read, discuss or copy out those poems which had caught their imagination. The merits of this idea seemed to lie in the changing variety of interesting poems; in the proximity of the cards and in the fact that there was no obligation to read any of the poems unless directed by whim or mood.

Clearly, many variations of this scheme are possible. In schools, for example, where there is an English Room, many more cards may be put up for longer or shorter periods of time. It should be mentioned that there is a continued demand for old cards which can either be re-circulated at a later date or stored flat in the English cupboard. Interestingly enough, in a school of over 600 boys, and over a period of three terms, not a single card was defaced or marked in any way. Only one card was "lost." The poem was Robert Frost's "Out, Out -", which was very much in demand at the time. I should like to think that

this poem is still continuing to give pleasure to some one.

4. Gramophone Records and Tape Recordings

We now move into the zone of teaching "aids" which have been well described as "subterfuges". The greatest care must be employed when using recordings, not only in the frequency of their use but also in the selection of the best possible readings. Two further points should be remembered. Firstly, nothing can adequately take the place of a good, live reading of a poem. Secondly, a great danger exists that attention may be drawn away from the poem by the "aid". On the other hand, teachers who cannot read poetry well should rely freely upon gramophone records, for the importance of the first reading a child hears cannot be overemphasised.

Disregarding for the moment the many excellent recordings of ballads and folk songs, there are six outstanding readers of poetry whose recorded performances are recommended. These are :

- (i) Neville Coghill reading Chaucer.
- (ii) Dylan Thomas, reading his own work.
- (iii) Robert Frost<sup>1</sup> reading his own work.
- (iv) Cecil Day-Lewis reading his own and other texts.
- (v) Richard Burton (without the sound effects) reading some of Wilfred Owen's poems.
- (vi) Robert Speaight.

The first three readers named are particularly important. Each of these speakers is able to impart a special quality of intonation and rhythm which leads the listener to feel, intuitively, that the voice and the poetry rightly coexist.

In my own teaching I have tended to avoid the use of many other available recordings - except in those instances when my intention is to invite adverse criticism from a class. The worst

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the excellent recording: Robert Frost Reads His Poetry (Caedmon T. C. 1960) is difficult to obtain outside the United States.

feature a recording can show, is probably the combination of "mood music" with a special, over-dramatic "poetry voice". This results in a precious, ethereal or elocutionary effect which is repelling.

One need not be entirely dependent upon professional recordings. Some years ago, I made a stereophonic tape-recording of some choral verse-speaking.<sup>2</sup> I was completely surprised at the result; the children were delighted and the method appeared to create a new, lively interest in those ballads where a question and answer dialogue exists. The poem was Auden's O What is That Sound and the class, a group of 13 year old boys and girls, some of whom were fine speakers of verse. After a short rehearsal, I arranged a small group of boys facing a small group of girls (solo voices may be used if a simple dialogue effect is preferred). Two separate, remotely controlled microphones were used, each housed in a "tent" improvised from school blazers to dampen the excessive echo effect of the classroom. Throughout the choral reading of this poem one of the boys played a very light tattoo on a drum. The recording turned out to be outstanding in quality and the playback was strangely moving in its stereophonic effect. Best of all, it gave the class a sense of involvement and achievement - and a permanent recording of their skill. Following class requests, we returned to the poem and the recording several times and five other classes called for the same treatment. Such requests also help to get rid of the strangely prevalent idea that when a poem has been read once it has been "done".

##### 5. Ballads and Folk-Songs

With the excitement and interest generated today for ballads and folk-songs, the teacher may need to guard against the danger of his pupils becoming pre-occupied with this particular form,

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2 I do not propose to say much about choral verse-speaking except to point to its very limited application and value in the senior school. Very few poems lend themselves to this treatment. Naturally, with the right poem, the right situation and the right age group, the technique can lead to a most valuable experience of poetry. The subject is fully covered in many of the books I have recommended for the teacher.

thereby losing sight of the wider perspective of poetry.

Nevertheless, I should like to make a very special plea for a greater use of ballads and folk-songs in schools. Unlike the limited range of good recordings of spoken poetry, a great variety of outstanding recordings of British and American ballads and folk-songs is readily available. Two useful accounts of this kind of work and of the multitude of recordings on the market, are given by David Holbrook in English for Maturity (1965) pages 106-110 and by Frank Whitehead, in his outstanding book The Disappearing Dais (1966) pages 107-108.

It seems to me that this kind of approach is particularly valuable with less literate pupils. And, contrary to the opinions expressed in some quarters, I see no reason to believe that it is less likely to succeed with girls. The establishing of an informal Ballad and Folk Song Group, as an extra-mural activity, leads, in my experience not only to a wider and more lively interest in poetry but also towards a creative involvement which is completely healthy and satisfying. There is little doubt that with such simple resources as a guitar, a gathering of young people, a narrator and a chorus, most of the usual anthology ballads such as Edward; Lord Randal; O, What is that Sound; Jesse James; Casey Jones and The Cowboy's Lament take on a new life by becoming more than words on a printed page. This recapturing of the original spirit of the ballad as song and music is important in the teaching of poetry today; and the re-establishment of this spirit is the very plea made by a poet who is also a teacher of English.

'I have been criticised for including the words of folk-songs in collections of poems for schools. I am unrepentant. The divorce which has occurred in recent centuries between poetry and music obscures the fact that there was once a natural and apparently indissoluble marriage between them.'

James Reeves (1958).

I have noticed that, in the main, the attention given by pupils to currently popular, imitation ballads is transient; eventually, any group will become more interested in authentic, enduring material such as the great spirituals, sea shanties, whaling ballads and traditional American and British folk-songs and ballads. Frequently, a ballad and folk-song group will reveal some remarkable - even astonishing - talent from pupils hitherto regarded as very ordinary, and it is not unusual to find some pupils composing their own ballads and setting them to music. To keep the ballad and folk-song appetite whetted, it is perhaps desirable not to hold meetings too often - once every ten days seems ideal.

#### RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

In addition to the general recommendations already made, the following recordings will form an invaluable nucleus around which a record library may be built up. The attention of teachers is also referred to the recordings and anthologies listed in Presenting Poetry: A Handbook for English Teachers. T. Blackburn (Ed) (1966) Methuen & Co. Ltd. pp. 165-214.

1. The Jupiter Anthology of Twentieth Century English Poetry: Parts I, II and III. 8 readers, including Christopher Hassall and Cecil Day-Lewis. JUR 00A1/00A2/00A8.
2. The Caedmon Treasury of Modern Poets Reading their own Poetry. T. C. 0994/0995.
3. A Personal Choice - Alec Guinness. R. C. A. 30, 303.
4. The Jupiter Book of Ballads (4 readers/singers) JUR 00A3. An excellent recording giving a full range of traditional and modern ballads.
5. Portrait of Joan Baez; Vanguard V. R. S. 9700. A record of exceptional beauty which includes fine renderings of the two

appealing ballads, Mary Hamilton and There But For Fortune.

6. What Passing Bell: Poems and Prose of the First World War (7 readers) A very fine recording. Argo R.G. 385.
7. The Poet Speaks: (British Council/Harvard University). A good set of recordings. Many modern poets introduce and read their own work. Argo R.G. 451 - 6.

### RECOMMENDED REFERENCES

#### For the Teacher

The following references are listed in response to the great number of requests from teachers for publications which give useful ideas, approaches and critical commentaries. I have selected only those books which have proved invaluable in my own teaching experience. If I were in charge of a school library, I would include nearly all these books in a special section for the English staff. Some of these publications deal generally with the principles and practice of English teaching. Of these, pride of place should go to Frank Whitehead's The Disappear<sup>ing</sup> Dais.

- \* Arnstein, Flora J. (1963): Poetry in the Elementary Classroom, Vision Press.
- Baldwin, M. (1959): Poetry Without Tears, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Brooks, C. and Warren, R. P. Third Edition (1961): Understanding Poetry, Holt, Rinehart & Winston Inc.
- Brown, V. V. (Ed.) (1953): The Experience of Poetry in School, O. U. P. (See especially, Chapter Six).
- + Copeland, R. F. (Ed.) (1963): English Teaching in South Africa, Grahamstown Publications.
- + de Sola Pinto, Vivian (Ed.) (1964): The Teaching of English in Schools, Macmillan & Co. (See especially Chapter One).
- Ford, Boris (Ed.) (1969): Young Writers, Young Readers, Hutchinson.
- Gurrey, P. (1963): The Appreciation of Poetry, O. U. P.
- + Holbrook, David (1961): English for Maturity, O. U. P.
- \* Mearns, Hughes (1958): Creative Power: The Education of Youth in the Creative Arts

Reeves, James (1958): Teaching Poetry, Heinemann.

Reeves, James (1965): Understanding Poetry, Heinemann.

Sweetkind, Morris (1964): Teaching Poetry in the High School  
Macmillan Paper back.

+ Whitehead, Frank (1966): The Disappearing Dais, Chatto and  
Windus.

Also highly recommended is the valuable quarterly publication:  
The Use of English, edited by Denis Thompson and published by  
Chatto and Windus.

\* These two excellent books are largely concerned with children's  
creative expression in verse.

+ Texts dealing with the teaching of English in general.

#### For the Poetry Bookshelves

Asch, Moses (Ed.): 104 Folk Songs, Robbins Music Corporation.

Baldwin, M. (1962): Poems by Children 1950-1961, Routledge &  
Kegan Paul.

Baldwin, M. (Ed.) (1963): Billy the Kid, Hutchinson.

Britton, James (Ed.) (1957): The Oxford Book of Verse for Juniors  
(Book IV) O. U. P.

Bownas, G. and Thwaite, A. (Trans.) (1964): The Penguin Book of  
Japanese Verse, Penguin Books.

Butler, Guy (1952): Stranger to Europe, A. A. Balkema.

Butler, Guy (Ed.) (1959): A Book of South African Verse, O. U. P.

Cohen, J. M. (Ed.) (1961): The Penguin Book of Comic and Curious  
Verse, Penguin Books.

Ellot, T. S. (Ed.) (1963): A Choice of Kipling's Verse, Faber and  
Faber.

Finn, F. E. S. (Ed.) (1961): The Albemarle Book of Verse, (Books  
I and II) John Murray.

Hansen, Ian (Ed.) (1966): One Voice, Edward Arnold.

Hughes, Ted (1963): The Earth-Owl and other Moon-People,  
Faber and Faber.

Holbrook, David (Ed.) (1965): Iron Honey Gold (Volumes I-IV)  
O. U. P.

Jennings, Elizabeth (1960): Let's Have Some Poetry, Museum  
Press.

Lomax, Alan (Ed.) (1964): The Penguin Book of American Folk Songs,  
Penguin Books.

- Lloyd, A. L. and Vaughan Williams, R. (Ed.) ( The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs, Penguin Books.
- O'Donnell, Margaret (1951): Feet on the Ground, Blackie & Son.
- Page, Frederick (Ed.) (1954): Letters of John Keats, World's Classics Series, O. U. P.
- Rintoul, David (Ed.) (1962): Narrative Verse, Oliver and Boyd.
- Roberts, Michael (Ed.) (1968): The Faber Book of Modern Verse, Faber & Faber.
- Roberts, Michael (Ed.) (1952): The Faber Book of Comic Verse, Faber & Faber.
- Russell, N. and Chatfield, H. (Eds.) (1963): Poetry Workshop, Thomas Nelson & Sons.
- Scully, James (Ed.) (1966): Modern Poets on Modern Poetry, Collins.
- Scott, A. F. (Ed.) (1955): Poems for Pleasure, (Books I and II; Book III Commentary) O. U. P.
- Silcock, Arnold (Ed.) (1957): Verse and Worse, Faber and Faber.
- Smith, Janet Adam (Ed.) (1963): The Faber Book of Children's Verse, Faber and Faber.
- Smyth, W. M. (Ed.) (1959): Poems of Spirit and Action, Edward Arnold.
- Spender, Stephen & Hall, Donald (Eds.) (1963): The Concise Encyclopedia of English and American Poets and Poetry, Hutchinson.
- Steiner, George (Ed.) (1966): The Penguin Book of Modern Verse Translation, Penguin Books.
- Thompson, Brian (Ed.) (1966): Once Around the Sun, O. U. P.
- Waley, Arthur (Trans.) (1961): Chinese Poems, Unwin Books.

#### Journals and Broadsheets for Teachers and Pupils

1. New Coin Poetry, a quarterly broadsheet of poetry by contemporary South African writers, edited by Guy Butler and Ruth Harnett and published by The South African Poetry Society, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.
2. English Alive, a literary magazine for high schools edited by H. H. E. Peacock, and published annually by the Western Cape Branch of the South African Council for English Education.
3. The Poetry Book Society, an organisation which aims to encourage the reading of recent poetry. Members are sent four books of recently published verse a year. Address: 4, St James' Square, London W. 1 England.

4. Crux : Guide to Teaching English Language and Literature,  
a quarterly published in South Africa by the Foundation for  
Education, Science and Technology.

**TABLE I**  
**ATTITUDES OF MATRICULATION CLASSES AT THREE SCHOOLS TOWARDS 14 SET POEMS**

SCHOOL A (Boys)

N = 38

POEM	AUTHOR	I definitely like	I rather like	I am indifferent	I rather dislike	I definitely dislike	I cannot remember	Total Responses
1. <u>From As You Like It</u>	W. Shakespeare	3	20	4	2	1	6	36
2. <u>From Julius Caesar</u>	W. Shakespeare	9	15	7	2	2	1	36
3. <u>Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard</u>	T. Gray	12	11	5	3	2	1	34
4. <u>From Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey</u>	W. Wordsworth	5	13	8	5	5	-	36
5. <u>The Lotos-Eaters</u>	A. Tennyson	1	9	9	8	5	-	32
6. <u>Ulysses</u>	A. Tennyson	3	9	9	2	-	11	34
7. <u>My Last Duchess</u>	R. Browning	4	8	12	6	5	-	35
8. <u>Journey of the Magi</u>	T. S. Eliot	18	10	4	1	2	-	35
9. <u>Strange Meeting</u>	W. Owen	1	9	8	10	7	1	36
10. <u>The Zulu Girl</u>	R. Campbell	10	10	8	2	4	-	34
11. <u>Musee des Beaux Arts</u>	W. Auden	5	11	6	6	4	4	36
12. <u>Preludes</u>	T. S. Eliot	5	11	6	2	3	8	35
13. <u>Iceland</u>	L. MacNeice	2	3	14	4	8	3	34
14. <u>When You Are Old</u>	W. Yeats	1	9	9	8	5	4	36
	TOTAL	79	148	109	61	53	39	489

TABLE 2

## ATTITUDES OF MATRICULATION CLASSES AT THREE SCHOOLS TOWARDS 14 SET POEMS

SCHOOL B (Girls)

N = 54

POEM	AUTHOR	I definitely like	I rather like	I am indifferent	I rather dislike	I definitely dislike	I cannot remember	Total Response
1. <u>From As You Like It</u>	W. Shakespeare	17	29	5	1	-	2	54
2. <u>From Julius Caesar</u>	W. Shakespeare	15	21	11	3	2	-	52
3. <u>Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard</u>	T. Gray	21	24	5	4	-	-	54
4. <u>From Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey</u>	W. Wordsworth	3	15	18	6	7	4	53
5. <u>The Lotos-Eaters</u>	A. Tennyson	18	25	3	7	1	-	54
6. <u>Ulysses</u>	A. Tennyson	9	18	13	6	-	7	53
7. <u>My Last Duchess</u>	R. Browning	29	22	1	-	2	-	54
8. <u>Journey of the Magi</u>	T. S. Eliot	18	18	10	6	-	1	53
9. <u>Strange Meeting</u>	W. Owen	7	11	12	10	7	6	53
10. <u>The Zulu Girl</u>	R. Campbell	13	18	10	5	4	3	53
11. <u>Musee des Beaux Arts</u>	W. Auden	6	15	10	3	3	15	52
12. <u>Preludes</u>	T. S. Eliot	16	15	7	5	3	4	50
13. <u>Iceland</u>	L. MacNeice	-	7	9	10	11	14	51
14. <u>When You Are Old</u>	W. Yeats	2	12	11	3	4	18	50
	TOTAL	174	250	125	69	44	74	736

TABLE 3

## ATTITUDES OF MATRICULATION CLASSES AT THREE SCHOOLS TOWARDS 14 SET POEMS

SCHOOL C (Boys)

N = 62

POEM	AUTHOR	I definitely like	I rather like	I am indifferent	I rather dislike	I definitely dislike	I cannot remember	Total Responses
1. <u>From As You Like It</u>	W. Shakespeare	14	14	12	6	3	5	54
2. <u>From Julius Caesar</u>	W. Shakespeare	18	21	10	7	4	-	60
3. <u>Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard</u>	T. Gray	5	10	17	13	11	1	57
4. <u>From Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey</u>	W. Wordsworth	2	12	10	20	12	4	60
5. <u>The Lotos-Eaters</u>	A. Tennyson	7	13	14	11	13	2	60
6. <u>Ulysses</u>	A. Tennyson	5	11	25	14	1	3	59
7. <u>My Last Duchess</u>	R. Browning	27	26	6	1	1	-	61
8. <u>Journey of the Magi</u>	T. S. Eliot	31	28	2	-	1	-	62
9. <u>Strange Meeting</u>	W. Owen	13	20	15	6	5	2	61
10. <u>The Zulu Girl</u>	R. Campbell	25	26	9	-	1	-	61
11. <u>Musee des Beaux Arts</u>	W. Auden	11	14	10	11	4	6	56
12. <u>Preludes</u>	T. S. Eliot	22	18	11	5	3	-	59
13. <u>Iceland</u>	L. MacNeice	8	8	18	12	10	4	60
14. <u>When You Are Old</u>	W. Yeats	10	16	15	9	4	5	59
	TOTAL	198	237	174	105	63	32	829

TABLE 4

## ATTITUDES OF MATRICULATION CLASSES AT THREE SCHOOLS TOWARDS 14 SET POEMS

GRAND TOTAL (N = 154) (100 Boys and 54 Girls)

POEM	AUTHOR	definitely like	I rather like	am indifferent	I rather dislike	definitely dislike	I cannot remember	Total Response
1. <u>From As You Like It</u>	W. Shakespeare	34	63	21	9	4	13	144
2. <u>From Julius Ceasar</u>	W. Shakespeare	42	57	28	12	8	1	148
3. <u>Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard</u>	T. Gray	38	45	27	20	13	2	145
4. <u>From Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey</u>	W. Wordsworth	10	40	36	31	24	8	149
5. <u>The Lotos-Eaters</u>	A. Tennyson	26	47	26	26	19	2	146
6. <u>Ulysses</u>	A. Tennyson	17	38	47	22	1	21	146
7. <u>My Last Duchess</u>	R. Browning	60	56	19	7	8	-	150
8. <u>Journey of the Magi</u>	T. S. Eliot	67	56	16	7	3	1	150
9. <u>Strange Meeting</u>	W. Owen	21	40	35	26	19	9	150
10. <u>The Zulu Girl</u>	R. Campbell	48	54	27	7	9	3	148
11. <u>Musee des Beaux Arts</u>	W. Auden	22	40	26	20	11	25	144
12. <u>Preludes</u>	T. S. Eliot	43	44	24	12	9	12	144
13. <u>Iceland</u>	L. MacNeice	10	18	41	26	29	21	145
14. <u>When You Are Old</u>	W. Yeats	13	37	35	20	13	27	145
	TOTAL	455	635	408	245	160	145	2,054

TABLE 5

ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY

SCHOOL D (BOYS) FORM V (MATRICULATION)

N = 86

Question 1: List the THREE poems which you have most enjoyed in the last year or two. N = 86

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
W. Owen	<u>Dulce et Decorum Est</u>	46
R. Campbell	<u>Horses on the Camargue</u>	22
T. Gray	<u>Elegy in a Country Churchyard</u>	20
C. Day-Lewis	<u>Sing We The Two Lieutenants</u>	19
T. S. Eliot	<u>Journey of the Magi</u>	16
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Bat</u>	9
W. B. Yeats	<u>The Lake Isle of Innesfree</u>	8
C. Marlowe	<u>Closing Speech from Faustus</u>	7
J. Keats	<u>Ode to a Nightingale</u>	6
A. Tennyson	<u>The Charge of the Light Brigade</u>	6
G. M. Hopkins	<u>Spring</u>	6
W. Morris	<u>Haystack in the Floods</u>	6

Comments

Most of the boys who gave comments variously described their choices as 'easy to understand', having an 'appealing theme', 'descriptive', 'realistic', 'sincere', 'direct', 'true', 'straightforward', 'Modern', 'stimulating.'

More than 30 comments revealed implicit dislikes: 'without puzzling meanings', 'not flowery', 'not difficult', 'not boring', 'not soppy', 'not requiring too much explanation'.

Question 2: List the THREE poems which you have least enjoyed in the last year or two.

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
W. Wordsworth	<u>Ode on Intimations of Immortality</u>	42
A. C. Swinburne	<u>The Garden of Proserpine</u>	28

D. G. Rossetti	<u>The Blessed Damozel</u>	27
M. Arnold	<u>The Forsaken Merman</u>	24
W. W. Gibson	<u>Flannan Isle</u>	23
J. Keats	<u>Ode to a Nightingale</u>	15
A. Tennyson	<u>The Lady of Shalott</u>	13
W. Morris	<u>Haystack in the Floods</u>	12
E. Shanks	<u>The King's Dancer</u>	11
T. Gray	<u>Elegy in a Country Churchyard</u>	10
<del>S.</del> Day/Lewis	<u>Sing We the Two Lieutenants</u>	7
W. Wordsworth	<u>The Solitary Reaper</u>	6
R. Browning	<u>Porphyria's Lover</u>	6

### Comments

The following are a selection of the most frequent criticisms :

Nearly all the comments made were directed against Wordsworth's Intimations of Immortality and the three poems by the Pre-Raphaelites, Swinburne, Rossetti and Morris. Wordsworth's poem was variously described as 'too difficult to understand' (mentioned 27 times) 'too involved', 'needs too much explanation', 'boring', 'obscure', 'has too deep a meaning', 'too heavy', 'philosophical', and 'abstract'.

'This poem is far above my head and even the explanations put me off.'

'It is just a puzzle of words and thoughts and I can't read it on my own.'

The poems by Swinburne, Rossetti, Morris - and those by Tennyson and Arnold - were most frequently criticised as 'soppy', (mentioned 17 times), 'long', 'sickly', 'unreal' (mentioned 13 times), 'sentimental', 'insincere', 'soft', 'old-fashioned', 'slow', 'artificial', 'contrived', 'boring' (mentioned 11 times), 'flowery', and as having 'too many figures of speech', 'no strength', and 'no breaks of interest in the dreary, arduous monotony.'

'How can we be expected to like poetry at school or after school if we have to do all this sort of stuff?'

'Poetry last year was mostly O. K. but this Pre-Raphaelite rubbish is enough to put anyone off.'

'The Forsaken Mermaid<sup>id</sup> (sic) and the Blessed Damsel are  
c, wishy-washy and to my mind quite pointless.'

14 boys commented on W. W. Gibson's Flannan Isle which was variously described as 'naive', 'childish', 'overdone', 'over-dramatic', 'all right for juniors', 'contrived', and 'superficial'.

It is of some interest to note that 4 poems (Elegy in a Country Churchyard, Ode to a Nightingale, Haystack in the Floods and Sing We The Two Lieutenants) are listed in both the 'most enjoyed' and 'least enjoyed' groups.

Question 3:	<u>We should do more poetry at school</u>	26
N = 86	<u>We do just the right amount of poetry at school</u>	49
	<u>We should do less poetry at school</u>	9

#### Comments

82 boys made comments. A varied selection of about half this number is listed below :

1. 'We should do more. It is regarded at the moment as just something for Matric. If we do more for pleasure it would alleviate this impression and perhaps even create a demand for more.'
2. 'We do just enough otherwise prose will suffer from lack of attention.'
3. 'The more good modern poetry we do in school, the more likely we are to take a greater interest in later life. The old heavy poetry done in schools helps to kill any interest in poetry.'
4. 'We should do more just for interest and pleasure but even less for the exams.'
5. 'I've always enjoyed poetry but we do just the right number. The long, old-fashioned poems like Wordsworth's Intimations are terrible and I can't understand them.'
6. 'We do the right number but should deal with it gently lower down the school.'

- We should spend more time in class on enjoyment and less time on passing the exam.'
8. 'Can do more but a wider selection of shorter, modern poems.'
  9. 'We do enough in Matric but not nearly enough new and exciting narrative poems in 6, 7 and 8' (i. e. Standards 6, 7 and 8).
  10. 'Poetry is of no use in after life so we should not do more.'
  11. 'Must not be increased because it would throttle the other set-books. There is no time when revising.'
  12. 'We do quite enough thank you, we have dozens and dozens all analysed in fine detail.'
  13. 'I do more, out of school. I like to choose my own.'
  14. 'Great quantities for Matric, over 50 of them all closely analysed - good formula for killing it off forever.'
  15. 'Could do more but not the kind I have listed' (Intimation of Immortality, The Garden of Proserpine, The Solitary Reaper).
  16. 'Poems in the syllabus lack something that makes poetry agreeable and exciting.'
  17. 'We do 40 minutes a week, enough to finish the anthology in 2 years, not that I would mind doing more.'
  18. 'We should do less because the analyses bores me.'
  19. 'If we were to do more I am sure our own writing would be refined.'
  20. 'We do the right amount but should not be tested on it.'
  21. 'Not "less poetry" but fewer poems, then we could have more time to read interesting poems.'
  22. 'Why do more especially all the mechanics of metre, scanning and so on. Few of us are going to be poets in life.'
  23. 'In our anthology after every few poems, I came across one that really excites me. Thus I think we should do more poetry.'
  24. 'We could do more shorter modern ones but I think it was a pity I was forced to learn and recite poetry in my junior school.'
  25. 'We do the right amount but it should be for pleasure, only analysing slightly.'
  26. 'Instead of this syllabus we should have 1 or 2 poems a week, intel-

- igently approached, mostly modern. This would be enjoyable.'
- 'We could do more but only in the low junior forms where it is fun.'
28. 'I like poetry but we can only do the Matric poems which don't seem to be the best poems.'
29. 'Doesn't matter how much or how little we do, it is unpleasant.'
30. 'We do the right amount. Increase would mean boredom but to do less would be a pity.'
31. 'We should do much less because the Physics syllabus is big and needs all my attention.'
32. 'I like poetry more than anything else. It makes me feel free, different, somebody else. We must do more now, there may be no time or feeling later in life.'
33. 'If we did less it would handicap me at University.'
34. 'We should keep the same number but give less time to poetry than we would not have to specialise and break up each poem and start thinking things which I'm sure the poet never had in mind.'
35. 'Perhaps we could do more but not compulsory. Poetry for leisure would increase appreciation in later life.'
36. 'Let's keep a reasonable perspective. If we do more it will make exams even harder.'
37. 'I would like to do more but not for exams. Dissecting it ruins it and all the wonder is gone.'
38. 'Poetry is an acquired taste so we should do more good modern poetry to acquire the taste.'
39. 'Right amount. With all the other work we would become super-saturated.'
40. 'We should do less because it is compulsory. I like poetry only when in the mood so I usually read it out of school by myself.'

Question 7: Have you ever, at any time in your life, enjoyed poetry at all?

N = 86

YES = 79

NO = 4

8: I most enjoyed poetry in :

6

(i)	The primary school standards .....	8
(ii)	Standard VI .....	4
(iii)	Standards VII and VIII .....	5
(iv)	Standards IX and X .....	51
(v)	I have always enjoyed poetry .....	6
(vi)	I have always disliked poetry .....	2
(vii)	I have never really liked or disliked poetry ....	3

TABLE 6  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY  
SCHOOL D (BOYS) LOWER V (ANTE-MATRICULATION)

N = 105

Question 1: List the THREE Poems which you have most enjoyed  
in the last year or two. N = 105

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
S. T. Coleridge	<u>The Ancient Mariner</u>	18
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Snake</u>	14
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Humming Bird</u>	9
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Mosquito</u>	8
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Mountain Lion</u>	8
J. Keats	<u>Ode to Autumn</u>	7
S. Spender	<u>The Express</u>	6
A. Tennyson	<u>The Charge of the Light Brigade</u>	6
A. Tennyson	<u>Morte D'Arthur</u>	6

Among the most frequent reasons given for the enjoyment of these poems were the following :

'Interesting' (mentioned 9 times), 'easy to understand' (mentioned 9 times), 'good descriptions', 'just appeals to me', 'full of feeling', 'mysterious', 'easy to read', 'got real meaning', 'good story', 'simple', 'exciting'. Many boys (17) used a negative description: 'not boring', 'not complicated', 'not flowery', 'not long', 'not soppy', 'not stupid', 'without deep meanings'.

'The story, rhythm and mystery of the Ancient Mariner are all so good I don't worry about how long it is.'

'You don't have to dig out funny meanings from poems by Lawrence.'

Question 2: List the THREE poems which you have least enjoyed in  
the last year or two.

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
A. Pope	<u>The Rape of the Lock</u>	14

H. Reed	<u>Naming of Parts</u>	11
J. Clare	<u>To Autumn</u>	10
P. B. Shelley	<u>Ode to the West Wind</u>	10
G. Chaucer	From: <u>The Canterbury Tales</u>	9
W. Wordsworth	<u>The Daffodils</u>	9
A. Tennyson	<u>The Lady of Shalott</u>	8
J. Keats	<u>Ode to a Nightingale</u>	8
J. Keats	<u>Ode to a Grecian Urn</u>	8
S. T. Coleridge	<u>The Ancient Mariner</u>	7
J. Keats	<u>Ode to Autumn</u>	6

Among the most frequent criticisms of these poems were the following :

'Difficult to understand' (mentioned 23 times), 'boring', or 'uninteresting', (mentioned 14 times), 'too involved', 'language too difficult', 'old-fashioned', 'too long', 'nonsense', 'heavy', 'vague', 'dull', 'high-brow', 'sappy', 'not easy to grasp', 'not exciting', 'not modern', 'I don't like Odes', 'not appealing', 'no story', 'needs too much analysis', 'needs too much explaining.'

'I like poetry to be strong and masterful catching one's immediate attention, whether sad or gay.'

'Poems can be too rich causing indigestion in the mind. Perhaps when I grow up and in the right mood I can appreciate these.' (Reference to three Odes by Keats).

Question 3:	We should do more poetry at school	13
N = 105	We do just the right amount of poetry at school	57
	We should do less poetry at school	33

### Comments

Nearly 1/3 of this group of boys felt that less poetry should be done at school. Comments were made by 101 boys.

Most of those who believed that poetry should be presented in school variously stated that poetry is 'relaxing' (mentioned 5 times) or

'enjoyable'. Others felt that 'not enough is done' more should be read 'for enjoyment' and that there is 'not enough variety'.

The majority who felt that just enough poetry was done added that any more poetry would lead to boredom (mentioned 21 times) that less attention would be given to other aspects of English (mentioned 13 times) and that the extra work involved in 'the mechanics', 'remembering the meaning', 'finding the meaning', 'remembering the details' or analysing poems 'for the examinations' would lead to boredom.

Of the 33 boys who showed a preference for less poetry in school, the majority made comments along the following lines :

1. '... better to do less and really understand it than a whole lot and have a vague idea and fail the exams.'
2. '... to drum in all the vital steps is a bore, we should read for pleasure.'
3. 'The poems are too difficult to follow.'
4. 'There are already too many set-works'.
5. 'I can't get the feel of these poems so we should really do less.'
6. '... we're not going to read this stuff after school.'
7. 'Poetry is of no practical use in life after school.'
8. 'I don't like descriptive poetry which is so serious.'
9. 'The mechanics of poetry is boring and difficult and I think metre is difficult to understand.'
10. 'The language is difficult and the poems long and old and the meaning has to be pumped into us. I don't enjoy it as much as I could and the mechanics part is very difficult.'

Question 7: Have you ever, at any time in your life, enjoyed poetry  
at all?  
N = 105

YES = 91  
NO = 9

Question 8: I most enjoyed poetry in :

(i)	The primary school standards .....	8
(ii)	Standard VI .....	12
(iii)	Standards VII and VIII .....	28
(iv)	Standard IX .....	12
(v)	I have always enjoyed poetry .....	14
(vi)	I have always disliked poetry .....	5
(vii)	I have never really liked or disliked poetry ....	23

TABLE 7  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY  
SCHOOL D (BOYS) U IV (STANDARD 8)

N = 114

Question 1: List the THREE poems which you have most enjoyed in the last year or two. N = 114

The following poems were selected as the most enjoyed :

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
R. J. Yeatman and W. C. Sellar	<u>How I Brought the Good News from Aix to Ghent (Parody)</u>	26
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Snake</u>	17
Guy Butler	<u>Cape Coloured Batman</u>	11
W. W. Gibson	<u>The Ice-Cart</u>	10
S & T. Coleridge	<u>The Ancient Mariner</u>	9
H. Blair	<u>The Bloody Orkneys</u>	9
H. Belloc	<u>Farentella</u>	7
A. Fenyson	<u>The Charge of the Light Brigade</u>	7
R. Browning	<u>How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix</u>	6
W. Plomer	<u>The Scorpion</u>	6
S. Spender	<u>The Express</u>	6

The reasons most frequently given for the enjoyment of these poems were as follows :

'Amusing', 'different', 'light', 'easy to understand' (mentioned 12 times), 'good story', 'refreshing', 'new', 'full of feeling', 'direct', 'out of the ordinary', 'full of life', 'interesting', 'well told', 'makes you think', 'not boring', 'not old', 'not difficult', 'not stale', 'not heavy'.

'I enjoyed these poems because there was no need to analyse them and find out what was happening by going into detail.'

'Touches a subject we all feel deeply about and it is easy to sense the meaning.' (Reference to Cape Coloured Batman).

'Because it stirred up new thoughts about how cruel Africa could be. This poem really excited me.' (Reference to The Scorpion).

'Amusing contrast of a poem which had become very boring because of too much reading.' (Parody of 'How They Brought the Good News...)

Question 2: List the THREE poems which you have least enjoyed in the last year or two. N = 114

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
A. Tennyson	<u>The Lady of Shalott</u>	22
J. Keats	<u>Ode to Autumn</u>	21
F. T. Prince	<u>Soldiers Bathing</u>	17
H. Reed	<u>Naming of Farts</u>	11
J. Clare	<u>To Autumn</u>	10
J. Clare	<u>Little Trotty Wagtail</u>	10
W. Wordsworth	<u>Daffodils</u>	10
S. T. Coleridge	<u>The Ancient Mariner</u>	7
R. Browning	<u>The Pied Piper of Hamelin</u>	6
A. Tennyson	<u>The Lotos-Eaters</u>	6
R. Browning	<u>Prospice</u>	6

The following were the criticisms most frequently made :

'Too boring' (mentioned 19 times), 'stale', 'done it too many times', 'read it too often' (variously mentioned 26 times), 'too difficult' or 'too difficult to grasp' or 'too complicated' (variously mentioned 23 times) and with particular reference to Soldiers Bathing by F. T. Prince) 'has a deep meaning', 'is too long', 'flowery'.

'This poem has been drummed into us from Standard I'. (Reference to The Lady of Shalott)

'Because they are too fairy-like with lots of figures of speech.'

'The third one (Little Trotty Wagtail) has no point and is silly for the senior school.'

Question 3:	<u>We should do more poetry at school</u>	17
N = 114	<u>We do just the right amount of poetry at school</u>	73
	<u>We should do less poetry at school</u>	21

### Comments

Most pupils who felt more poetry should be done, variously described poetry as 'interesting', 'stimulating', 'enjoyable' or 'relaxing'. 'Because poetry is a funny thing, it changes your mood, makes you see new things and is different from other school subjects.'

The very great majority of boys who felt the right amount of poetry was being done, variously stated that less attention to poetry would be a 'bad thing', a 'handicap', 'a pity', or that more attention would lead to 'boredom' or a neglect of other set books.

Most of the 33 boys who preferred to do less poetry made one (or more) of three major complaints.

- |    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | That most poems had 'deep' or 'difficult' meanings           | 9 |
| 2. | That 'analysis', 'mechanics' or 'explanations' spoilt poetry | 8 |
| 3. | That the syllabus contained too many poems                   | 6 |

Over 100 pupils made comments.

'I write poetry quite often and read it out of school but we should do less because it is mostly the wrong kind and compulsory.'

'We should do more poetry but less on the technical side, the metre and scanning is difficult and very boring.'

'When one reads poetry in after life one never worries about form, details and hidden meanings. We do the right amount but we should do it differently.'

Question 7: Have you ever, at any time in your life, enjoyed poetry at all?  
N = 114

YES	=	99
NO	=	10

Question 8:

N = 114

I most enjoyed poetry in :

(i)	The primary school standards .....	8
(ii)	Standard VI .....	12
(iii)	Standards VII and VIII .....	43
(iv)	Standards IX and X .....	-
(v)	I have always enjoyed poetry .....	14
(vi)	I have always disliked poetry .....	6
(vii)	I have never really liked or disliked poetry.....	29

TABLE 3  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY  
SCHOOL D (BOYS) FORM M IV (Standard 7)

N = 82

Question 1: List the THREE poems which you have most enjoyed in the last year or two      N = 82

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Snake</u>	27
Rex Warner	<u>Mallard</u>	21
Andrew Young	<u>The Eagle</u>	17
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Bat</u>	13
R. Browning	<u>The Pied Piper of Hamelin</u>	12
A. Tennyson	<u>The Eagle</u>	10
Anon.	<u>Sir Patrick Spens</u>	9
Anon.	<u>Lord Randal</u>	8
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Mountain Lion</u>	6
James Stephens	<u>The Shell</u>	6
W. B. Yeats	<u>The Lake Isle of Innisfree</u>	6

Comments

These popular choices were variously described as 'interesting', 'easy to understand', 'dealing with wild life', 'animals', 'birds', as having interesting 'stories', 'themes', 'ideas', being 'full of feeling', 'not too long', 'in easy language'. The word 'modern' (or the phrase 'up to date') was used by more than half the boys who listed the first three or four poems. Many boys described their selections as 'not boring', 'not difficult to understand', 'without deep meaning', and not needing much 'explanation.'

Question 2: List the THREE poems which you have least enjoyed in the last year or two.      N = 82

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
W. Armstrong	<u>Miss Thompson Goes Shopping</u>	14
Anon.	<u>Sir Patrick Spens</u>	13

R. Barham	<u>The Jackdaw of Rheims</u>	12
Rex Warner	<u>Mallard</u>	11
R. Browning	<u>The Pied Piper of Hamelin</u>	10
James Stephens	<u>The Snare</u>	8
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Snake</u>	7
H. Monro	<u>Milk for the Cat</u>	6
W. Wordsworth	<u>Westminster Bridge</u>	6

Comments

The selections of least liked poems were variously described as 'boring' (mentioned 19 times), 'too long', 'sappy', 'old-fashioned'. As many as 17 pupils thought some of these poems were unsuited to their age-group and interests (in particular, the poems by M. Armstrong, R. Barham, R. Browning, J. Stephens and H. Monro were frequently described as 'childish', 'for children', 'all right for girls', 'soft', or 'for the primary school'). Nearly all the boys who ranked Mallard or Snake variously gave one of three reasons for their dislike :

- (a) Subject-matter ('I don't like birds in poetry'; 'A snake is not a good subject')
- (b) Description ('There is too much description'; 'I can't say I like descriptive poems')
- (c) Lack of Narrative ('There is no story'; 'Good poems must tell a story ...')

Question 3:	<u>We should do more poetry at school</u>	12
N = 82	<u>We do just the right amount of poetry at school</u>	62
	<u>We should do less poetry at school</u>	8

Comments

Over 70 boys made comments. Some of the most typical are given below :

Poetry is 'relaxing', 'relaxes the body' (variously mentioned 6 times). Poetry is a 'change from grammar' (mentioned 5 times) or 'is a rest' or 'a relief'. Most of the boys who felt that the right amount of

poetry was being done variously gave one of three reasons :

- (a) Any more poetry would make it 'boring', 'uninteresting'.  
(mentioned 24 times)
- (b) Other aspects of English 'would suffer' or 'are as important'.  
(mentioned 16 times)
- (c) Too much poetry would mean too many 'for the exams', too many 'to be analysed', 'explained', or 'remembered' (variously mentioned 14 times).

Of the 8 pupils who felt that less poetry should be done at school, 5 showed utilitarian outlooks. 'Poetry doesn't get you anywhere in life', 'a poem is of no use in your job', 'poetry can't help you earn a living in the world'.

Question 7: Have you ever at any time in your life, enjoyed poetry at all?

N = 82

YES = 70  
NO = 9

Question 8:

N = 82

I most enjoyed poetry in :

- (i) The primary school standards ..... 5
- (ii) Standard VI ..... 18
- (iii) Standard VII ..... 18
- (iv) Standards IX and X..... -
- (v) I have always enjoyed poetry..... 11
- (vi) I have always disliked poetry ..... 4
- (vii) I have never really liked or disliked poetry..... 24

TABLE 9

ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY

SCHOOL D (BOYS) FORM L IV (STANDARD 6)

N = 74

Question 1: List the THREE poems which you have most enjoyed in the last year or two. N = 74

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
A. Noyes	<u>The Highwayman</u>	30
T. S. Elliot	<u>Macavity: The Mystery Cat</u>	29
Sir Henry Newbolt	<u>The Fighting Temeraire</u>	10
R. Browning	<u>How They Brought the Good News...</u>	9
R. Browning	<u>The Pied Piper of Hamelin</u>	9
Lord Macaulay	<u>Horatius</u>	8
A. Tennyson	<u>The Charge of the Light Brigade</u>	7
Anon.	<u>Sir Patrick Spens</u>	6
Anon.	<u>Casey Jones</u>	6

Comments

The following comments and descriptions appeared most frequently:

'Exciting', 'well-written', 'easy to follow', 'fast', 'tells a good story', 'doesn't need explaining', 'cheerful', 'humorous', 'has good rhythm', 'interesting', 'interesting subject', 'not boring', 'not too long', 'not difficult to understand', 'not dead.' 'It doesn't explain everything over and over again.' '... sad and funny at the same time'. (Casey Jones)

Question 2: List the THREE poems which you have least enjoyed in the last year or two. N = 74

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
A. Tennyson	<u>The Lady of Shalott</u>	17
H. Asquith	<u>The Volunteer</u>	13
R. Browning	<u>The Pied Piper of Hamelin</u>	11
A. F. Trotter	<u>Picardie</u>	8

W. Wordsworth	<u>The Daffodils</u>	7
Anon.	<u>Sir Patrick Spens</u>	6

Comments

Nearly half the group (34) did not make comments. The following criticisms were among those most frequently made. 'Boring' (mentioned 11 times), 'dreary', 'did it in junior school', 'hard to understand', 'dull', 'unhappy', 'too long', 'too sad', 'no story', 'not exciting', 'not interesting', 'not fast.'

'There is no point to these stories, this makes them boring.'

'I don't like long, difficult poems of the olden days.'

Question 3:	We should do more poetry at school	22
N = 74	We do just the right amount of poetry at school	48
	We should do less poetry at school	3

Comments

Nearly all the boys who would prefer more poetry felt that it was enjoyable, relaxing, a relief from 'other lessons' or fun. The great majority who believed the right amount was done felt that any more or too much poetry would 'be boring', 'monotonous' or would take time and attention away from other aspects of English. The 3 boys who felt that less poetry should be done admitted that they did not enjoy poetry.

Question 7: Have you ever, at any time in your life, enjoyed poetry at all?  
N = 74

YES	=	68
NO	=	4

Question 8:

N = 74

I most enjoyed poetry in :

- (i) The primary school standards..... 15
- (ii) Standard VI ..... 30
- (iii) Standards VII and VIII..... -

(iv) Standards IX and X .....	-
(v) I have always enjoyed poetry.....	11
(vi) I have always disliked poetry .....	3
(vii) I have never really liked or disliked poetry	14

TABLE 10

ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY

SCHOOL D N = 466

	Do you ever read poetry for pleasure?			Do you ever write poetry for pleasure?			Do you ever poetry for	
	Often	Sometimes	Never	Often	Sometimes	Never	Often	Some
Vith (7)	-	5	2	-	5	2	1	
UVA (19)	1	14	4	1	7	11	2	1
UVB (27)	1	14	11	-	11	14	6	
UVC (19)	1	11	7	-	2	17	1	14
UVD (11)	-	6	5	-	3	8	1	
UVE (10)	-	5	5	-	1	9	2	
LVA (27)	1	21	5	1	11	15	3	14
LVB (13)	1	10	2	-	5	8	4	
LVC (18)	2	10	6	2	7	9	1	7
LVD (23)	2	13	8	2	5	16	4	13
LVE (22)	1	7	14	-	2	20	2	8
UIVA (27)	2	17	8	1	11	15	5	12
UIVB (25)	7	12	6	3	13	9	1	17
UIVC (27)	4	18	5	4	12	11	4	12
UIVD (22)	2	14	6	1	6	15	3	13
UIVE (11)	-	7	4	-	3	8	1	5
MIVX (20)	1	13	6	2	7	11	5	10
MIVA (24)	-	14	10	2	7	15	3	12
MIVB (19)	1	14	4	2	8	9	2	12
MIVC (19)	-	15	4	1	12	6	1	15
LIVA (24)	2	21	1	-	10	14	1	17
LIVB (21)	1	16	3	2	7	11	2	13
LIVC (19)	-	17	2	-	7	12	3	8
LIVD (12)	2	6	4	1	6	5	2	5
TOTAL (466)	32	290	132	25	168	270	60	246

TABLE 11  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY  
SCHOOL E STANDARD X (GIRLS)

Question 1: List the THREE poems which you have most enjoyed in the last year or two. N = 27

The following poems emerged as the most popular :

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
R. Campbell	<u>Horses on the Camargue</u>	13
J. Keats	<u>Ode to a Nightingale</u>	11
W. W. Gibson	<u>Flannan Isle</u>	9
W. Owen	<u>Dulce et Decorum Est</u>	8
W. B. Yeats	<u>The Lake Isle of Innisfree</u>	6

Among the most frequent reasons given for the enjoyment of these poems were the following :

The poems are full of feeling (mentioned 9 times); the descriptions are vivid; the language is beautiful; the poems are moving, they deal with suffering or longing; they are not complicated, old-fashioned or too long.

Question 2: List the THREE poems which you have least enjoyed in the last year or two. N. = 27

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
A. Swinburne	<u>The Garden of Proserpine</u>	14
W. Wordsworth	<u>Intimations of Immortality</u>	12
C. Marlowe	<u>Extract from Faustus</u>	10
A. Tennyson	<u>The Lady of Shalott</u>	9
A. Pope	<u>The Rape of the Lock</u>	6

Among the most frequent criticisms of these poems were the following :

The poems are 'too long' and 'difficult to understand' ; the poems are 'unreal', 'boring' (mentioned 8 times), 'morbid', 'childish' and 'dull'.

The 'language is difficult'; the poems are 'old-fashioned'. The poem by Swinburne was particularly disliked for being 'vague', 'too long', without 'aim or sense' - 'no real feeling or sense, just a whole mass of sounds and figures of speech.' The poem by Wordsworth was variously described as 'boring' and 'abstract', 'too long' and 'difficult to understand', and 'it has been pulled to pieces so much that the enjoyment is gone.' Six pupils variously described the extract from Faustus as 'morbid', 'bleak', 'depressing' or 'unreal'.

Question 3:	We should do more poetry in school	7
N = 27	We do just the right amount of poetry at school	17
	We should do less poetry at school	3

Comments

Most pupils (5) who felt they ought to be doing more poetry at school, variously emphasised the need for a wider choice of poems and freedom from examination requirements. Most girls, who believed that the right amount of poetry was done, maintained that the 'other set-works' would suffer if more time was given to poetry; 7 girls felt that more attention should be given to the right kind of poem. Those who agreed that less poetry should be taught, believed that poetry was not as interesting or important as other forms of literature, e.g. plays, novels, short stories.

Question 7:	<u>Have you ever, at any time in your life, enjoyed poetry at all?</u>
N = 27	
	YES = 25
	NO = 2

Question 8:

N = 27	I most enjoyed poetry in :	
	(i) The primary school standards .....	1
	(ii) Standard VI .....	2
	(iii) Standards VII and VIII .....	-
	(iv) Standards IX and X .....	10
	(v) I have always enjoyed poetry .....	10
	(vi) I have always disliked poetry .....	1
	(vii) I have never really liked or disliked poetry .....	3

TABLE 12  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY  
SCHOOL E STANDARD IX (GIRLS)

Question 1: List the THREE poems which you have most enjoyed  
in the last year or two. N = 42

The following poems were selected as the most enjoyed :

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
R. Frost	<u>After Apple-Picking</u>	17
T. S. Eliot	<u>Journey of the Magi</u>	9
J. Keats	<u>Ode to a Nightingale</u>	7
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Snake</u>	7
A. Tennyson	<u>Morte D'Arthur</u>	6

Among the most frequent reasons for the enjoyment of these poems were the following :

The poems 'convey feelings' and 'are easy to understand'; the poems are 'truthful', 'moving', 'simple', 'modern'. The language has 'beauty and simplicity'; the ideas are 'sincere and interesting'. The poem by Robert Frost, which received a very high rating, was variously described as 'simple', 'vivid', 'modern', 'sincere' and 'immediately appealing'; 'he (Frost) makes you feel close to him with his easy, familiar words and I found myself thinking of the poem days afterwards.'

Question 2: List the THREE poems which you have least enjoyed in  
the last year or two. N = 43

The following poems were named as the least enjoyed :

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
R. Browning	<u>Andrea del Sarto</u>	23
J. Milton	<u>Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity</u>	17
A. Tennyson	<u>The Lotos-Eaters</u>	15
S. T. Coleridge	<u>The Ancient Mariner</u>	14
J. Keats	<u>Ode to a Grecian Urn</u>	13
A. Pope	<u>The Rape of the Lock</u>	10

The following comments were among those most frequently made :

The poems are 'too involved', 'too long and dreary', 'too difficult', 'old-fashioned' and 'boring'. (The word 'boring' was used 22 times). In particular, the first three poems listed were variously described as 'too long', 'unreal', 'uninteresting', 'too flowery' and 'stupid'. The description, 'I don't understand the meaning' was used 8 times with regard to the first two poems listed. 'The language and thought of these two poems (first two listed) is really too flowery and difficult for school-children. Then they have to be pulled to pieces by the teacher and explained and this is boring and depressing.'

Question 3:	We should do more poetry at school	11
N = 43	We do just the right amount of poetry at school	26
	We should do less poetry at school.	5

Comments

Six of the eleven girls who believed that more poetry should be read, qualified their opinions with a remark such as, 'but of the kind which is interesting and enjoyable.' Four of the eleven girls suggested that more poetry should be done for 'fun', 'leisure', 'recreation' and that fewer poems should be 'pulled to pieces' or used 'as a puzzle' in examinations. The great majority of pupils who felt that the present amount of poetry was sufficient, believed that an increase would leave too little time for reading other forms of literature. Several pupils each qualified their selected response :

'I agree, we do the right amount, but do we do the right kind?'

'The "right amount" of what older people think is good for us.'

Most of those who felt that less poetry should be done admitted that poetry was 'dull', 'boring' and 'difficult'. 'You have to listen to the teacher all the time explaining the meaning and things.'

Question 7: Have you ever, at any time in your life, enjoyed poetry at all?

N = 43

YES = 41

NO = 1

Question 8:

N = 43

I most enjoyed poetry in :

(i)	The primary school standards .....	-
(ii)	Standard VI .....	4
(iii)	Standards VII and VIII .....	6
(iv)	Standards IX and X .....	14
(v)	I have always enjoyed poetry.....	12
(vi)	I have always disliked poetry .....	2
(vi)	I have never really liked or disliked poetry	5

TABLE 13  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY  
SCHOOL E STANDARD VIII (GIRLS)

Question 1: List the THREE poems which you have most enjoyed in the last year or two. N = 28

The following poems were named as the most enjoyed :

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Snake</u>	17
G. K. Chesterton	<u>The Donkey</u>	9
T. S. Eliot	<u>Macavity: The Mystery Cat</u>	8
R. Campbell	<u>Horses on the Camargue</u>	6
W. W. Gibson	<u>Flannan Isle</u>	6

The reasons most frequently given for the enjoyment of these poems were as follows :

The poem 'tells an interesting story', 'is a good description' (mentioned 9 times), is 'not boring' (mentioned 6 times), deals with 'things I like', describes 'animals' or 'creatures' with 'feeling', 'beauty', 'sincerity'. All 7 pupils who named Eliot's poem used words like 'amusing', 'humorous' or 'delightful', and one girl stated, 'Often I like to read poems that are light with fun and not heavy with thoughts.' Other descriptions frequently used were 'straight-forward', 'full of mystery', 'unusual', 'different', 'modern' and 'because I can understand them.' Three girls mentioned the mystery of the 'three queer, black, ugly birds' in Flannan Isle. (It will be noted all 46 mentions are of poems dealing with living creatures).

Question 2: List the THREE poems which you have least enjoyed in the last year or two.

The following poems were the least enjoyed :

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
J. Donne	<u>Death, be not Proud</u>	10
G. Chaucer	<u>The Clerk of Oxenford</u>	8
M. Arnold	<u>The Forsaken Merman</u>	7
A. Tennyson	<u>The Lady of Shalott</u>	6
J. Keats	<u>On First Looking into Chapman's Homer</u>	6

The most frequent comments were as follows :

The poems 'don't make sense'; the poems are 'too difficult to understand' (mentioned 7 times); the poems are 'boring' (mentioned 10 times); they are 'too solemn', not in 'modern English', 'morbid', 'old-fashioned', 'dull', 'monotonous' and 'too long' (mentioned 8 times).

'I enjoy many poems but these (The Forsaken Mermaid and The Lady of Shalott) are too long and dreary especially as we did them twice last year.'

Question 3:	We should do more poetry at school.	5
N = 28	We do just the right amount of poetry at school	22
	We should do less poetry at school	1

#### Comments

Three of the five pupils who would prefer more poetry variously suggested more 'exciting', 'interesting' poems which are not 'boring' or 'difficult to understand.' The majority of those who agreed with the present amount felt that any more poetry 'would be boring'. The only girl who felt that less poetry should be taught added 'Could do more but it must not be pressed upon us.' We could choose some poems we liked which would make it different.' Seven pupils observed that more poetry would mean fewer plays, stories and other 'English books.'

Question 7:	<u>Have you ever, at any time in your life, enjoyed poetry at all?</u>
N = 28	YES = 28
	NO = -

Question 8:	I most enjoyed poetry in :
N = 28	(i) The primary school standards ..... 4
	(ii) Standard VI ..... 4
	(iii) Standards VII and VIII..... 12
	(iv) Standards IX and X ..... -

- (v) I have always enjoyed poetry ..... 4
- (vi) I have always disliked poetry ..... -
- (vii) I have never really liked or disliked poetry 4

TABLE 14  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY  
SCHOOL E STANDARD VII (GIRLS)

Question 1: List the THREE poems which you have most enjoyed in the last year or two. N = 42

The following poems were the most frequently mentioned :

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
I. Colvin	<u>A Museum Idyll</u>	17
W. de la Mare <sup>a</sup>	<u>The Listeners</u>	13
F. Carey-Slater	<u>Xhosa Lament for Wetu, the Cow.</u>	8
A. Noyes	<u>The Highwayman</u>	8
S. T. Coleridge	<u>The Ancient Mariner</u>	7
T. S. Eliot	<u>Macavity: The Mystery Cat</u>	6
J. G. Magee	<u>High Flight</u>	6

The reasons most frequent given for these choices were as follows :

Poems are 'interesting', 'easy to understand', 'exciting', 'descriptive', 'peaceful', 'mysterious', 'funny'. The poem has 'an appealing story', is 'historical', 'dramatic'. Poems have 'got a story to them' and are 'not boring' or 'in ancient English'.

'You can hear the silence'. 'I listen and dream.' (The Listeners)

'It gives me a free, sad feeling up in the skies.' (High Flight)

Question 2: List the THREE poems which you have least enjoyed in the last year or two.

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
J. Keats	<u>On First Looking into Chapman's Homer</u>	16
S. T. Coleridge	<u>The Ancient Mariner</u>	14
W. Wordsworth	<u>Composed upon Westminster Bridge</u>	13
A. Tennyson	<u>Morte D'Arthur</u>	9
M. Arnold	<u>Sohrab and Rustum</u>	7
M. Arnold	<u>The Forsaken Merman</u>	6
A. Tennyson	<u>The Lady of Shalott</u>	6

The following comments appeared most frequently: The poems were variously described as 'monotonous' (mentioned 7 times), 'hard to understand' (mentioned 7 times), 'too long', 'not enjoyable', 'boring', 'old-fashioned', 'silly' and needing too much 'explanation'.

'We have done these poems three times in two years and I was bored the first time.' (A reference to the two poems by Matthew Arnold).

'I don't like a poem which needs so many lessons to read and explain.' (The Ancient Mariner)

Question 3:	We should do more poetry at school	2
N = 42	We do just the right amount of poetry at school	38
	We should do less poetry at school	2

Comments

Nearly all the pupils who made comments believed that to do more poetry would lead to boredom. Nine pupils felt that a greater emphasis upon poetry would lead to a neglect of other forms of literature. Eight girls felt that poetry was 'important', 'useful' or 'valuable'; consequently, it should not be given less attention.

Question 7:	<u>Have you ever, at any time in your life, enjoyed poetry at all?</u>	
N = 42	YES =	39
	NO =	1

Question 8:		
N = 42	I most enjoyed poetry in :	
	(i) The primary school standards .....	44
	(ii) Standard VI .....	9
	(iii) Standards VII.....	17
	(iv) Standards IX and X .....	-
	(v) I have always enjoyed poetry.....	5
	(vi) I have always disliked poetry .....	1
	(vii) I have never really liked or disliked poetry	6

TABLE 15  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY  
SCHOOL E (GIRLS) N = 139

	Do you ever read poetry for pleasure?			Do you ever write poetry for pleasure?			Do you ever memorise poetry for pleasure?			Have you ever en- joyed poetry at all?	
	Often	Sometimes	Never	Often	Sometimes	Never	Often	Sometimes	Never	Yes	No
STD 10 (27)	6	15	6	2	13	12	3	17	7	25	1
STD 9 (42)	4	32	6	1	13	28	5	27	10	40	2
STD 8 (28)	2	17	9	1	8	19	4	22	1	27	1
STD 7 (42)	2	29	9	4	12	24	8	26	8	37	2
TOTAL (139)	14	93	30	8	46	83	20	92	26	129	6

TABLE 16

ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY

SCHOOL A STANDARD VIII (BOYS)

Question 1: List the THREE poems which you have most enjoyed in the last year or two. N = 48

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
Lord Macaulay	<u>Horatius</u>	28
A. Noyes	<u>The Highwayman</u>	19
T. S. Elliot	<u>Macavity: The Mystery Cat</u>	18
M. Thwaites	<u>The "Jervis Bay"</u>	14
W. R. Benet	<u>Jesse James</u>	8
J. G. Magee	<u>High Flight</u>	6

Among the most frequent reasons given for liking these poems were the following :

Nearly all the poems were variously described as 'easy to understand', 'exciting', 'stirring', 'full of action', 'full of feeling', 'a good story', 'adventurous'. A number of boys (9) reflected their dislikes by praising these poems as 'not boring', 'not lifeless', 'not a drag', 'not flowery', 'not complicated'.

Question 2: List the THREE poems which you have least enjoyed in the last year or two. N = 48

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
A. Tennyson	<u>The Lady of Shalott</u>	15
J. Keats	<u>La Belle Dame Sans Merci</u>	11
H. W. Longfellow	<u>Hiawatha's Sailing</u>	9
M. Arnold	<u>The Forsaken Mermaid</u>	9
Anon.	<u>Sir Patrick Spens</u>	6

The majority of boys disliked these poems for the following reasons:

'Too mythical', 'boring' (mentioned 11 times), 'far-fetched', 'too long', 'difficult to understand'. Five boys variously described the language of many of these poems as 'funny', 'old-fashioned', 'difficult', 'queer'. Four

boys complained that The Lady of Shalott had been 'done' too many times before.

'We did this poem in Standard V and thought it stupid'.

'This is the third time we have done this poem since Junior school and I think it silly but the girls might like it I suppose'.

Question 3:	We should do more poetry at school	7
N = 48	We do just the right amount of poetry at school	32
	We should do less poetry at school	8

Only 12 boys gave reasons for their selected responses. Three boys who felt more poetry should be done at school variously believed that 'poems should be for pleasure not for exams', 'more good poetry would help relieve normal school periods which are boring', and 'poems I like make me relaxed and happy'. Most of the pupils who felt 'the right amount of poetry' was being done believed that more poetry would lead to boredom or would leave little time for 'other set-books'. No comments were made by pupils who selected the statement: We should do less poetry at school.

Question 7:	<u>Have you ever, at any time in your life, enjoyed poetry at all?</u>
N = 48	YES = 41
	NO = 5

Question 8:

N = 48	I most enjoyed poetry in :
	(i) The primary school standards ..... 4
	(ii) Standard VI ..... -
	(iii) Standards VII and VIII ..... 32
	(iv) Standards IX and X ..... -
	(v) I have always enjoyed poetry..... 2
	(vi) I have always disliked poetry ..... 2
	(vii) I have never really liked or disliked poetry 6

TABLE 17  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY  
PERSE SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND N = 167

	Do you ever read poetry for pleasure?			Do you ever write poetry for pleasure?			Do you ever memorise poetry for pleasure?			Have you ever en- joyed poetry at all?	
	Often	Sometimes	Never	Often	Sometimes	Never	Often	Sometimes	Never	Yes	No
Form IA (26)	21	4	1	17	7	2	14	11	1	26	-
Form I (24)	20	4	-	19	5	-	12	12	-	24	-
Form II (30)	18	12	-	16	13	1	11	18	1	30	-
Form III (32)	14	17	1	12	15	5	4	26	2	32	-
Form IVA(29)	16	13	-	13	14	2	3	24	2	29	-
Science Lower VI (12)	1	6	5	1	5	6	1	4	7	12	-
Modern Upper VI (14)	7	4	3	8	4	2	5	7	2	14	-
TOTAL (167)	97	60	10	86	63	18	50	102	15	167	-

TABLE 18  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY

SCHOOL C (STANDARDS VII, VIII) MARCH 1965

N = 277 (BOYS)

Name up to TEN poems which you have most enjoyed in the last year or two

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Snake</u>	89
W. W. Gibson	<u>Fiannan Isle</u>	82
W. G. Magee	<u>High Flight</u>	81
T. S. Eliot	<u>Macavity: The Mystery Cat</u>	77
Lord Macaulay	<u>Horatius</u>	72
A. Noyes	<u>The Highwayman</u>	68
Sir Henry Newbolt	<u>He Fell Among Thieves</u>	66
W. R. Benet	<u>Jesse James</u>	51
R. Campbell	<u>Horses on the Camargue</u>	49
J. Masfield	<u>From Reynard the Fox</u>	38
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Bat</u>	34
A. Tennyson	<u>Morte D'Arthur</u>	31
W. W. Gibson	<u>The Ice-Cart</u>	24
G. K. Chesterton	<u>The Donkey</u>	21
Anon.	<u>Lord Randal</u>	20
J. Masfield	<u>Cargoes</u>	16
W. de la Mere	<u>The Listeners</u>	12
A. Tennyson	<u>The Eagle</u>	11
R. Browning	<u>The Pied Piper of Hamelin</u>	10
H. Belloc	<u>Tarantella</u>	9
Anon.	<u>Sir Patrick Spens</u>	9
W. B. Yeats	<u>The Lake Isle of Innisfree</u>	8
W. de la Mere	<u>Silver</u>	7
R. Kipling	<u>If</u>	7
J. Masfield	<u>Sea-Fever</u>	7
R. Browning	<u>How They Brought the Good News...</u>	6
Lord Byron	<u>The Destruction of Sennacherib</u>	6

TABLE 19

ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY

SCHOOL C (STANDARD VII, VIII) AUGUST 1966

N = 282 (BOYS)

(Approximately 123 (47%) of these boys gave their preferences in the previous year).

Name up to TEN poems which you have most enjoyed in the last year or two.

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
Robert Frost	<u>'Out, Out -'</u>	112
Guy Butler	<u>Cape Coloured Batman</u>	101
Elizabeth Riddell	<u>The Lifesaver</u>	94
R. L. Stevenson	<u>Death of the Fisher</u>	91
John Masefield	<u>The Fight</u>	88
R. J. C. Stead	<u>The Squad of One</u>	83
Anon.	<u>The Cowboy's Lament</u>	82
J. M. Hayes	<u>The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God</u>	77
J. G. Magee	* <u>High Flight</u>	68 (81)
H. H. Knibbs	<u>Charley Lee</u>	62
R. P. T. Coffin	<u>Little Boys of Texas</u>	60
Guy Butler	<u>The Parting</u>	57
D. H. Lawrence	* <u>Snake</u>	54 (89)
W. W. Gibson	* <u>Flannan Isle</u>	51 (82)
W. H. Auden	<u>C, What is that Sound</u>	50
Ted Hughes	<u>The Jaguar</u>	46
Ted Hughes	<u>Bayonet Charge</u>	44
Sir Henry Newbolt	* <u>He Fell Among Thieves</u>	43 (68)
A. Noyes	* <u>The Highwayman</u>	42 (68)
A. Waley (Trans.)	<u>Homecoming</u>	36
T. S. Eliot	* <u>Macavity: The Mystery Cat</u>	35 (77)
e. e. cummings	<u>Portrait</u>	35
Robert Frost	<u>Birches</u>	32
Roy Campbell	<u>The Zebras</u>	31
Rudyard Kipling	<u>Bridge Guard in the Karroo</u>	30
Robert Frost	<u>The Runaway</u>	30
A. E. Housman	<u>Eight O'Clock</u>	29

Anon.	<u>Casey Jones</u>	28
Robinson Jeffers	<u>Hurt Hawks</u>	28
Lord Macaulay	* <u>Horatius</u>	27 (72)
Various Japanese poets	From: <sup>The</sup> <u>Penguin Books of Japanese Verse</u>	27
Roy Campbell	<u>The Zulu Girl</u>	26
Judith Wright	<u>The Surfer</u>	25
Bruce Strouach	<u>Last Run</u>	24
C. Day Lewis	<u>Flight to Australia</u>	23
W. R. Benet	* <u>Jesse James</u>	21 (51)
Roy Campbell	* <u>Horses on the Camargue</u>	21 (49)
Walt Whitman	<u>The Learn'd Astronomer</u>	19
Andrew Young	<u>Field Glasses</u>	19
A. Waley (trans.)	<u>Releasing a Migrant 'Year'</u>	17
William Carlos Williams	<u>This is just to say</u>	15
Anon.	* <u>Lord Randal</u>	15 (20)
Emily Dickinson	<u>The Train</u>	14
Carl Sandburg	<u>Arithmetic</u>	12
Sarah Teasdale	<u>'There will Come Soft Rains'</u>	10
Ogden Nash	<u>Very Like a Whale</u>	10
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Humming Bird</u>	8
G. K. Chesterton	* <u>The Donkey</u>	6 (21)
A. Tennyson	* <u>Morte D'Arthur</u>	6 (31)
W. de la Mère	* <u>The Listeners</u>	6 (12)
Anon.	* <u>Sir Patrick Spens</u>	6 (9)

\* Indicate those poems most frequently mentioned in an identical survey 17 months earlier (See Table 18 ). The previous rating is given in brackets.

TABLE 20  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS POETRY

SCHOOL A STANDARD X (BOYS) N = 38

Question 1: List the THREE poems which you have most enjoyed in the last year or two. N = 38

The following poems emerged as the most popular :

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
T. S. Eliot	<u>Journey of the Magi</u>	23
R. Campbell	<u>The Zulu Girl</u>	13
R. Browning	<u>My Last Duchess</u>	10
T. S. Eliot	<u>Preludes</u>	9
R. Frost	<u>Mending Wall</u>	6
W. Owen	<u>Miners</u>	6

Among the most frequent reasons listed for the enjoyment of these poems were the following :

The poems were described as having interesting 'themes', 'topics' or 'ideas' (variously mentioned 17 times). Other frequent comments were : 'full of real feeling', 'have got meaning', 'makes you think', 'enjoyable', the language is 'simple' or 'modern', 'not old-fashioned' (mentioned 8 times). Five of the 13 boys who listed The Zulu Girl said they preferred 'South African Poetry' or 'South African themes'. Many boys (19) used negative terms to express their liking for these poems - for example, 'not long', 'not boring', 'not stupid', 'not difficult to understand'.

Question 2: List the THREE poems which you have least enjoyed in the last year or two. N = 38

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
L. MacNeice	<u>Iceland</u>	12
P. B. Shelley	<u>Ode to the West Wind</u>	11
W. Wordsworth	<u>Tintern Abbey</u>	9
A. Tennyson	<u>The Lotus-Eaters</u>	9
A. Tennyson	<u>Ulysses</u>	6

The following comments were among those most frequently made: The poems were variously described as 'boring', 'full', 'difficult', too 'long' and 'involved' (at least some of these words appeared in all 35 questionnaires). Other frequent remarks were 'old-fashioned', 'stupid topics', 'too much explanation needed', 'too contrived', and 'the language is flowery'.

'The Lotos-Eaters just rambles on and on and on.'

'There is too much subtle meaning in these poems which has to be explained and learned for the exams.'

Question 3:	We should do more poetry at school	2
N = 38	We do just the right amount of poetry at school	10
	We should do less poetry at school	21

Nearly all the comments were concerned with poetry and examinations. A selection of some of the qualifying remarks are given below :

'We could do more, if they were interesting and if we were not examined.'

'We should do less of the present kind and more of the right kind.'

'There is hardly time to revise half the poems for the exams.'

'We could do more if it were not for the exams.'

'I used to enjoy poetry when the choice was good and there was no exam.'

'Poetry is O.K. but the exam worries me, especially the meanings.'

'We should just do them for pleasure, forget about the exams.'

'There are too many poems in the syllabus.'

'There are so many poems we just rush through making notes and hoping they wont ask us about the meaning.'

'We are given such long dull things which make me sleepy.'

'We should do more like Zulu Girl with no swotting, explanation and revision for the exams which is boring.'

5

Question 7: Have you ever, at any time in your life, enjoyed poetry at all?

N = 38	YES	=	31
	NO	=	2

Question 8:

N = 38 I most enjoyed poetry in :

(i)	The primary school standards .....	-
(ii)	Standard VI .....	10
(iii)	Standards VII and VIII.....	10
(iv)	Standards IX and X .....	8
(v)	I have always enjoyed poetry.....	2
(vi)	I have always disliked poetry .....	3
(vii)	I have never really liked or disliked poetry ...	1

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