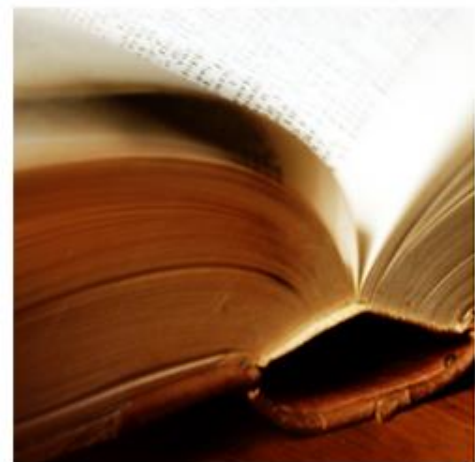


# HOW TO TEACH POETRY?

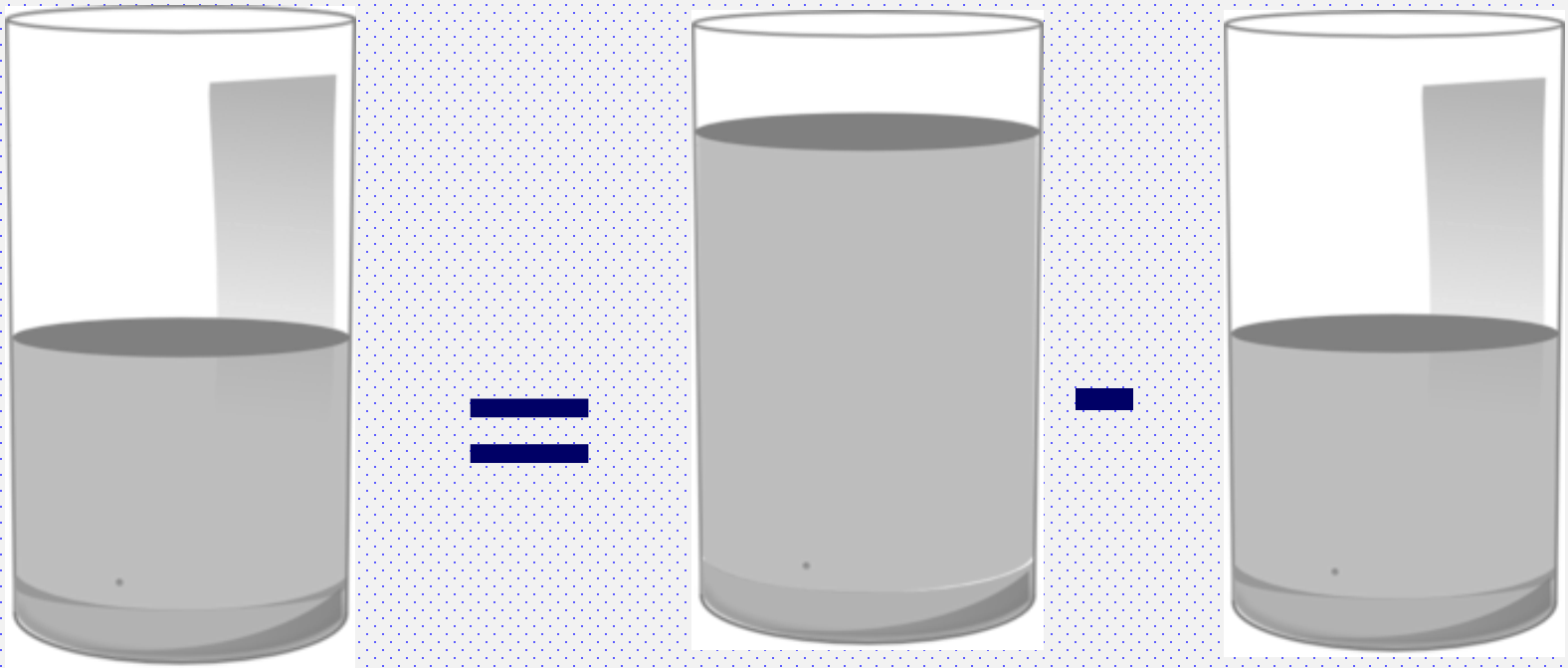
DR. JAYDEEP RISHI



# Before we start...

- Can poetry/ literature be taught?
- Should literature be taught in the classroom?
- Remember Plato banished the poets/ littérateurs from his *Republic*.

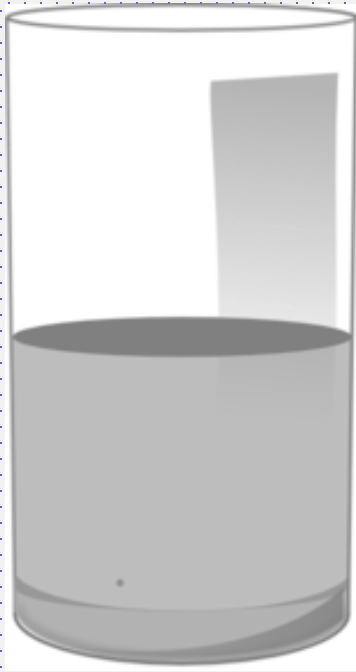

$$x/2 = x - x/2$$



$$x/2 = x - x/2$$



$x/2 \neq x - x/2$



**≠**



**-**



**Half Full ≠**

**Half Empty**

# A Literature Teacher

- Skills required:

- » Intuitive

- » Analytical

- Play the part of:


- » Literary Critic

- » Practical Linguist

- 
- Roman Jakobson observed:

All of us here, definitely realize that a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unacquainted with linguistic methods, are equally fragrant anachronisms.



- 
- The integration of language and literature in English classrooms is a must.
  - Need to make students understand the language which is the medium through which messages in literary discourses are encoded.

# Strategies Involved

- To stimulate the interest of the students.
- To approach in such a way so as to reveal aspects of the text under discussion.
- To formulate relevant participatory activities and make a well-planned journey towards the text.
- To be a participant and guide students towards the right track without being intimidating.




# Methodology Involved

- To follow an Integrated approach consisting of
  - Pre-reading activities
  - Whilst-reading activities and
  - Post-reading activities
- Pre-reading activities – arousing interest among students
- Whilst-reading activities – cultivating the interaction between the text and the readers
- Post-reading activities – to widen the understanding of the text and stimulate thought and discussion that arises out of it




# The Sands of Dee - Charles Kingsley



"O Mary, go and call the cattle home,  
And call the cattle home,  
And call the cattle home  
Across the sands of Dee";  
The western wind was wild and dank with foam,  
And all alone went she.

The western tide crept up along the sand,  
And o'er and o'er the sand,  
And round and round the sand,  
As far as eye could see.  
The rolling mist came down and hid the land:  
And never home came she.

# The Sands of Dee



"Oh! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair--  
A tress of golden hair,  
A drowned maiden's hair  
Above the nets at sea?  
Was never salmon yet that shone so fair  
Among the stakes on Dee."

They rowed her in across the rolling foam,  
The cruel crawling foam,  
The cruel hungry foam,  
To her grave beside the sea:  
But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home  
Across the sands of Dee.

# Pre-reading activities

- Objectives

- to involve students into activities that stimulates their responsiveness to the text and willingness to read it
- to design activities that require the students to dwell upon their experience of the world and their imagination and intuition to make intelligent guesses about the text.

- Methodology

- analysis of
  - Title
  - Illustrations
  - Warming up questions
  - Key words



# Title

- The title of a literary piece is most important as it indicates the theme of the text
- The teacher only puts forward the title without the text and then asks a range of questions to elicit students' responses
- Examples:
  - What is meant by 'sands'?
  - What is the difference between 'sand' and 'sands'?
  - Cite examples of words having different meaning when they are singular and plural.
  - What is your understanding of 'Dee'?
  - Is the poem a description about the sands of Dee?
  - Is the poem a description about an incident on the sands of Dee?

# Illustrations

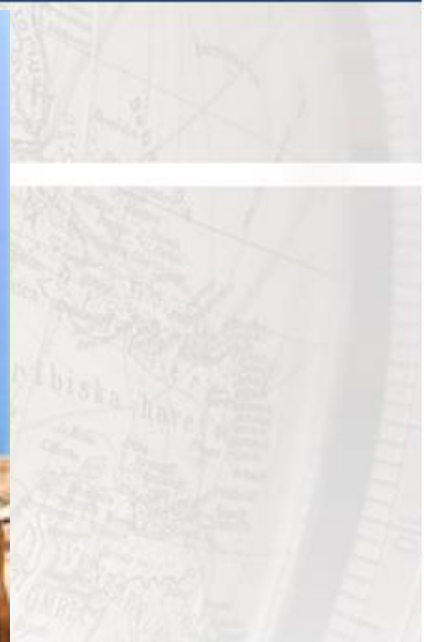


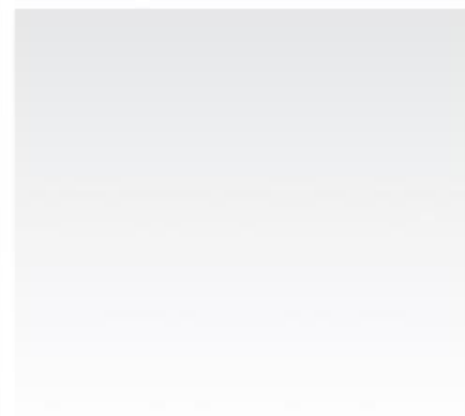
The Sands of Dee  
– Paul Gauguin






Robert  
Harris





- 
- The teacher displays these illustrations and prompts students to interpret them through a set of questions.
  - Examples:
    - What is the weather like?
    - What is the girl doing?
    - What are the boatmen looking at?
    - What do you think is the theme of the poem?
    - What are the common elements in the four pictures?
    - How are the four pictures different?
    - What is the mood of the poem?

# Warming-up questions

- The teacher now introduces some lines keeping in view the theme of the poem.
- The students are to discuss in brief what these lines mean to them depending upon their own experience
- Examples:
  - People strive against the stream in vain.
  - Rivers sweep away everything.
  - Hungry waves swallow
  - The sea is a gluttonous monster
  - The sea has cruel, hungry foam



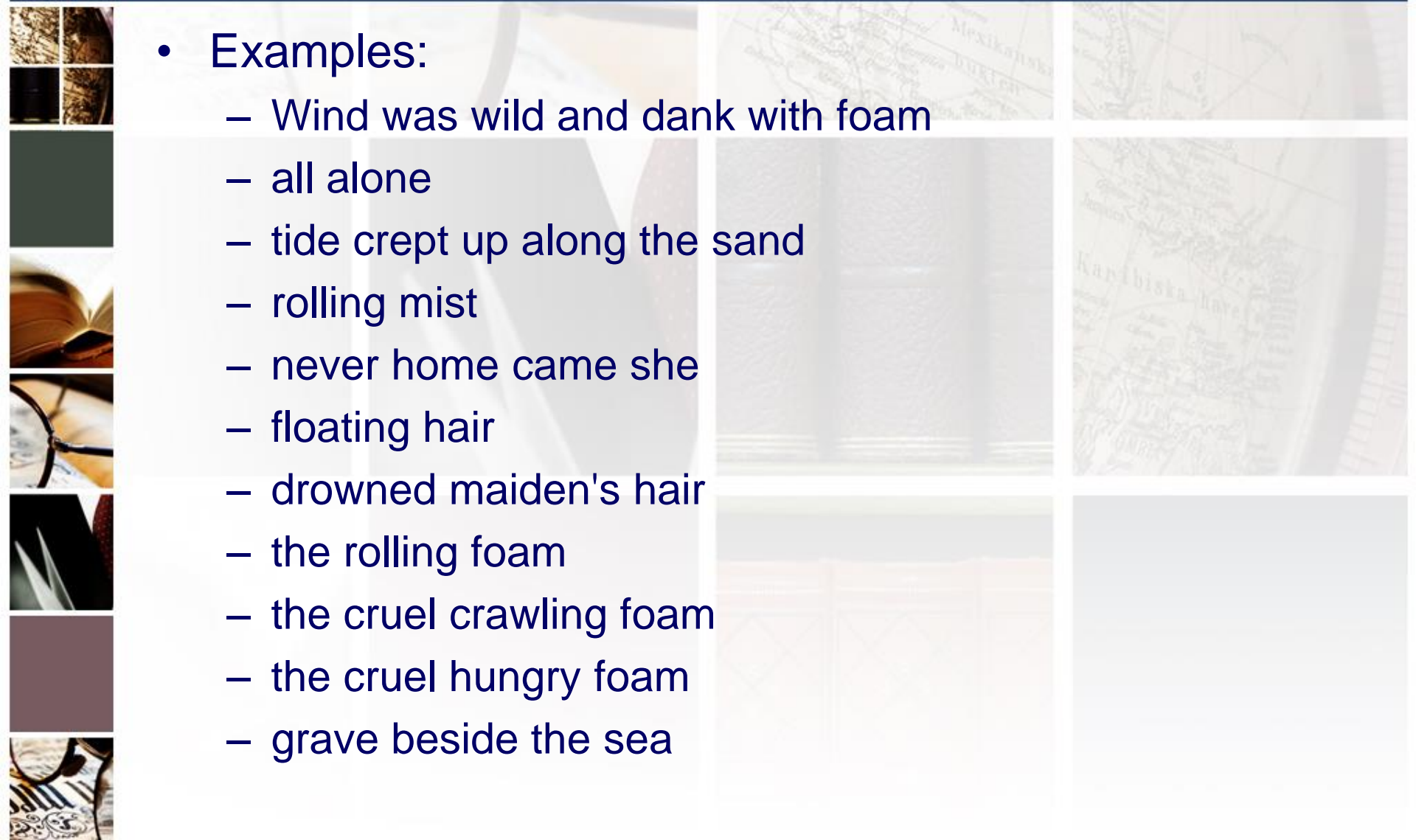
# Key words


- The key words through a semantic link help the readers to understand the theme and atmosphere of a poem.
- The teacher presents a list of particular lexical items from the text.
- The students try to understand the theme of the poem by paying attention to the connotative aspect of the selected lexical items.
- The students in groups discuss the semantic implications of the text by looking at the key words.
- The teacher's job is to channelize the students in a proper way by asking them relevant questions at this point.





- Examples:


- Wind was wild and dank with foam
  - all alone
  - tide crept up along the sand
  - rolling mist
  - never home came she
  - floating hair
  - drowned maiden's hair
  - the rolling foam
  - the cruel crawling foam
  - the cruel hungry foam
  - grave beside the sea
- 

- 
- Example of questions that may be asked:
    - Is the wind normal or wild?
    - What is the weather like?
    - Can you say something about the setting of the poem?
    - Why is the crawling foam cruel?
    - What happened to the maiden?
    - Was her hair floating in the sea?
    - Was she buried in a grave by the sea?
    - Is the poem just a description about a sandy beach?



# Whilst-reading activities

- Objectives
  - Making the text more accessible to the students
  - Developing a meaningful interaction between the text and the students
- Methodology
  - Listening
  - Reading
  - Language exercises
  - Comparing the text with the inferences drawn during pre-reading

- 
- **Listening**
    - The students listen to the text which is read by the teacher. Alternatively they may listen to a recording.
  - **Reading**
    - The students read the text either individually or in pairs or in groups.
  - **Language exercises**
    - Students prepare a list of words or phrases which are unknown.
    - They are encouraged to find meanings of those words.
  - **Comparing the text with the inferences drawn during pre-reading**



- Examples:

- dark with foam

- tide

- crept up

- rolling

- weed

- drowned

- crawling

- grave

(wet with water drops)

(the flow of water in a river)

(came rolling)

(moving)

(sea plant)

(died from drowning)

(moving along the ground)


(burial place)

# Post-reading activities

- Objectives
  - To make the students comprehend the text properly
  - To enable the students to make creative use of language
  - To explore possibilities of further interaction
- Methodology
  - Comprehension test
  - Language exercises
  - Creative activities

# Comprehension test

- Meant to test students' understanding of the text.
- Teacher to set short questions regarding setting, plot, character, event, situations, subject-matter etc.
- Examples:
  - Who asked Mary to go and call the cattle home?
  - Where did Mary go to call the cattle home? Did she go alone?
  - What is a Salmon?
  - What happened to Mary?
  - What did the fishermen take Mary's hair for?
  - Who found her dead body and where?
  - What did they do with the dead body?
  - Why was the foam called cruel and hungry?
  - What do the boatmen still hear across the sands of Dee?

- 
- The teacher next elaborates on the study of textual properties which are important to the particular text.
  - This emphasis helps in better understanding of the text.
  - Examples:
    - Who is the narrator of the text?
    - Are there more than one speaker in the text?
    - Who are these speakers?
    - Why does the poet use more than one speaker in the text?
    - Why is there a narrative shift from the past to the present in the poem?
    - How does this narrative shift contribute to the subject matter of the poem?

# Language exercises

- A variety of language exercises may be introduced for comprehensive development of the linguistic skills of the students.
- Exercises that may be introduced:
  - Antonyms
  - Voice change
  - Narration change
  - Foregrounding



- Antonyms

- Examples:

- Wild (gentle)
- dark (dry)
- rolling (fixed)
- floating (sinking)
- Cruel (kind)
- Hungry (full)





- Voice change

- Examples:

- Call the cattle home
- The rolling mist came and hid the land
- They rowed her across the rolling foam
- Still the boatmen hear her voice



- Narration change

- Examples:

- “O Mary, go and call the cattle home  
And call the cattle home  
And call the cattle home  
Across the sands of Dee !”

- "Oh ! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair -  
A trees of golden hair,  
A drowned maiden's hair  
Above the nets at sea?”



- Foregrounding/ Structural peculiarities

- Repetition of phrases with slight variation for emphasis

- Examples:

- and call the cattle home,  
And call the cattle home,  
And call the cattle home.
- along the sand,  
And o'er and o'er the sand,  
And round and round the sand,
- or floating hair--  
A tress of golden hair,  
A drowned maiden's hair
- across the rolling foam,  
The cruel crawling foam,  
The cruel hungry foam,

# Creative activities

- Helps to enhance students' understanding and appreciation.
- **Rewriting activities**
  - Students express in their own words what they make out of the text.
- **Media Transferring**
  - Students to express the idea of the text in a different media – viz. a film script
- **Role playing**
  - Students to play various roles as dictated by the text.

