



TEACHING W. B. YEATS' 'THE SECOND COMING' : A PROPOSITION ON SELF LEARNING STEPS

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ABSTRACT

W.B. Yeats' 'The Second Coming is a very important poem of modern British poetry . It As we have seen that the current phase of education , across the globe, is giving vent to hybrid mode of teaching . The phase of pandemic has given so much impetus on teaching and learning on-line e-mode.The present paper offers a note on how to learn maximum out of W.B Yeats'' The Second Coming'. The poem provides a vision on time, society, spirituality and futuristic view point . The present study material offers a detailed reading on the text, context and connotations of the poem in question .On the one hand it offers an indicative analysis of the poem , and on the other it suggests the issues of further studies and research in the field concerned. Such self reading materials on the one hand adds value to teaching learning process, on the other hand enrich the learning experiences of the students.

Key Words : W.B.Yeats, The Second Coming , Poetry , British Poetry

INTRODUCTION

As we have seen that the current phase of education , across the globe, is giving vent to hybrid mode of teaching . The phase of pandemic has given so much impetus on teaching and learning on-line e-mode. Keeping it in view developing self containing and self explanatory e reaming materials for students holds value. In this light, the present paper offers an e content / self reading material on This study material is solely and exclusively meant for academic

WASFIA HASAN

1P a g e



purposes and for enhancing teaching and learning. Any other use for economic/commercial purpose is strictly prohibited. The users of the content shall not distribute, disseminate or share it with anyone else and its use is restricted to advancement of individual knowledge. The information provided in this e-content is developed from authentic references, to the best of my knowledge.

The Objectives of Teaching W.B. Yeats' 'The Second Coming':

The modest objective of creating this self reading material for graduation students of the University of Lucknow is given as under :

- It aims at develop ICT resources as e content in Modern British Poetry
- It aims to contribute to formal and non formal education of the stakeholders concerned
- It's aim is to facilitate the e learning of the students of B.A. students in English subject
- It will associate literary studies with behavioral knowledge

Learning Outcome of the proposed E Learning Module :

The proposed E Learning Module aims at inculcating the following issues :

After studying this e content, the learners shall

- Very well comprehend the poem 'The Second Coming'.
- Clearly understand the text, contexts and connotations of the poem.
- They shall make a critical appreciation of W.B. Yeats' poem 'The Second Coming' .
- They can associate the context of the poem , and develop the power of association and expansion of ideas on the themes and issues concerned .

Methodology : The present paper aims at developing a self study material for undergraduate students .In view of providing study material I am providing the text of the poem with glossary . Also a brief note is provided on Critical Appreciation, Main Themes ,Features of Style ,Connotations and thoughts etc. My main aim is to offer almost every solution to intricate points for making learning a soft and pleasant work.

Text of the Poem 'The Second Coming'



Following is the text of the poem taken from authentic sources as given at the end of the paper :

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*

Discussion : Students are advised to read it time and again till they comprehend the work . A select glossary is given below to understand the poem well.

1. Gyre : a circular motion , whirling spiral
2. Ceremony of Innocence : artifacts of civilization . Ceremonies in usual life . Celebration with arts , manners, customs , values, traditions etc.
3. Spiritus Mundi': W.B. Yeats uses it to describe the collective soul of the universe containing the memories of all time. Yeats believed that from 'Spiritus Mundi,' the imagination emanates .
4. The shape with lion's body: It resembles the Sphinx .An ancient Egyptian statue near the Pyramids .Its body is that of lion with human head.



5. Stony Sleep : Centuries of Christianity , sleep of the beast .
6. Bethlehem :The birthplace of Christ

Discussing Main points: Dear students , the main points of the poem are given below . You must read it in coherence with the text and glossary . These points hve been cited from an e content developed by Department of English , University of Lucknow by a teacher there , named Prof R .P.Singh .

1. The time of the poem - just after the First World War.
2. The poem shows the memories of the Easter Rising in Ireland.
3. The revolution is broken out in Russia.
4. There are different trajectories of crises in the world.
5. On socio cultural scale there is a state of flux and chaos.
6. The poem refers to the idea that Jesus will return to Earth towards the end of time to bring justice and order.
7. Yeats does not express a Christian interpretation of the end of the days.
8. Yeats believed in a complex set of ideas to do with ‘gyres’,
9. Gyre refers to cone-shaped spirals representing the essential historical and individual forces offering transitions into new worlds.
10. The first eight lines of the poem offer a complex vision of an apocalypse. Apocalyptic consciousness is pervading throughout .
11. The beginning - "turning and turning in the widening gyre," locates the whole poem inside an expanding gyre,
12. It shows that something is moving and changing,
13. The world will never be the same.
14. With the second line in the text of the poem an uncertain image is visible.
15. In the second section ,Yeats presents a disturbing image of a sphinx ‘out of *Spiritus Mundi*’



16. *Spiritus Mundi* denotes the 'spirit of the world' .
17. In the context of the poem *Spiritus Mundi* refers to Yeats's belief that every mind is linked to a single vast intelligence. It also suggests the storehouse of imagination.
18. "The falcon, has lost touch with its falconer" suggests that the "falcon," which likely represents humanity, has become detached from its "falconer,"
19. This glimpse of the new order after two thousand years of Christianity is not a comforting one
20. The poet concludes the work at a note of astonishment about the nature of this 'rough beast' that 'Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born'

In the light of the above , we find that the main themes of the poem are Humanity ,Criticism of Culture ,Moral dichotomy ,Loss of spirituality ,Cycle of time ,Revelation and Modern Civilization . The structure of the poem operates on so many structural and stylistic features like Symbolism ,Imagery ,Illustrations , Allusions ,Rhythmic and structured order, various figures of speech ,Sounding effects and Conviction in the ordering of the images. A lot of symbols have also been used . In main, they are The Gyre,The Falcon and The falconer,The *Spiritus Mundi*,Darkness Desert and Rough beast

Conclusion : By now the students are familiar with the text, contexts and connotations of the poem. The teacher can give the instruction like this :

Read the poem , and find the answers of the following questions:

1. Yeats was influenced by the mysticism of the East. Do you find any reference of it while reading 'The Second Coming'?
2. Write the views of W B Yeats on modern civilization .
3. Write a note on the imagery in 'The Second Coming'.
4. Write a critical appreciation of 'The Second Coming'.
5. Evaluate W B Yeats as a modern poet with reference to 'The Second Coming'.
6. Do you think 'The Second Coming' is a poem of apocalypse? Argue in favour of your answer .
7. Explain the following :



Surely some revelation is at hand;

Surely the Second Coming is at hand.

The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out

When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*

8. Explain the following :

Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it

Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

The darkness drops again; but now I know

That twenty centuries of stony sleep

Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,

Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Assignment : Assignment and assessment are the integral part of any teaching learning exercise. The following assignment is very useful:

1. Write a note on the theme and style of the poem 'The Second Coming' i.
2. Read the socio cultural life of the phase when the poem was written. Do you find some reverberations of Spanish Flu while analyzing 'The Second Coming'? Write a short note in 250 words . (The teacher shall evaluate it out of 10 marks.)

This is a very significant poem stylistically as well. To cite Abdul- Razzaq Darweesh Abdul-Razzaq 's research paper "William Butler Yeats' "The Second Coming":A Stylistic Study in Terms of Collocation". Published in Journal of Basrah Researches (Humanities Series), we can find that,"W.B.Yeats exploited the lexical sets successfully to achieve his aim in criticizing the modern civilization and the absence of the role of Christianity in the society."

The learned teachers can make some interesting exercises

Conclusion :

WASFIA HASAN

6P a g e



W.B. Yeats' 'The Second Coming' is a very significant poem. It offers a note on the time, society, spirituality and futuristic view point. The present study material offers a detailed reading on the text, context and connotations of the poem in question. On the one hand it offers an indicative analysis of the poem, and on the other it suggests the issues of further studies and research in the field concerned. Such self reading materials on the one hand adds value to teaching learning process, on the other hand enrich the learning experiences of the students.

Suggested Readings: The following is a suggested reading list for students :

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W.B. Yeats' 'The Second Coming' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IY2oIsA4c7k>

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Weblink :

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(Disclaimer and Acknowledgment : The author of the present paper has referred the above sources for building her ideas)