

Critical Thinking Skills in English Language and Literature

Debabrata Bagui,

Assistant Professor, RIE Bhubaneswar

Abstract: Critical thinking may play a vital role in enhancing linguistic skills and in interactive approaches. The act of asking questions is central to critical thinking. When analysing an academic text, one should always ask oneself what the work is attempting to prove, how it is attempting to prove it, and why it is attempting to prove it. One must seek to identify the premise on which the author's logic is based in each of these considerations. The study shows that the way the experimental group was taught was effective in helping them think critically about books. The students started to move from asking what the book says to asking what it means, why the writer wrote it that way, whether they agree with it and how it is related to life. However, the study also shows that critical thinking is complex and cannot be fully developed by understanding the main ideas. The students need to keep practising how to argue based on evidence, read and analyse the tools the writer used, compare different understandings and explain why they think what they do.

Keywords: Critical thinking, literary study, language pedagogy in India

1. INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking is the process that questions ideas and is a way to find out if a claim is true, false, or partially true. "It is a self-guided, self-disciplined thinking which attempts to reason at the highest level of quality in a fair-minded way" (Mathews and Lowe). Teachers need to take a directive role and can initiate and guide critical thinking. In English classes, critical thinking can be used as a medium. It is particularly appropriate for the richness of material and for the approaches which are interactive. It may play a role in enhancing linguistic skills and in interactive approaches. The act of asking questions is central to critical thinking. When analysing an academic text, one should always ask oneself what the work is attempting to prove, how it is attempting to prove it, and why it is attempting to prove it. One must seek to identify the premise on which the author's logic is based in each of these considerations.

In a seminal study on critical thinking and education in 1941, Edward Glaser defines critical thinking as follows: "The ability to think critically, as conceived in this volume, involves:

- (1) an attitude of being disposed to consider thoughtfully the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experiences,
- (2) knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning, and
- (3) some skill in applying those methods.

Critical thinking calls for a persistent effort to examine any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the evidence that supports it and the further conclusions to which it tends. It also generally requires ability to recognize problems, to find workable means for meeting those problems, to gather and marshal pertinent information, to recognize unstated assumptions and values, to comprehend and use language with accuracy, clarity, and discrimination, to interpret data, to appraise evidence and evaluate arguments, to recognize the existence (or non-existence) of logical relationships between propositions, to draw warranted conclusions and generalizations, to put to test the conclusions and generalizations at which one arrives, to reconstruct one's patterns of beliefs based on wider



experience, and to render accurate judgments about specific things and qualities in everyday life.” Richard Paul and Linda Elder provide the features of a well-cultivated critical thinker. Such a person

- raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely;
- gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively
comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards;
- thinks with an open mind - within alternative systems of thought, recognising and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and
- communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.

Paul and Elder think that Critical thinking is, in short, self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It presupposes assent to rigorous standards of excellence and mindful command of their use. It entails effective communication and problem-solving abilities and a commitment to overcome our native egocentrism and sociocentrism. In his book *The Advancement of Learning*, Francis Bacon argued for the importance of studying the world empirically. Descartes wrote what might be called the second text in critical thinking, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*. In it, Descartes argued for the need for a special systematic disciplining of the mind to guide it in thinking. In 1906, William Graham Sumner published a landmark study of the foundations of sociology and anthropology, *Folkways*, in which he documented the tendency of the human mind to think sociocentrically. According to a study done by Birjandi and Bagherkazemi (2010), a critical thinker has the following characteristics:

- problems are identified by them, and relevant solutions are dealt with,
- valid and invalid inferences are recognised by them,
- decisions and judgments are suspended by them when there is not enough evidence to prove it
- the difference between logical reasoning and justifying is perceived by them
- relevant questions are asked by them to see if their students have understood
- statements and arguments are evaluated
- lack of understanding can be accepted by them
- they have developed a sense of curiosity
- clear criteria for analysing ideas are defined
- he is a good listener and gives others feedback
- he believes that critical thinking is a never-ending process that needs to be evaluated
- judgment is suspended by them until all facts have been collected
- they seek evidence for the assumptions to be advocated
- opinions are adjusted by them when there are some new facts
- incorrect information is easily rejected by them.

Ennis (1995) defined Critical Thinking as “reasonably reflective thinking that focuses on deciding what to believe or do.” Critical thinking encourages people to learn how to evaluate situations, draw inferences, and reach conclusions based on evidence from their surroundings. According to Hatcher (2000), Critical Thinking is the type of thought that intends to reach a decision on an issue only after evaluating all of the alternatives, arguments, and available evidence related to a fact. According to Fisher (2001), Critical Thinking entails actively, persistently, and

carefully building knowledge in light of foundations that underpin further conclusions. The assumptions generated by the definitions above have significant implications for the teaching and learning of a foreign/second language. In the article “The Use of Critical Thinking Skills in Literary Analysis”, Celia Esplugas argues that a successful class in literature should not merely confine itself to traditional classroom methodology in which students follow the teacher’s cues. It is observed that the instructor should enable the students to exercise their critical thinking skills in interpreting a text.

The present research was conducted through a controlled group and an experimental group consisting of two batches of students (total 50) from B.A. B.Ed (Integrated) studying Honours in English in the Regional Institute of Education, Bhubaneswar.

2. TOOLS FOR COLLECTING DATA

Tool for Intervention

Problem identification: Problem identification can be accomplished through diagnosing the situation properly and recognising the underlying problems. It includes the skill of ‘observation’.

Analysis: Analysis usually refers to a close examination of something that may include a situation. Etymologically, it is derived from a Greek word that means “an untying” or “a breaking-up”. Therefore, as the word suggests, it includes breaking down a complex structure into simpler parts to gain a better understanding of it.

Reasoning: Reasoning includes making use of personal experiences and perceptions to find viable solutions.

Evaluating: This includes studying the potential reasons and solutions, researching and investigating all the possibilities, seeking out opinions of others, and perspectives about the issue, etc.

Decision making and problem solving: Decision making includes taking a fine look at the pros and cons of each solution and making choices by identifying a decision.

Evaluation: In continuation to the test taken to assess evaluation skills, individuals will be asked to give their final verdict and trace the journey ahead.

Tool for Evaluation

A focus group discussion, semi-structured interview, open-ended questionnaire, and essay writing and other literary devices were used for the purpose of triangulation and data collection.

Tools of Data Analysis

An evaluative pattern was developed to ascertain the analysis of the data.

Parameters	Indicators
Problem identification	Problem identification capacity may be assessed by a piece of literary excerpt that presents a conflict. Upon reading the excerpt, they may be asked to identify the conflict, the instances that build on to that conflict, the causes and the possible consequences.
Analysis	An act has multiple causes and themes that can be described from multiple vantage points.
Reasoning	Appears as an analytical ability test that tests the learners’ ability to properly study a given information and find patterns or make inferences based on the study.
Evaluating	An individual’s reasoning is hypothetically putting them in a simulated situation and asking them to recognise the

	various solutions, their pros and their cons and negotiate their way through the problem.
Decision making and problem solving	Providing a hypothetical problem (perhaps even associated with contemporary and historical issues, as the factor of emotion will be strongly influential) and possible solutions. The individual needs to be given a few days' time to gather information and opinions. Their task will be to identify the pros and cons of each of the given task.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The first set of questions was on the poem “Kubla Khan” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It was asked why the woman is wailing for the demon lover. In fact, in the text, readers find amid a tumult, in the place “as holy and enchanted / As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted / By woman wailing to her demon-lover,” Kubla heard “ancestral voices” bringing prophesies of war. It is narrated how the shadow of the pleasure dome floated on the waves, where the mingled sounds of the fountain and the caves could be heard. “It was a miracle of rare device,” the speaker says, “A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!” The students of the experimental group nicely elaborate the picture and point out how a contrast has been presented between a bright and beautiful garden and a haunted, mysterious place.

The second question was: Why does the poet aspire to build the pleasure dome in the air? The pleasure dome, indeed, dominates “Kubla Khan”. Besides, the setting of the poem is also minutely and vividly described by Coleridge. There is a description of a sacred river Alph. It runs through ‘caverns measureless to man’ down to a sunless sea. The area through which it flows is full of winding streams, beautiful gardens, ancient forests and aromatic trees. The students of the experiential group aptly write about the relation between the dome and the structure of the mind – the navigable passages of the unconscious in the human psyche. Next, they were asked that while “Miracle itself being rare is yet mentioned as rare in the stanza. Why?” When readers go through the text, they find that the picture created in line 36 is an absolute miracle. The two opposing forces of nature, i.e. the sun's heat and ice, are in perfect balance and harmony. Coleridge provides a sense of contrast in the text and may be referring to his theory that a balance between opposing forces is needed for poetic imagination. Students from the experimental group are found elaborating the point and writing about the floating structure and the presence of the sacred river. The next question was interesting: “What historical aspects in Kubla Khan’s life make him look forward to war?” It is known that the poem “Kubla Khan” was composed one night after the poet experienced an opium-influenced dream after reading a work describing Shangdu (the summer capital of the Yuan dynasty) founded by Kubla Khan, the Mongol Emperor. He was almost 12 when Genghis Khan passed away. Kubla succeeded his elder brother in 1260, but had to defeat his younger brother Ariq in the Toluid Civil War lasting until 1264. Kubla's real power was, however, limited to the Yuan Empire. If one considers the Mongol Empire at that time as a whole, his area reached from the Pacific Ocean to the Black Sea. In 1271, Kubla established the Yuan dynasty, which ruled over present-day China, Mongolia, Korea, and some adjacent areas. He assumed the role of Emperor of China. By 1279, the Mongol conquest of the Song dynasty was over. Kubla became the first non-Han emperor. The controlled group, although it fared well here, the answers from the experimental one appear more informative. The next question was: “How would you make that dome? Why?” After a careful examination of the poem, it is revealed that Kubla set up a really beautiful palace – a stately pleasure dome. Readers find there a description of a woman playing a dulcimer. If the speaker could revive her song, he could fill the pleasure dome with music. At the end, there is a description of an audience's reaction to the song in the language of religious ecstasy. Some students of the experimental group have provided the reply in terms of joy, happiness and recreation. Then, they were asked to explain and elaborate the matter in an interdisciplinary manner. In fact, the poem “Kubla Khan” is an edifice of the dream or vision of the poet about a grand palace and its magical surroundings. It is an outcome of a dream-soaked imagination. “Kubla Khan” is a procession of images coloured in rainbow hues and expressed in the language of hunting melody. Outwardly it seems to have no allegory, no story, no moral. The students of the experimental group replied to the question in terms of creativity and poetic imagination.

Students were asked to write answers to the questions on "Ulysses", which is a poem in blank verse by the Victorian poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson. The first question on the poem was: "Is Ulysses questioning the value of justice in human society?" Tennyson was the Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom during Queen Victoria's reign. His poem "Ulysses", Odysseus' name in Latin, captures the dissatisfaction of the hero with life in Ithaca after his return, and his desire to set sail again. The poem expresses the feeling of going ahead and facing the struggle of life in a brilliant way. Readers find how the hero found meaning of life and happiness, not in a stable life, but in his journeys; how he enjoys being in the dark, troubled sea of life. The students of the experimental group highlight the aspect of stupidity and lack of civilisation among the people in Ithaca. The next question was "Is Ulysses questioning his own identity?" In the poem, Ulysses says that there is little point in his staying home. He dislikes being "by this still hearth" with his old wife. He is not interested in doling out rewards and punishments for the people who live in his kingdom. He realises that his travels and tussles have shaped who he is: "I am a part of all that I have met". The students of the experimental group show their realisation of the identity of the hero as a king and how he shows his interest in travel after handing over the responsibilities to his son. The next question was: "What is Tennyson's idea of oblivion through the lens of Ulysses?" In the poem, in the final stanza, Ulysses talks to the mariners with whom he has worked, travelled, and faced the storms of life. He realises that although he and the sailors are old, they still can do something great and notable before their death when "the long day wanes." He motivates them to make use of their experience and old age. "'tis not too late to seek a newer world." He declares in front of them that his aim is to move forward "beyond the sunset" until his last day. They may meet the warrior Achilles; reach the paradise of perpetual summer described in Greek mythology or the "Happy Isles." Students of the experimental group have pointed out the matter. The next question was: Why does Ulysses desire to leave behind all and move into a world of anonymity and adventure? Through the poem "Ulysses" the speaker expresses his own attitudes towards life. The figure of Ulysses interested in travelling goes to an unknown land of fruit and flowers in "The Lotos Eaters". Students of the experimental group point out the nature of the speaker and his desire to move to the utmost bound of human thought. The next question was: "Is Tennyson's "Ulysses" basically the expression of a personality or of a philosophy? Substantiate your answer." According to the poet, someone can become a greater human being through voyages of life and experience. It is highlighted that the material things of domestic comfort, safety and security - home, family and friends cannot stop Ulysses. The answers of the students of the experimental group are of varied nature. Sometimes it is found that the mixture of both philosophy and personality is highlighted; sometimes it is the philosophy which is focused in comparison to the other. As a response to the question: What is your take on Ulysses' decision to leave his responsibility behind and pursue adventure? - students of the experimental group justify the points raised by Ulysses. Tennyson here selects a myth from ancient Greece. He used the story of Ulysses to inspire a desire for discovery, adventure and exploration among his contemporaries. He used the story of Ulysses myth several times to express his own understanding towards life. The last question on the poem was: What would you have done if you were struck in a dilemma between your responsibilities and your passions? For Ulysses, it is forward motion in life that is important. Students of the experimental group have made their subjective view towards the issue -prioritising passion is found along with maintaining a balance between responsibility and desire.

Another poem on which there was a discussion was "The Second Coming" written by Irish poet W. B. Yeats in 1919. Here the poet uses Christian imagery regarding the Apocalypse. It is considered a major work of modernist poetry. Second Coming allegorically describes the atmosphere of post-war Europe. The first question on the poem was "Why do you think the falcon cannot hear the falconer?" The picture in the poem, in fact, represents how the ordinary people are no longer paying heed to the old social and political leaders. They are listening to and following the new movement leaders instead. Yeats believes this will be the cause of the downfall of society. The students of the experimental group show their grasp of the matter. The second question was "Is Yeats trying to paint a dystopian picture?" in the text it is found that when the speaker thinks of "The Second Coming," he is troubled by "a vast image of the Spiritus Mundi", or the collective spirit of mankind: somewhere in the desert, a giant sphinx ("A shape with lion body and the head of a man, / A gaze as blank and pitiless as the sun") is moving, while the shadows of desert birds reel about it. The darkness appears before the speaker's sight. He knows that the sphinx's twenty centuries of "stony sleep" have been made a nightmare by the motions of "a rocking cradle." And what "rough beast," he wonders,

“its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?” Students of the experimental group have mentioned the dark picture depicted by the poet in the poem. The next was on the interpretation of “The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity.” The speaker in “The Second Coming” describes a fearful, nightmarish scene. Here readers find the falcon, turning in a widening “gyre” (spiral), cannot hear the falconer; they observe how “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold”; the effect of anarchy is loosed upon the world; how “The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned.” The best people, the speaker says, lack all conviction, but the worst “are full of passionate intensity.” Students of the experimental group have explained the lines. One of them writes that this shows people are passionate about destruction. The point, however, has been described by the students of the controlled group also. In the answer to the next question, “What is meant by the best lack all conviction?” students of the experimental group write about the passion in the minds of people. In fact, “The best lack all conviction” indicates that the best/good people do not have strong beliefs and/or will not act. “While the worst/Are full of passionate intensity” means that the worst/bad people are passionate and active. The next question was: “What exactly is the poet trying to compare with similes?” “The Second Coming” is a magnificent statement about the contrary forces at work in history. It is about a conflict between the modern world and the ancient world. The aesthetic experience of its passionate language is powerful enough to ensure its value and its importance in Yeats’s work as a whole. Many students of the experimental group are not found confident here, while in the answer script of the controlled group it is highlighted that the poet is trying to express the ability of the poet to visualise a horrible picture of the world. The next question was “What specifically is the meaning of second coming that has been contextually used in- “Surely some revelation is at hand; / Surely the Second Coming is at hand.” But what sort of Second Coming will it be? It is almost being twenty centuries, or two thousand years since Christ came to Earth in human form and was crucified. Now what ‘rough beast’ will be revealed? Perhaps it will not be a Christ in human form. Perhaps it is going to be something altogether different from the previous event. Students of the experimental group have mentioned how, in the belief of the poet, the world is at a crucial juncture, a very critical point of human history. The last question was “In what context is Bethlehem projected as a place to be reborn?” “The Second Coming” is alluding to the Book of Revelation. The “rough beast” is the Anti-Christ. The scene is set for the showdown and the Second Coming. In the answers of the students of the experimental group, this has been explained as “the end of a religion”.

The analysis of students’ responses shows that the experimental group demonstrated significant features of critical thinking. Students in the group were able to think critically, especially when it came to interpretation, analysis, evaluation and relating literary ideas to broader human experiences.

1. Ability to interpret ideas beyond the literal meaning: Students in the experimental group were able to move beyond just talking about what the poems say. They tried to understand the underlying ideas in the poems. For example, when they read “Ulysses”, they saw that Ulysses was not happy with his life at home and wanted to keep exploring and having experiences. They understood that the poem is not about a king who wants to travel but about what life means and what people want to achieve.

2. Development of understanding of character: The students were able to analyse Ulysses as a complex person, not just a hero. They saw that Ulysses was questioning his identity and connected his identity to his experiences. They also understood that Ulysses had roles, such as being a king, husband, father and adventurer and that he wanted to pass on his responsibilities to his son so he could keep exploring.

3. Ability to recognise contradictions and tensions: The responses from the groups showed that they could see the internal conflicts and contradictions in the poems. They identified tensions between responsibility and personal desire, security and adventure, old age and continued aspiration, social duty and individual freedom and stability and change.

4. Evidence of subjective thinking: When students were asked about Ulysses' decision to leave his responsibilities and go on an adventure, they gave personal and evaluative responses. They did not just repeat what

Ulysses said. Instead took a position on his decision. They also gave viewpoints when asked what they would do if they were in a similar situation.

5. Ability to distinguish personality from philosophy: The question of whether “Ulysses” is about a person or a philosophy got different responses from the experimental group. Some students focused on the personality and the love of adventure of Ulysses while others looked at the ideas about human life and experience. Some responses saw a combination of both.

6. Understanding of philosophical concepts: Students were able to engage with abstract concepts like identity, mortality, experience and the meaning of life. They connected Ulysses' desire to explore worlds to the desire to go beyond human limits and reach the "utmost bound of human thought."

7. Ability to connect texts with human experience: The responses showed that students were able to connect the literary situations to broader questions about human existence. They saw Ulysses' dilemma as a problem between duty and personal aspiration, not just an issue for an ancient king.

8. Stronger engagement with social contexts: In their responses to *The Second Coming*, students demonstrated an understanding of the historical and social implications of the poem. They saw the image of the falcon and falconer as a breakdown in the relationship between people and authority.

9. Ability to interpret symbolism and imagery: The experimental group was able to interpret symbols in “*The Second Coming*”, such as the falcon and the falconer, the widening gyre and the "rough beast." They explained the meaning within the context of the poem.

10. Understanding of disorder and moral crisis: Students were able to recognise the significance of the statement by Yeats about the best people lacking conviction and the worst being full of passion. They understood the contrast between good people and passionate, active destructive forces.

11. Ability to identify the crisis represented in “*The Second Coming*”: The experimental group showed a good grasp of the poem's representation of a critical turning point in human history. They recognised that Yeats was imagining a different historical and spiritual event.

12. Evidence of interpretation: The experimental-group students did not always give the same standard interpretation. Their responses were varied, especially when it came to the personality, philosophy, responsibility and passion of Ulysses.

13. Critical thinking was stronger in thematic questions: The students were more confident when questions required them to identify the central theme, character motivation, social situation, philosophical concern, historical context or implications of an image or statement.

14. Difficulty with literary and figurative analysis: The findings showed that students were less confident when questions required sophisticated analysis of poetic technique and figurative language. They had trouble analysing similes and poetic comparisons.

15. Experimental-group performance was not uniformly superior: The responses demonstrated that the experimental group was not better in every question. For example, the controlled group did better on the question about similes in *The Second Coming*.

16. Evidence of movement from recall towards higher-order thinking: The responses showed a movement beyond remembering and understanding towards analysis, interpretation, evaluation, application, perspective-taking, reflection and synthesis.

17. Greater willingness to question than accept: The experimental group was encouraged to treat literary texts as objects of inquiry rather than sources of fixed answers. They were willing to question and interrogate the text rather than just accepting one interpretation.

18. Critical thinking through comparison of perspectives: The experimental group was able to compare different perspectives and think critically about the literary texts. They were able to see that literary interpretation involves questioning, reasoning and justification, rather than just finding the "correct" meaning. The students' answers show that they can see ways to understand things. For example, when it comes to choosing between doing what you have to do and doing what you love, the students said you should pick what you really want to do and try to make it happen; and try to find a balance between doing what you have to do and doing what you want to do.

The students also looked at the personality of Ulysses. They realised that it could be about a person or about ideas. This shows that they can think in ways, which is important for critical thinking. The way the students answered the questions shows that they were able to think for themselves and share their ideas. They were not just limited to what the teacher said the book meant. The questions asked them to think, discuss and take a stand. The students' answers about the choices in Ulysses are especially important because they show that the students can move from just understanding the book to thinking about how it relates to their own life and what is right and wrong. Overall, the students in the group got better at thinking critically about books. They could understand the ideas, look at the characters, find the problems, understand the symbols, connect the book to what was happening in the world, think about whether the characters made good choices and share their own thoughts. The best evidence of thinking was that they could question what they thought, see things from different perspectives, explain why they thought something, connect what they read to real life and understand big ideas. However, they did not do well on the question about poetic language, which means they need to work more on understanding the details of the book and the tools the writer used.

The study shows that the way the experimental group was taught was effective in helping them think critically about books. The students started to move from asking what the book says to asking what it means, why the writer wrote it that way, whether they agree with it and how it relates to life. However, the study also shows that critical thinking is complex and cannot be fully developed by understanding the main ideas. The students need to keep practising how to argue based on evidence, read and analyse the tools the writer used, compare different understandings and explain why they think what they do.

The realisation of critical thinking skills and their implementation of their development among the learners are worth doing to improve students' competence. These can be incorporated in English lessons as long as teachers do collaborative activities providing students sufficient exposure to the thinking process and meaning negotiation. The variety of classroom activities not only caters to students' communicative competence, but also creates a lively learning atmosphere.

4. Appendix (Tools for the Study)

KUBLA KHAN or, A Vision in a Dream. A Fragment. (Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

1. Problem identification:

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!

A savage place! as holy and enchanted

As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted

By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

Q.: Why is the woman wailing for the demon lover?

2. Analysis:

The shadow dome of pleasure

Floated midway on the waves;

Where was heard the mingled measure

From the fountain and the caves.
 It was a miracle of rare device
 A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice!
 [...] Could I revive within me
 Her symphony and song,
 To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
 That with music loud and long,
 I would build that dome in air,
 That sunny dome! those caves of ice!

Q.: Why does the poet aspire to build the pleasure dome in air?

Q.: Miracle itself being rare, is yet mentioned as rare in the stanza. Why?

3. Reasoning:

Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
 Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
 And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
 And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
 Ancestral voices prophesying war!

Q.: What historical aspects in Kubla Khan's life make him look forward to war?

4. Evaluation:

A fine way to evaluate this will be to give a hypothetical problem (perhaps even associated with contemporary and historical issues, as the factor of emotion will be strongly influential) and a possible solution.

Q.: How would you make that dome? Why? (It may be related to decision making as well as reasoning)

5. Decision Making

1. Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
 Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
 Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
 2. And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
 His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
 Weave a circle round him thrice,
 And close your eyes with holy dread,
 For he on honeydew hath fed,
 And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Q.: How to explain and elaborate it in an interdisciplinary manner?

ULYSSES (Sir Alfred Tennyson)

1. Problem identification

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

Q.: Is Ulysses questioning the value of justice in human society? (skeptical)

Q.: Is Ulysses questioning his own identity?

2. Analysis

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.

Q.: What is Tennyson's idea of oblivion through the lens of Ulysses?

3. Reasoning

Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.

Q.: Why does Ulysses desire to leave behind all and move into a world of anonymity and adventure?

4. Evaluation

Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

Q.: Is Tennyson's "Ulysses" basically the expression of a personality or of a philosophy? Substantiate your answer.

Q.: What is your take on Ulysses' decision to leave his responsibility behind and pursue adventure?

5. Decision Making

Q.: What would you have done if you were struck in a dilemma between your responsibilities and your passions?

THE SECOND COMING (William Butler Yeats)

1. Problem identification

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;

Q.: Why do you think the falcon cannot hear the falconer?

Q.: Is Yeats trying to paint a dystopian picture?

2. Analysis

The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Q. Interpret the lines.

3. Reasoning

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.

Q.: What exactly is the poet trying to compare with these similes?

4. Evaluation

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.

Q.: What specifically is the meaning of the Second Coming that has been contextually used in these lines?

5. Decision Making

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?

Q.: In what context is Bethlehem projected as a place to be reborn?

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