Cultivating Soft Skills Through Poetry: A Textual Analysis of Grade Ten Textbook

Dr. Narendra Raj Paneru
nrajpaneru@gmail.com
Tribhuvan University, Sanothimi Campus

Abstract

This study explores how poetry from grade 10 English textbook in Nepal can be utilized to enhance key soft skills for the 21st century in students. This study employed a textual analysis of selected poems of grade 10 and found the avenues for cultivating soft skills such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, leadership, empathy, adaptability and emotional intelligence. Despite the lack of explicit texts and tasks targeting these soft skills in the textbook, the poems' composition and thematic content, and pedagogical strategies such as discussions, role-playing, reflective presentations, and group work enhance the students' cognitive, emotional, and ethical growth resulting in cultivating soft skills. Furthermore, the study highlights that the poetry and poetry-based pedagogy into ELT classrooms can simultaneously enhance the linguistic proficiency and soft skills as well as provide the insights for curriculum designing, textbook writing and effective classroom teaching.

Keywords: *Soft skills, literature, language teaching, critical thinking, teamwork, communication skills, leadership.*

Introduction

Soft skills have emerged as indispensable competencies for success in the 20th-century workplace in the rapidly developing global economy (Dean & East, 2019). Moreover, these skills enable people to address the intricacies of their social, professional, spiritual, and personal situations. In this sense, soft skills have become more important in today's workforce since they help people succeed in their jobs and are essential to succeed in both academic and professional environments worldwide (Hussein, 2024). In line with this transformation, contemporary educational systems are not just instilling knowledge into the students; most education systems focus on holistic skills development. The evolution witnessed is from the traditional 3Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic) to the 4Cs which include communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, indicating a change in paradigm shift (Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023).

Soft Skills in English Curriculum

This transition in education is manifested in English language teaching too, where the focus of teaching-learning has shifted from proficiency in basic language skills; i.e.; listening,

speaking, reading, and writing along with language systems such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation to 21st-century skills; i.e.; effective communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. Such paradigm shift in English language teaching has enthused teacher educators to explore how to incorporate soft skills in language courses and redesign innovative and novel pedagogical approaches (Paschal & Gougou, 2022). In this sense, integrating soft skills in the English language has become a core element of preparing the learners for the real world rather than an auxiliary objective for English language teaching. Literature, with its diverse nature in contents and genres, is a crucial resource in ELT classrooms and contributes to language and soft skills development in learners (Islam & Das, 2023).

Indeed, this shift on the pedagogical and curricular level worldwide has both problems and opportunities within the context of Nepal's English curriculum. Here, the secondary-level English curriculum now recognizes English as a global language which is compulsory in all school and even university levels and basically, covers access to educational, technical, and knowledge resources (Curriculum Development Center, 2079 B.S.). The objective of this curriculum is to keep the students prepared for real-life communication, while teachers should be able to equip them with soft skills such as effective communication, efficient collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity to pave the way for the challenges that will come in the 21st century. However, conventional teaching methods and digitized forms of communication at the global level have become added burdens for language teachers in teaching that language for that purpose (Larson & Miller, 2011).

The Potential of Literature in Language Teaching

Conventional language teaching methods often prioritize grammatical accuracy and vocabulary acquisition over holistic skill development, which is now superficial (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Chang, 2011; Schurz & Coumel, 2020). Ironically, existing curricula and classroom pedagogies frequently overlook the potential of literature to serve as a tool for language development and fostering soft skills (Paran, 2008) and very often exclude it from EFL courses (Spack, 1985). Despite these limitations, literature offers a promising pathway to bridge these gaps by addressing linguistic and soft skills development.

Studies suggest that literary texts across cultures and languages encourage readers to uncover hidden meanings and interpret the context often hidden behind the visible text. For example, the allegorical plot of *Animals Farm* by George Orwell unveils the power dynamics in the socio-political contexts (Hasan et al., 2023). Similarly, the poem *Parrot in the Cage* (*Pinjara ko Suga* in Nepali) by Lekhnath Paudyal invites readers to reflect on the parrot's confinement— born free but now restricted by the cage—and consider how this parallels the human condition, constrained by numerous limitations (Khanal, 2022). When such texts are used as language input sources in an ELT class, they encourage students to foster linguistic proficiency and enhance their intellectual and soft skills organically (Azmi, 2013). Hence, soft skills can be effectively cultivated in learners via various sorts of literary texts. However, despite the growing recognition of soft skills' importance, their integration into ELT remains inconsistent (Boonmoh & Chanchay, 2024).

Literature in language classrooms has been essentially taught for intellectual, linguistic, and aesthetic enhancement (Van, 2009; Regmi, 2022). Most of the research works tend to have been focused on broad pedagogical advantages while not having much inclination towards

satisfying specific skills development through literary genres. However, so far, soft skills integration in ELT classrooms using literature is not emphasized and remains underestimated in academic literature. However, the findings of some studies support the argument that literature in the classroom can nurture soft skills in students such as creative and critical thinking (Lazar 1993; Alwi, et al., 2013; Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016; Azmi et al., 2018) and teamwork (Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003). Students' ability to interpret the symbols, explore themes, and estimate characters' motives enhances their critical thinking capacity (Lazar, 1993). These examples highlight the untapped potential of literature in ELT to promote essential competencies. Improving communication skills, literature serves as an excellent medium for developing communication skills, both oral and written. Classroom activities, such as group discussions, role-playing, and essay writing, allow learners to articulate their thoughts and express ideas effectively. Paran (2008) highlights how literature-based tasks encourage learners to engage in meaningful dialogue, negotiate interpretations, and refine their expressive abilities. For instance, poetry analysis allows students to explore nuanced meanings and share their unique perspectives, fostering confidence in communication.

According to Ilankumaran and Deepa (2018), poetry fosters critical thinking, language development, rhythm, rhyme, sentence patterns, cultural understanding, and memorable learning experiences through its musical and rhythmic qualities. Incorporating literary texts such as poetry into language teaching has emerged as a promising approach for developing learners' soft skills, such as critical thinking, empathy, communication, and teamwork. Its rich and diverse content provides a platform for exploring complex human experiences, encouraging students to reflect, analyze, and engage collaboratively, thereby nurturing these essential 21st-century skills (Regmi, 2022).

Critical thinking, a vital soft skill, can be effectively cultivated through literary analysis. Literary texts often present ambiguous situations and multifaceted characters, prompting learners to interpret, evaluate, and question meanings. According to Khatib et al. (2011), literature challenges students to go beyond surface-level comprehension, engaging in inferential and evaluative thinking. Amer (2003) conducted a study in ESL classrooms where short stories were used to enhance students' critical thinking. The findings revealed that learners developed better problem-solving skills by analyzing characters' decisions and predicting outcomes. Moreover, activities such as identifying themes or debating alternative interpretations further deepen students' cognitive engagement.

Similarly, empathy, a vital interpersonal skill, is nurtured through exposure to diverse cultural, social, and emotional experiences in literature. Nussbaum (1997) argues that reading literary narratives fosters emotional intelligence by enabling readers to vicariously experience the lives of others. For example, novels and short stories addressing social justice or personal struggles allow learners to step into the characters' shoes, understand their emotions and appreciate different perspectives. Moya and Pineda's (2020) research highlights literature's role in fostering empathy among EFL learners by allowing them to relate to characters' emotional journeys. It amplifies teamwork through collaborative activities. In the same way, group activities such as dramatization and collaborative text analysis or even project-based learning require students to cooperate, share duties, and handle issues constructively. Hall (2005) argued that group projects in literature create the necessary collaborative skills for the students: those needed for working in groups, in and outside of work. Students must use a combination of

different means to carry out assignments, including dramatization; cooperative text analysis; and project-based learning.

In the discussion of challenges and pedagogy, even though literature is a huge potential resource for developing soft skills, its effectiveness depends on proper text selection and the design of instruction. Van (2009) emphasizes age and culture-appropriate text selection for students to optimize their engagement and understanding. Along with guided discussions and various other reflective assignments, students can absorb literary insights concerning real-life situations. Scaffolded learning should also be provided by teachers because circumstances often require background knowledge and vocabulary support to fill linguistic gaps. Studies prove that integrative literature in language teaching could produce transformational learning experiences and develop critical thinking, empathy, communication, and needed teamwork (see Khatib et al., 2011; Babaee & Yahya, 2014; Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016; Darmawati et al., 2020). Many empirical studies reveal the very idea of literature as the most fluid medium for soft skill development. This makes literature one of the most appropriate and relevant tools for modern language education. Thoughtful implementation of literature can unfurl the frontiers of languages and better equip learners for personal and professional development.

Another area not much explored is the specific genres of literature in the areas of targeted soft skill acquisition. For instance, plays facilitate collaboration and verbal communication quite naturally as they are performance-based activities, while using poetry resonates with empathic involvement, drawing out rather profound feelings, as associated with Mohammed and Ozdamli (2024). Yet controlled systematic analyses comparing different genres for soft skill development are scanty. Bridging this gap would yield a more complex picture for the educator on maximizing the literary selections for total learning.

These early dramatic representations of the English language in learning practices in Nepal, where it is a crucial medium for global contact and academic persuasions, revolve around rote learning and grammar precision on the part of the students. Probably, the shorter the demand for soft skills may be local or global, but this is steadily spiraling up in demand in various job markets. Literature in Nepalese ELT has the potential to facilitate the incorporation of critical thinking, intercultural understanding, and empathy into this fading process, thus preparing students for the challenges of a rapidly globalizing world. For instance, Nepalese folklore can go hand in hand with global literary classics to make learning contextually relevant while developing skills, including global soft skills in language.

Soft Skills Across Literary Genres: An Overview

The major purpose of literature teaching is to make the reader critically think about the context beyond the text, which closely aligns with teaching soft skills.

Poetry: Fostering Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

Poetry's rich, emotional content and its reliance on metaphor, rhythm, and symbolism make it an ideal genre for cultivating empathy and emotional intelligence. As Miall and Kuiken (1994) argue, the emotional resonance of poetry can encourage students to connect with characters' emotions and reflect on their feelings. The thematic depth of poems often delves into complex social and moral issues—such as identity, loss, love, and injustice—which can stimulate empathy by challenging students to consider different perspectives and situations. For example, Maya Angelou's *Still I Rise* (1978) explores themes of resilience, self-worth, and defiance in the

face of oppression (Tahir & Bilal, 2024). The poem's defiant tone and affirming message can encourage students to engage with themes of social justice and resilience, fostering an understanding of marginalized experiences. In the classroom, discussing this poem allows students to explore issues related to identity, race, and personal strength, while also encouraging them to practice empathy as they engage with the emotions expressed in the text. Moreover, Smith (2000) emphasizes that the interpretive nature of poetry challenges students to critically analyze figurative language and explore deeper meanings, thereby developing both critical thinking and emotional intelligence.

Novels: Encouraging Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving, and Leadership

Novels provide a more extensive narrative structure that allows for in-depth character development and the exploration of social, moral, and philosophical issues. This makes them an excellent genre for fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership skills. Novels frequently involve complex plotlines, ethical dilemmas, and character interactions that require readers to judge, consider consequences, and weigh multiple viewpoints. For instance, George Orwell's 1984 (1949) presents a dystopian society in which characters confront oppressive political regimes and struggle with the concept of freedom. The novel forces readers to critically assess the nature of power and control, making it an excellent resource for encouraging students to think about the implications of authority and leadership. In discussing the text, students can explore how Winston Smith's decisions impact both his fate and the broader society. This provides a valuable opportunity for students to engage in problem-solving discussions about leadership, governance, and resistance to power (Orwell, 1949). Additionally, novels often highlight key aspects of teamwork and the collective effort to overcome challenges.

In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), the collaboration between the members of the fellowship is integral to the plot. The characters—each with their strengths and weaknesses—must work together to achieve their goal. This collective action provides a natural platform for students to discuss and practice teamwork, as they analyze how the characters' differing skills contribute to the success of the group.

Short Stories: Enhancing Communication, Teamwork, and Problem-Solving

Short stories are often centered around a single event or conflict, making them ideal for exploring communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. The brevity of short stories allows students to focus on the interactions between characters and their responses to conflict, often involving misunderstandings, negotiations, and collaborative efforts. By analyzing how characters communicate and collaborate, students develop their interpersonal skills.

An exemplary text for this genre is Shirley Jackson's The Lottery (1948), which explores the role of tradition and conformity in a community. The story's shocking conclusion, in which the townspeople, despite their familiarity with the ritual, blindly follow the violent tradition, invites reflection on social pressure, conformity, and the consequences of groupthink. By analyzing the characters' communication and collective action, students can discuss the importance of critical thinking and teamwork in addressing societal issues. Engaging in group discussions about the ethical implications of the story also allows students to practice problem-solving by exploring alternative outcomes.

Drama: Developing Leadership, Collaboration, and Communication Skills

Drama, with its emphasis on dialogue, performance, and character interaction, provides an ideal context for developing leadership, communication, and collaboration skills. Drama

engages students in active learning through performance-based activities, such as role-playing, group discussions, and collaborative interpretation of texts. These activities not only improve public speaking and interpersonal communication skills but also offer opportunities for leadership and decision-making.

William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (1599) is an exemplary text for exploring themes of leadership, betrayal, and loyalty. The complex political dynamics in the play, particularly the contrasting leadership styles of Caesar and Brutus, provide students with a framework for discussing effective leadership, ethics, and decision-making. Moreover, the text invites students to engage in role-play activities, where they can assume the roles of different characters and practice persuasive communication, negotiation, and group decision-making.

Essays: Enhancing Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

Essays, especially those that engage with social, political, or philosophical issues, can develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The argumentative nature of essays challenges students to assess evidence, formulate arguments, and articulate their positions on complex topics. Through engaging with essays, students also practice persuasive communication and critical evaluation.

An example in this regard is Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (1729)—an essay that proposes the outrageous idea of selling poor Irish children as food, prompting students to critically analyze broader social issues. The essay satirizes British colonialism and the socioeconomic conditions in Ireland. Its study provides an opportunity to evaluate the satirical essence of the text, encouraging students to contemplate and deliberate on solutions to societal problems, thereby enhancing their problem-solving skills (Sussman, 2004).

Literature is thus incorporated into English Language Teaching (ELT) to impart soft skills for the workplace and daily life (Islam & Das, 2023). In order to produce these genres and develop crucial soft skills, it is necessary to look into different text formats. Digging further into each genre will reveal new insights into how they support the growth of some of the key skills, including empathy, leadership, communication, teamwork, and critical thinking (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016). Many types of soft skills are either implicitly or expressly incorporated into English and Nepali literature both locally and internationally. Few of them can be discussed as follows.

Communication Skills

The dialogue-driven nature of drama, as discussed by Barton and Sawyer (2007), directly enhances verbal communication and listening skills. In drama performances, students must articulate their lines clearly, adjust their tone and pitch, and respond to the cues from other characters. This interactive nature encourages students to communicate effectively in both formal and informal settings. Furthermore, the emphasis on listening skills in drama helps students to comprehend and respond to others' ideas in real-time, improving overall communication.

Similarly, poetry is a unique genre in its ability to condense complex emotions into a few carefully chosen words. Carter and McRae (2001) explain that poetry encourages students to refine their communication abilities through precise articulation of emotions. This process requires students to consider the weight of each word and its emotional resonance, making poetry an excellent tool for refining oral communication skills.

Moreover, the exploration of characters and intricate plot structures in novels helps to build written and verbal communication skills. Long and Richards (2012) argue that novels

provide a platform for understanding dialogue and narrative, which allows students to explore character development and plot analysis, leading to improved expression and communication. Discussing novels in class enhances the verbal communication skills of students, as they interpret and discuss complex situations and characters.

Teamwork and Collaboration

Drama is inherently collaborative, requiring students to work together to perform, direct, and interpret plays. Barton and Sawyer (2007) highlight that drama encourages teamwork as students must coordinate their performances, practice timing, and share responsibilities. This fosters leadership skills and teaches students how to work harmoniously in a group setting.

Folk tales and myths often involve collective action and group solutions. According to Vygotsky (1978), these stories emphasize the importance of cooperation and social interaction. Many myths involve groups of characters coming together to solve problems or confront challenges. By studying these texts, students learn the value of collaboration and collective decision-making, which are crucial skills for effective teamwork.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Genres like mystery and thriller are excellent for developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Readers' act like a fictional detective who solves a case in the detective genre; they spend time interpreting a text- their own by delving deep into the narrative to unravel conceptual hidden meanings, draw comparisons, and then analyze patterns of the text. They are enlightened by scientific methods and sometimes wonder at the prying of the eyes, and the opening of the mind, and then discover these methods unveil. While readers may try to imitate how the author thinks regarding the creative process, it usually does not pan well, leaving the reader with even greater awe of the genius (Link, 2023). Similarly, Science fiction encourages creative thinking by imagining future scenarios or alternate realities (Black & Barnes, 2019). As Hobbs (2005) notes, these genres stimulate students to think beyond conventional boundaries and solve complex problems. In most science fiction, characters face challenges that require innovative solutions, which can inspire students to think about future problem-solving and technological advances (Black & Barnes, 2019).

Leadership Skills

Epic and adventure stories are often centered around hero figures who make decisions under pressure. These stories model leadership through characters like Hercules, Odysseus, and King Arthur, whose actions shape the outcomes of their communities. Green (2002) points out that these stories teach students the value of decision-making, crisis management, and moral leadership. By analyzing the choices of these leaders, students can reflect on their own leadership styles and decisions.

Drama also offers valuable insights into leadership, especially through characters in authoritative roles. Barton and Sawyer (2007) suggest that plays such as Macbeth or King Lear provide students with the opportunity to explore leadership dynamics, decision-making processes, and the consequences of leadership choices. Through discussions and performances, students can develop a deeper understanding of ethical leadership and the impact of personal decisions on group dynamics.

Empathy

Drama's ability to showcase human emotions and personal dilemmas makes it an excellent genre for cultivating empathy. Nunan (2003) emphasizes that through role-playing and

performance, students are placed in the shoes of others, which allows them to experience different perspectives. For example, in a play like The Diary of Anne Frank, students can empathize with the challenges of living in hiding during the Holocaust, enhancing their emotional intelligence.

Novels with deep character development provide an intimate look into the experiences of others, fostering empathy. Hobbs (2005) argues that fiction allows readers to deeply engage with characters, feel their emotions, and understand their motivations. Through this engagement, students learn to empathize with people from different walks of life and cultures, which is an essential skill in a globalized world.

Creativity

Poetry stimulates students' creative thinking by encouraging them to experiment with language, form, and expression. Carter and McRae (2001) suggest that poetry provides an outlet for students to express abstract concepts and emotions through unique linguistic constructs. This cultivates creative writing and helps students think creatively about how language can shape ideas.

Short stories, with their concise plots and character development, also prompt students to think creatively about narrative structure and how stories can be told. These stories often leave much to interpretation, which fosters imaginative thinking as students explore different possibilities for meaning.

Emotional Intelligence

Drama helps students build emotional intelligence (I/EQ) by immersing them in the emotional lives of characters. Through acting and analyzing characters' emotional responses, students can develop a greater understanding of how emotions influence actions. Nunan (2003) emphasizes that drama allows students to engage emotionally, fostering emotional awareness and regulation, key components of EQ.

Novels provide insight into how characters deal with complex emotions and social situations. This allows students to reflect on their emotional responses and improve their self-awareness and self-regulation. According to Hobbs (2005), reading novels with deep emotional content helps students relate better to their own emotions and those of others.

Incorporating various literary genres into language education offers a dynamic approach to developing a wide array of soft skills. By engaging with genres such as drama, poetry, novels, and epic tales, students can enhance their abilities in communication, teamwork, critical thinking, leadership, empathy, creativity, and emotional intelligence (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016). These skills are not only crucial for academic success but also vital for navigating the demands of the global workforce.

Teachers can harness the power of literature-based pedagogy to create active, interactive learning environments where students engage with texts that challenge their thinking, encourage emotional growth, and promote effective communication. By integrating literary texts with interactive activities like role-playing, group discussions, and writing projects, educators can foster the holistic development of students—preparing them for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Realizing such gravity and magnitude of the soft skills, the curricula and textbooks have been redesigned in this line. In this context, this article attempts to analyze the soft skills integrated into the poems given in the English textbook of grade 10. In this textbook, there are 36 reading texts divided into 18 thematically arranged units (CDC, 2079). Out of them, the poems of

the book appear as the Reading II exercise of seven lessons. Each exercise containing a poem begins with pre-reading questions which appear right before the full text and is followed by comprehension exercises. However, the exercises do not contain any items that would explicitly help in fostering soft skills. The poems included in the textbooks are shown in the table1 below.

Table 1

List of Poems Included in Grade 10 English

Poem Title	Author	Page No.
Leave this Chanting and Singing	Rabindranath Tagore	61
The Voice of the Rain	Walt Whitman	77
Climbing	Amy Lowell	128
Composed upon Westminster Bridge	William Wordsworth	199
Weather	Thomas Hardy	234
If	Rudyard Kipling	266
The Country Mouse and the City Mouse	Richard Scrafton Sharpe	283

Furthermore, the secondary level curriculum of Nepal identifies nine expected competencies for 10th graders. However, only one competency addresses reading literary genres, and is limited to reading short literary texts for pleasure and understanding. Similarly, the curriculum reiterates similar objectives for reading literary texts in its stated learning outcomes Curriculum Development Center, 2079 B.S.). Studies highlight the integration of an ample amount of literature in school-level English curricula because it fosters cultural understanding, develops language skills, and encourages critical thinking among learners extending its traditional role as a tool to improve English proficiency (Dewi & Asrifan, 2024; Kaur & Mahmor, 2014). Thus, this work focuses on the possibilities of cultivating soft skills via teaching poetry given in Nepal's English textbook of grade 10.

Methodology

The methodology of this study is based on textual analysis of seven poems included in the Grade 10 English textbook published by CDC, Nepal. This study employs document analysis as its primary methodology to explore how poetry as a literary genre contributes to the development of soft skills in English language teaching. Document analysis is a qualitative research method that involves reviewing texts systematically to identify recurring themes, ideas, and patterns (Bowen, 2009). For this study, all the poems included in the textbook are analyzed for their potential to foster specific soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, and empathy. Through this examination, the study seeks to establish how this poetry can be incorporated into language teaching practices to enhance both language skills and soft skills development.

Results and Discussions

In this section, the poems included in the English textbook of grade 10 are read and analyzed to find clues to foster soft skills in students.

Soft Skills to be Cultivated Through Teaching Poems in the Textbook

In the English class of grade 10, teaching poetry can be beneficial to students to cultivate various soft skills. Though the textbook does not contain any exercise that can be directly related to any of the soft skills, various sorts of soft skills could be cultivated via these poems. In this regard, a teacher can also play a vital role to enhance these skills in the students through his/her pedagogy adopted during the teaching these poems.

Communication Skills

The primary purpose of language teaching is to train the students for their effective communication. It is also vital for understanding the contents, sharing the feelings and expressing ideas effectively. The poems given in the Grade 10 textbook provide ample opportunities for their communication development via various genres of literature and language. In "Leave This Chanting and Singing", Rabindranath Tagore critiques superficial rituals and emphasizes meaningful dialogue with the world very critically and creatively. The poem in its composition with literary devices and interpretation provide ample opportunities for enhancing soft skills such as creativity, critical thinking, etc. Through the pedagogical practices of this poem such as class discussions, debates, and role-playing activities, students encourage the students to communicate their thoughts clearly and engage in meaningful and constructive conversations about social responsibilities. Similarly, the poem "Weather" by Thomas Hardy uses vivid imagery to describe nature's unpredictable behaviour and enables students to develop descriptive and interpretive communication. It enhances creativity and imaginative/analytical skills in the students. Furthermore, the activity-based teaching of the poem such as writing weather reports or sharing interpretations of the metaphors in the poem improve verbal and written communication of the students. Similarly, the poem "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" by William Wordsworth appeals the students to reflect on the beauty of a serene morning in London through rich imagery that fosters soft skills such creativity, innovation, communication, empathy, appreciation, and critical thinking.

Teamwork and Collaboration

Teamwork and collaboration are cultivated in the students while working together to analyze and interpret the poems. In "The Country Mouse and the City Mouse" by Richard Scrafton Sharpe, students can explore the contrasting lifestyles of rural and urban settings through which they can enhance their creativity, critical thinking, empathy, problem-solving, collaborative and communication skills. They also cultivate more soft skills through group discussions and debates, interpretation and realizations of diverse perspectives. Similarly, "Leave This Chanting and Singing" fosters social skills such as teamwork by focusing on collective human action over isolated rituals. In "The Voice of the Rain" by Walt Whitman, the interconnectedness of nature serves as a metaphor for collaboration, teamwork, and empathetic to nature. The pedagogies employed during the poetry class enhance the students' soft skills through the group work, analysis, interpretation, presentation, and solving the problems.

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

Critical thinking and problem-solving are the common skills cultivated through the themes and questions from the poems. In "If" by Rudyard Kipling, students are invited to face the challenges to analyze the poet's advice on resilience, integrity, and decision-making. Such contexts help the students develop their critical thinking skills, problem solving (i.e. overcoming

challenges) and making ethical choices. The poem "The Voice of the Rain" by Walt Whitman metaphors the rain for life's cyclical processes. Such metaphorical analysis encourages the students to think critically about environmental issues, and provide creative solutions to ecological challenges. Likewise, the poem "Composed upon Westminster Bridge," by Wordsworth helps students critically examine the impact of urbanization and appreciate the beauty of nature creatively. These activities promote creativity, critical thinking, analytical skills, decision-making, integrity/ ethics, and problem-solving abilities by engaging students in the poetic language, content and pedagogies.

Leadership Skills

The poetry support to cultivate the leadership skills that highlight qualities such as initiative, perseverance, and responsibility. The poem "Climbing" by Amy Lowell metaphorically presents ambition, self-motivation and the drive to achieve one's goals. Such self-motivation reflects the perseverance and qualities to overcome challenges or solve the problems from their academic and personal lives. Similarly, "If" by Rudyard Kipling stresses the qualities of leadership such as resilience, integrity, and self-management. In the same line, the poem "Leave This Chanting and Singing," by Tagore encourages students to think responsibly about their roles and understand the value of collective actions for society. Such qualities i.e., responsibility and value of collection action serve as a foundation for leadership quality in students.

Empathy

Poetry profoundly cultivates the empathy in the students through its composition, contents and tone since the poetry is emotionally connected with the experiences and emotions of others. In "Weather" by Thomas Hardy, mirrors the uncertainties of life and cultivate the empathic qualities in the students along with facing the challenges (i.e. problem solving) of uncertainties of life. Similarly, the poem "The Voice of the Rain" by Walt Whitman cultivates the creativity in the students through the personification of rain and interconnecting it with all living beings. In the same vein, the poem "Leave This Chanting and Singing" **by** Rabindranath Tagore, enhances the quality of responsibility and integrity for their society. It also promotes the quality of empathy, problem solving and critical thinking during the fulfilling his/her social

Creativity

The main quality of poem is imaginary and creativity. The poem "The Voice of the Rain" by Walt Whitman employs the creative personification of rain as a living entity. Similarly, the poem "Climbing" by Amy Lowell also promotes creativity in the students through its metaphorical depiction of ambition, perseverance and self-motivation. The metaphorical representation of their own "climbs" toward goals fosters imaginative or creative thinking. In the same line, the poem "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" by William Wordsworth describe the nature beautifully to capture the serene beauty of London. Furthermore, the creative exercises and tasks during the teaching poem will certainly promote the creativity in the students.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional aspect or emotional intelligence is also one of the major properties of the poems. The poem **"If"** by Rudyard Kipling metaphorically presents the emotions and how to manage them in challenging situations (i.e. critical thinking and problem solving). This poem develops the students' resilience and their emotional regulations. The poem "Climbing" by Amy Lowell nurtures students' self-awareness to recognize their ambitions and the effort required to achieve their goals. Similarly, the "Weather" by Thomas Hardy presents adaptability or flexibility

skills as the uncertainties of life and way of coping with the changes. Furthermore, the pedagogical strategies employed for this poem will support the enhancement of the soft skills.

These all poems cultivate the soft skills such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, responsibility, ethics, empathy, leadership skills and emotional intelligence in the students through the literary devices, contents and pedagogies. The above discussion can be presented in table 2 as follows.

Table 2

Poems and Soft-Skills Cultivated

Poem Title	Author	Skills Cultivated
Leave this Chanting and Singing	Rabindranath Tagore	Ethics, Empathy, Leadership, Communication, Teamwork
The Voice of the Rain	Walt Whitman	Creativity, Critical Thinking, Empathy, Environmental Awareness
Climbing	Amy Lowell	Ambition, Perseverance, Leadership, Creativity
Composed upon Westminster Bridge	William Wordsworth	Reflection, Communication, Critical Thinking, Ethics
Weather	Thomas Hardy	Adaptability, Flexibility, Resilience, Empathy, Communication
If	Rudyard Kipling	Integrity, Leadership, Critical Thinking, Professionalism
The Country Mouse and the City Mouse	Richard Scrafton Sharpe	Contentment, Critical Thinking, Ethics, Teamwork, Communication

The above discussion regarding the soft skills that could be cultivated via the poems from the Grade 10 English textbook also aligns with educational frameworks such as UNESCO's emphasis on ethics, teamwork, and leadership (UNESCO, 2017). Tagore's *Leave This Chanting and Singing* criticizes rude ritual practices but emphasizes on ethical reasoning and empathy, which are vital components of soft skills such as ethics, empathy, and leadership skills. Similarly, Whitman's *The Voice of the Rain* stresses on environmental awareness as ecological responsibility and creativity that resonates with Carson's (1962) understandings. In the same vein, Lowell's *Climbing* as ambition, perseverance and self-motivation echoes Dweck's (2006) growth mindset theory, while Wordsworth's *Composed upon Westminster Bridge* fosters creativity, appreciation and ethical reasoning for natural beauty aligning with Bate's (1991) ecological consciousness. Hardy's *Weather* promotes resilience and adaptability in coping with life's uncertainties, and Kipling's *If* highlights integrity and professionalism as key traits of ethical leadership. Together, these poems integrate emotional, ethical, and cognitive competencies, demonstrating the transformative power of literature in fostering soft skills such as, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, adaptivity, responsibility, emotional intelligence, empathy, responsibility, and leadership.

Conclusion

The exploration of poetry from the Grade 10 English textbook reveals its potential as a transformative tool for cultivating diverse soft skills essential for the 21st century. Through literary devices, contents, and poetry-based pedagogies or activities, they cultivate the soft skills such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, work-ethics, empathy and emotional intelligence in the students. Beyond literary boundaries, these poems transcend them to extend further educational goals such as soft skills. Tagore's *Leave This Chanting and Singing* fosters empathy and ethical reasoning; Whitman's *The Voice of the Rain* would promote creativity and environmental awareness; or Hardy's *Weather and Lowell's Climbing* would instill within a person resilience, ambition and self-motivation, are a few examples of how poems serve as unique opportunities for cultivating soft skills in the students for the holistic development of an individual in today's classrooms. Rooted in literary themes coupled with interactive teaching strategies, poetry indeed serves as a very dynamic medium to integrate emotional, mental, and moral growth into the curriculum aligning with global priorities in education. This emphasizes the role of literature including poetry as a vital element in shaping not only linguistic proficiency but also all-round and holistic development of individuals for preparing the 21st world.

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