

# The “Blooming” of English Poetry in the Middle School Classroom

## ---Take “When You Are Old” as an Example

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**Abstract:** Aiming at cultivating the students’ core literacy in the English subject, training students’ language ability, learning ability, cultural character, and thinking quality, the poetry teaching in the class adopts the “target step by step” teaching model and the narrative research method. And students made perception, recitation, appreciation, imitation and comparison of “When You Are Old”. The teaching results found that English poetry has a certain significance and value for the cultivation of English core literacy.

**Key words:** English; poetry; core literacy

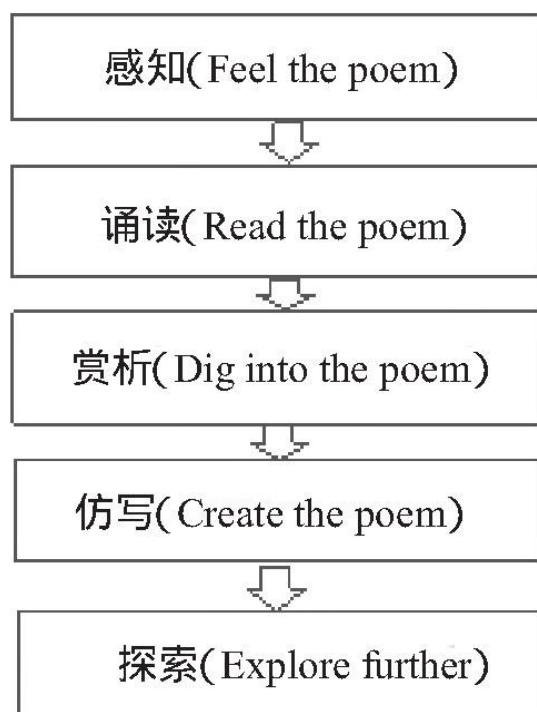
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### 1. Introduction

In the core literacy of English subjects, language ability refers to the ability to understand and express meaning, intentions and emotional attitudes in social situations by listening, speaking, reading, seeing and writing. Cultural character refers to the understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures and the recognition of excellent cultures, which are mainly manifested in cultural awareness, humanistic cultivation and behavior orientation. Thinking quality refers to the ability and level of thinking in terms of logic, criticism, and innovation. Learning ability refers to students’ awareness and ability to actively use and adjust English learning strategies, broaden English learning channels, and strive to improve English learning efficiency. As a beautiful literary genre and teaching resource, English poetry has not been fully utilized in English classrooms. Affected by the test-oriented education, most teachers neglect the teaching of English poetry (Zeng Xiuyu, 2016; Lei Ming, 2017). This article takes the teaching of “When You Are Old” as an example to study the value of poetry in the cultivation of people’s core English literacy in the English classroom.

### 2. Teaching Design and Process

The poetry teaching in this class adopts the “target step-by-step method” mode to guide junior high school students to perceive, appreciate, comprehend, create and explore “When You Are Old”. (See in Figure 1)



**Figure 1.** Teaching design and process

#### 2.1 The first step: perception

(1) The teacher presents several sets of pictures to the students, so that students can concentrate and become curious and interested in the content of the poems.

(2) The teacher uses Karen Mok’s “When You Are Old” for classroom introduction. The tune of the song is as gentle and graceful as clouds and flowing water, and the artistic conception created by the lyrics is also full of emotion.

(3) The teacher asked the students: who did the author write this song for? And what is this song singing about? Friendship, family affection or love?

(4) The teacher introduced the poem “When You Are Old”, and then introduce its author---the famous Irish poet William Butler Yeats. At the same time, the teacher will present this English poem on PPT .

#### 2.2 The second step: recitation

##### (1) Teacher recitation

The teacher read this song emotionally, using the “promise” as the background music. Accompanied by the soundtrack, the teacher read aloud with affection. Students were immersed in the fusion of music and poetry and the artistic conception created by the beautiful poetry.

##### (2) Students read freely

After listening to the teacher’s emotional reading, the students can’t wait to read it in person. At this time, the teacher gives the students a certain amount of time to read aloud freely, listen to each other at the same table and make evaluations.

#### 2.3 The third step: appreciation

Appreciation of this poem mainly includes the following points: difficult vocabulary and expression, rhyme, imagery and rhetoric of the poem.

(1) Explain difficult vocabulary and expressions. In the process of reading aloud, students will find some words and

expressions that are more difficult to understand, and then the teacher will explain.

(2) Experience the rhythm. The teacher leads the students to experience the rhythm of this poem. And ask them questions: What is the rhythm of this poem? The students read aloud again with thinking and experience the rhythm of this poem-pentameter and iambic.

(3) Analyze the image. The teacher asks students questions: what do the glowing bars, mountains and stars mean in this poem?

(4) Analyze rhetoric. This poem also has a lot of rhetorical techniques. The teacher asks the students a question once again: what rhetorical devices are used in the poem?

(5) The teacher plays the English poem recitation video for the students once again. Students listen to the poem on the basis of comprehension, and appreciate the emotion that the poem conveys.

(6) Finally, the teacher will invite a few good students to come on stage to recite poetry.

#### 2.4 The fourth step: imitation

Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled  
And paced upon the mountains overhead  
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars

The teacher changed the “love” to “time”, and asked the students to use anthropomorphic rhetoric to imitate. And then let them discuss with each other.

#### 2.5 Exploring emotions and translation contrast

There are many translations of the poem “When You Are Old”, such as Bing Xin’s “When You Are Old” and Lover’s “The Years Are Passed”. Different translations have different poems and emotions. And the teacher need to present these different versions of translation to the students, so that students can feel the charm and magic of the language.

### 3. Teaching Results

With regard to language ability, students have a preliminary understanding of poetry through perception, listening and reading. Through recitation, they exercise their oral skills; through appreciation, students improve their reading comprehension ability in the process of understanding vocabulary, expression, rhythm, imagery and rhetoric; and through imitation, their writing and English expression are exercised.

For cultural character, students will discover the beauty of imagery and rhythm of English poetry, and will appreciate the foreign cultural background. Under the influence of the beauty of poetry rhythm, imagery, and music, they will improve their humanistic accomplishment, and feel the beauty of English poetry and literature. The charms have inspired their interest in foreign cultures.

With regard to the quality of thinking, through understanding, dividing, and generalizing the content of the poems, students’ logical and generalization skills are improved. Through the analysis of the image and rhetoric of the poems, their analytical and inference abilities are fully exercised. And through imitation, students also give full play to their imagination and associations, which is conducive to their creativity to a certain extent.

With regard to learning ability, students have mobilized various skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing in the process of studying poetry, and their teamwork ability and sense of cooperation can be cultivated in the process of creating poetry with their classmates.

### 4. Conclusions

In general, the role of English poetry in English classroom teaching cannot be ignored. In the new era, English teachers should make full use of the educational value of poetry to develop students’ core competence in English subjects,

so that English poetry can “bloom” in middle school classrooms.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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