

# Teaching Poetry Through Art Integrated Learning: A Study of John Keats' A Thing of Beauty

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**Abstract:** The research paper explores the effectiveness of Art Integrated Learning (AIL) as an innovative pedagogical approach for teaching English poetry, with special reference to John Keats' poem A Thing of Beauty. AIL is an innovative, learner-centred, and powerful pedagogical approach that promotes learning of any subjects through and with various art forms. It encourages learners to explore concepts imaginatively while establishing links between different disciplines and art forms. Teaching poetry through visual arts (such as sketching, clay modelling, paper craft, puppetry, and digital graphics) as well as performing arts (including music, dance, drama, film, and theatre) enhance comprehension and retention of concepts. It increases essential comprehensive skills of the students for learning abstract concepts and theories. Traditional methods of poetry teaching often fail to engage learners due to abstract themes, figurative language, and lack of emotional involvement. The present study adopts a qualitative, classroom-based Art Integrated Learning activity to examine how integrating visual arts, performing arts, and creative expression enhances students' comprehension, language skills, and value-based learning. The findings indicate that AIL significantly improves engagement of learners and their aesthetic appreciation, emotional response, and overall understanding of poetic concepts. The study also highlights the relevance of AIL in achieving the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes experiential, holistic, and competency-based education.

**Keywords:** Art Integrated Learning, Poetry Teaching, English Language Teaching, multilingualism, John Keats, Secondary Level, NEP 2020.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Art Integrated Learning (AIL) is an innovative, learner-centred, and constructivist pedagogical approach that promotes learning of any subjects through and with various art forms. It encourages learners to explore concepts imaginatively while establishing links between different disciplines and art forms. Teaching through visual arts (such as sketching, clay modelling, paper craft, puppetry, and digital graphics) as well as performing arts (including music, dance, drama, film, and theatre) enhances comprehension and retention of concepts. In National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the benefits of art integrated learning as innovative pedagogy are written as: "Art-integration is a cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilizes various aspects and forms of art and culture as the basis for learning of concepts across subjects. As a part of the thrust on experiential learning, art-integrated education will be embedded in classroom transactions not only for creating joyful classrooms, but also for imbibing the Indian ethos through integration of Indian art and culture in the teaching and learning process at every level.

This art-integrated approach will strengthen the linkages between education and culture." (p.12).

### ► Background of the Study:

Through AIL, learners actively participate in artistic creation or performance and meaningfully relate these experiences to subject knowledge. According to Das (2020) "...One of the key takeaways from the new National Education Policy... is the increased focus on Arts and the proposed integration of Arts and Sciences." In this approach, art functions as a powerful medium for understanding and internalizing academic concepts rather than being treated as a separate activity. This process not only makes learning enjoyable and engaging but also deepens conceptual understanding while fostering respect and appreciation for the arts themselves. Hegde (2020) quoting NEP 2020 makes a proactive suggestion : "As part of experiential learning, the policy also proposes the inclusion 'integration of Indian art and culture in the teaching and learning process at every level' in order to 'strengthen the linkages between education and culture' and imbibe 'the Indian ethos' (4.7) The pedagogy

aligns closely with experiential learning, as students learn by doing, reflecting, and connecting ideas creatively.

➤ *Brief Review of Studies:*

Art Integrated Learning (AIL) is a powerful approach for teaching English at the secondary level because it makes language learning experiential, creative, and student-centred. It enhances listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW) skills of the students and builds confidence and communication skills in inclusive classrooms. H. Gardner(1990) said, "People do not simply develop by existing, growing older, or becoming larger; they must go through certain pivotal experiences that lead to periodic reorganizations of their knowledge and understanding". In the classroom of diverse learners (visual, auditory, kinesthetic), it encourages their critical thinking and creativity and makes abstract literary concepts concrete and relatable. The preamble of the 'Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education (2010)' highlights that "...arts education has an important role to play in the constructive transformation of educational systems that are struggling to meet the needs of learners in a rapidly changing world, characterized by remarkable advances in technology on the one hand, and intractable social and cultural injustices on the other."

In the 21st century classrooms for cognitive, emotional, social, behavioural, and psychomotor development of the students, AIL supports holistic education, positioning the arts as a central pathway for meaningful and comprehensive learning. According to A.S. Malik and R. Malik (2011), there are 12 steps to take to develop an integrated curriculum: (1) train the staff member, (2) decide on scope of integration, (3) choose the level of integration, (4) plan for both vertical and horizontal integration, (5) establish working groups and elucidate their responsibilities, (6) determine learning outcomes, (7) identify the contents, (8) create themes, (9) prepare a comprehensive timeline, (10) select assessment methods, (11) communicate with students and staff, and (12) commit to reevaluation and revision. These recommendations can contribute to the effective development of an integrated curriculum that benefits all students.

Secondary education focuses on refining students' skills i.e.. listening skills, speaking skills (debates, presentations, discussions), reading skills and writing skills (essays, reports, creative and critical writing). These skills are essential for professional communication and social interaction. As an Art Integrated Learning (AIL) facilitator the teacher transforms English classrooms into creative spaces where students read with understanding, speak with confidence, and write with originality. Such higher-order thinking skills are essential for 21st-century learners. English literature often involves abstract themes, symbolism, and emotions. Through literature, drama, poetry, and prose, students learn to analyse texts, interpret ideas and themes, express opinions logically. English acts as a global language, providing access to scientific and technological advancements. English literature exposes students to diverse cultures and traditions, universal human values and moral and ethical perspectives. AIL also supports multilingualism and communication skills, which

are essential components of English language teaching. Through art-based activities such as role play, visual representation, creative writing, and performance, students actively use language in meaningful contexts. .

➤ *Challenges of Teaching Poetry:*

Secondary classrooms consist of learners with varied socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles and always there is particularly lack of interest in poetry and its abstract ideas—arise mainly from traditional teaching methods and inadequate learner engagement. Poetry frequently deals with emotions, philosophy, and imagination, symbolism, metaphors, and imagery, indirect expression rather than direct statements. For secondary-level students, these abstract concepts are hard to visualise, difficult to interpret, often misunderstood. Students struggle to relate poetic ideas to their personal experiences, leading to confusion and disengagement. To overcome these difficulties, innovative approaches such as Art Integrated Learning (AIL) methods help transform poetry from an abstract text into a living, relatable experience. In the rapidly changing educational landscape, traditional teacher-centred methods are no longer sufficient to meet the diverse learning needs of secondary-level students. Art-Integrated Learning (AIL) emerges as a powerful and necessary pedagogical approach in this context.

➤ *AIL and Performing Arts:*

Art-based strategies such as drama, music, drawing, and creative writing make lessons interactive and enjoyable, reduce fear and anxiety associated with language learning and create emotional connection with texts. AIL transforms English learning from a passive to an active experience. The objective is not to teach art in isolation, but to use art as a medium of learning and expression across the curriculum. NEP 2020 strongly advocates the integration of arts at all stages of schooling to promote conceptual understanding, creativity, critical thinking, and emotional development. According to the policy, art integration helps learners connect knowledge with real-life experiences, thereby improving retention and deeper learning.

Value-based education aims at developing learners who are not only intellectually competent but also morally, emotionally, and socially balanced. John Keats' "A Thing of Beauty" holds immense significance in value-based education as it instills positivity, environmental awareness, moral virtues, emotional maturity, and aesthetic appreciation. Poetry becomes meaningful when students see, feel, and create. The poem highlights natural elements such as the sun, moon, trees, and flowers, encouraging students to appreciate and protect nature. This fosters environmental consciousness and ecological responsibility, which are vital moral values today. John Keats considers noble actions and heroic stories as beautiful. The poem inspires students to value courage, compassion, selflessness, and moral integrity, guiding them towards ethical behaviour. By portraying beauty as a healing force for the soul, the poem helps students develop emotional sensitivity, empathy, and inner peace, contributing to their spiritual growth.

Through art Integrated Learning, teaching poetry has become easy and it improves vocabulary acquisition of students and enhances speaking, listening skills and develops expressive and reflective writing. Students move beyond surface understanding to deeper literary appreciation. Poetry, when taught through innovative methods, becomes a powerful medium for language development, emotional growth, and critical thinking. Traditional methods of teaching poetry—such as explanation, paraphrasing, and rote

learning—often fail to engage the students to understand the basic themes of the poem. Educational theorists like John Dewey emphasized learning through experience. As an experiential learning, when students perform poems visualise imagery, connect poems with personal experiences and their comprehension and retention significantly improve. Creative teaching of poetry thus helpful in contemporary educational goals of holistic and competency-based learning of the students.

Table 1 Art Integrated Learning Activity

Subject	English
Class	XII
Theme	Poetry (A Thing of Beauty by John Keats)
Form of art activity	Visual and performing arts

➤ Objectives

- To examine the effectiveness of Art Integrated Learning in teaching English poetry
- To analyse students’ response to A Thing of Beauty through art-based activities
- To study the impact of AIL on language skills and aesthetic appreciation
- To promote learner-centred and experiential learning in English classrooms

✓ Material Required:

Drawing sheets, chart papers, colour pens

➤ Research Questions

- How does AIL enhance students’ understanding of poetic themes?

- Does art integration improve language expression and creativity?

✓ Sample:

Secondary school students enrolled in Class XII English.

➤ Tools

AIL lesson plan for “A Thing of Beauty”, student engagement rubric reflective journals and interview schedules

➤ Procedure

As an AIL facilitator, the teacher conducts an art integrated learning based activity for teaching poetry, 'A Thing of Beauty'. The description of the activity is as given below:

**II. ART INTEGRATED LEARNING BASED ACTIVITY**

**Day 1**

**Task 1: Ice-breaking Activity**

Students are divided into five groups, wherein they engage in a brainstorming session on ‘Significance of beauty prevailed on environment’, and come up with five points on impact of nature on human being and how does 'a thing of beauty' provides them comfort in hard times. This is followed by the visual art activity (Poster / Collage / Drawing) based on the points ascertained in the brainstorming session. Next, students pin up their sketch/drawing of natural things that provide them peace and satisfaction. After that the students give a group presentation of their task. At last, the teacher concludes the presentation and appreciate their efforts to re-connect with nature.

**Task 2**

After a brief introduction of the poem, teacher visualises relevant animated video of the poem 'A thing of beauty' and gave students a virtual video of the natural world and it's real beauty. After the completion of the virtual video (10 minutes approximately) of the poem, as an facilitator, the teacher mentions the key points (main themes, poetic devices rhyme scheme for further discussion.

At last, contents of poem has been allotted in each groups as given below:

- Group 1— Poem composition on nature or ‘A thing of beauty is joy for ever’.
- Group 2— Interview on ‘Identification of poetic rhyme scheme and poetic devices used in the poem’ (Anaphora, Alliteration, Metaphor)
- Group 3— Story weaving [Hint: Noble deeds, martyr stories]
- Group 4— Mime and movement [Hint: flowing of small streams/emotions]
- Group 5— Creative writing on ‘Natural beauty and its Impact on human being’

**Day 2**

Teacher starts the session with some warm up questions such as:  
 Explain key themes of nature as a healing power but with limited connection to personal experience.  
 Explain the deeper meaning of "a thing of beauty is joy for ever".  
 Identifies and explains alliteration, metaphor, and oxymoron (e.g., "joy/pain") and their effect.  
 Identifies poetic rhyme scheme used in the poem.

**Group presentation.**

After asking some questions, the teacher has invited students as per their allocated groups for their respective presentations and appreciated them for better efforts and performance for making the class enjoyable and relatable.

**Assessment**

The teacher examines the understanding of communication of the students in different art forms and their ability to communicate in English, grasping the essence of the value of beauty that provides them comfort during their dark times.

There is an art integrated learning assessment rubrics as given below:

**ASSESSMENT STUDENT WORKSHEET (Art Integrated Learning)**

A Thing of Beauty – John Keats (Art Integrated Learning)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class/Section: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section A: Understanding the Poem**

1. According to John Keats, why is a thing of beauty a source of joy?
2. List any two sources of beauty mentioned in the poem.
  - a) \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) \_\_\_\_\_

**Section B: Visual Interpretation**

1. Draw or paste an image that represents the line:  
 "A bower quiet for us." (Space for drawing)
2. Write 3–4 lines explaining how your visual connects with the poem.

**Section C: Performing Arts Reflection**

1. What emotion did you try to express during recitation / mime / drama?
  - a. Joy.      b. Peace.      c. Relief from sorrow.      d. Hope
2. Write one line from the poem that inspired your performance.

**Section D: Critical Thinking**

1. How does beauty help human beings overcome sadness and suffering? (Answer in 4–5 lines)

**Section E: Self-Reflection**

1. What did you enjoy most about learning poetry through art?
2. Do you think art made the poem easier to understand? Why/Why not?

**III. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

Students show significant improvement in understanding poetic imagery and themes after engaging in visual and performance activities. Artistically representing lines such as "a bower quiet for us, and a sleep full of sweet dreams" helped students interpret abstract metaphor into concrete ideas. Students connect more deeply with the poem's ideas of beauty and joy when tasked with artistic reinterpretations, improving both linguistic understanding and emotional resonance. Qualitative feedback revealed students were more enthusiastic about learning poetry

through art activities. Many reported that painting scenes from the poem and dramatizing emotions made the literature more accessible and personally meaningful.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

Art Integrated Learning acts as a powerful pedagogical tool for teaching English poetry at the secondary level. It converts abstract poetic language into expressive art not only deepens comprehension but also enhances student engagement and holistic development. In the context of "A Thing of Beauty", AIL allowed students to experience beauty,

not just analyze it, aligning with holistic educational goals promoted by contemporary curricular reforms like NEP 2020. Art integrated learning promoted not just cognitive understanding of the students but also socio-emotional and creative confidence. Teaching poetry through AIL activity, students were feeling easy in demonstration and increased active participation, expressive confidence, and collaborative learning.

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