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Teaching Poetry at Primary and Secondary School Level: an examination of students' and teachers' attitudes to poetry.

Marian Forde
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
University of Dublin
Trinity College Dublin
2011

Declaration

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Abstract

'... Most poetry is relevant to everyone, but most people think they don't know how to unlock it, or don't think it's worth the bother. In any activity, you need to put in some effort to reap the reward. It's not a matter of making more accessible poems; it's to do with giving people the keys to access what's already there, and showing them it is worth the bother.'[1]

Over the past twenty years of teaching poetry at second level and working with second level student teachers and recently qualified primary school teachers in Trinity College, it has become apparent that poetry is the least liked and most poorly taught part of the English curriculum. Historically poetry was an integral part of all students' education, it was valued for its moralistic and disciplinary function. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it was used for the betterment of society. The present situation of poetry is very different, it has been pushed aside in some schools, it is often badly taught and teachers themselves say they are ill equipped to teach it. The aims of this study are to elucidate the historical and educative role of poetry, to establish a comprehensive and reliable baseline of students' and teachers' attitudes to the study of poetry in classrooms and of their perceived understanding of its value in people's lives in contemporary society, and finally, to evaluate the impact of a specially devised creative and interactive approach to the teaching of poetry with recently qualified primary school teachers.

Data was gathered from almost 2,000 respondents using a survey method, and revealed that the majority of students and teachers did not enjoy their study of poetry, and did not engage with it beyond the classroom. Inadequate teaching and learning approaches were deemed responsible for many of the concerns raised. It was identified that the major difficulty in turning students against poetry arises as a result of the approaches adopted at primary school level. The results of the study show convincingly that when a sustained and creative approach to the teaching of poetry is implemented, it impacts extremely

[1] Howard, Peter (2001) The Poetry Question. http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/news/debate.htm Accessed 23/02/2006.

positively upon the students and teachers collectively in their study and engagement of poetry in the classroom.

Acknowledgements

To merely say thank you seems so inadequate to all of the people who have helped me so much in the course of this study, but I am sincerely grateful.

To my Supervisor, Dr. Carmel O'Sullivan, her expertise, clarity, focus and genuine interest in this work helped me enormously. Led by her example, I now know the meaning of academic endeavour.

Thank you to all of the teachers and students, who participated in this study, particularly my own students who worked so hard and produced such excellent work.

Thank you to my own school, for being supportive and kind and for believing in the transforming power of education.

Thank you to the library staff in TCD for all of their help and patience in the course of my research.

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Chapter One
Introduction

'... only someone intent on restricting our humanity would discourage thoughts about how to make poetry more widely available.'[1]

1.1 Rationale

In the twenty-first century poetry has never been more widely available, instantaneous access is available via websites, media and advertising campaigns. There has been a recent surge of academic debate, research papers and publications about the importance of poetry and arguments have raged about whether poetry is a lost cause, redundant and irrelevant, or important in society. Poetry has entered into the public domain as visual art on trains, as eulogies during times of national and international tragedy and as orations for Presidents. Maya Angelou recited *On the Pulse of Morning* at the inauguration ceremony of Bill Clinton in 1993. By choosing her poem to mark the beginning of his presidency Clinton was attempting to present himself as a uniting force in racial relations while affirming to Americans and the world that poetry is not only inseparable from politics and culture but that it is part of the ritual of life. In 2000 Andrew Motion,[2] Poet Laureate and member of the Arts Council of England defended the place of poetry in society. His lecture was an impassioned defence of the power of poetry as exemplified in key events that affected the public like the death of Princess Diana and the Soho bombing, 'in their various kinds of distress, people had turned to poetry because they felt that it allowed them to express their feelings in a way that prose could not.'[3] In his opinion poetry is 'sanctified'[4] because it can help us to enjoy and endure our existence.'[5] Motion believes that poetry stretches our humanity, deepens our understanding of the human condition and can also have a 'liberalising effect on our natures.'[6] According to the NAPT[7] poetry therapy has been a part of human consciousness as far back as the fourth millennium B.C.[8] and the use of poetry in the treatment of psychiatric patients evolved as early as the first century A.D. Modern theoreticians

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[1] Motion, Andrew (2000) Poetry in Public. London. The Arts Council of England. p 4.
[2] Motion, Andrew (2000) Poetry in Public. London. Arts Council of England.
[3] Ibid. pp. 2, 3.
[4] Ibid. p. 3.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] The National Association for Poetry Therapy. http://www.poetrytherapy.org/history.html Accessed 23/02/2006.
[8] Ibid. p. 1.

like Freud and Jung even maintained that 'poets were the first to chart paths that science later followed.'[9] In 1987 the *Journal of Poetry Therapy: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Practice, Theory, Research and Education*[10] was initiated and in June 2000 the professional standards and requirements for the practice of poetry therapy were set by the Certification Committee of the National Association for Poetry Therapy.[11]

It is suggested that poetry has always been important; it provides opportunity to see the world from another person's perspective so, for example, in an instant readers can enter the Arab world of Nizar Kabbani and get an insight into what Mohja Kahf[12] referred to as the 'practices and attitudes that have been used to exploit women in his society: from polygamy, rape, and "honor" killings to the meat-market approach to marriage, the uxorious expectation of wifely obedience, and the ideal of womanly domesticity and docility.'[13] It has been shown that over time the most important historical, religious and political issues have been recorded in poetry; in some instances they can be read as primary source material. In the wider academic debate about the importance of world literature David Damrosch[14] says that it is seen 'in one or more of three ways':[15] the classic 'a work of transcendent, even foundational value';[16] the masterpiece which embodied great ideas; and literature that acts as windows on the world.[17] It is through these three conceptions that the reader learns most about themselves and the world.

No matter how divisive the argument between academics about accuracy of the translation of certain works, the reader will for example, learn to become more politically aware if they read Bei Dao's[18] poetry about the Tiananmen massacre and they may develop empathy with those who lost their lives protesting for principles that are the right of most Western Europeans. The importance of poetry as a record of political strife, social and economic repression and cultural

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[9] Ibid. p. 2.
[10] http://www.poetrytherapy.org/history.html p. 3.
[11] Ibid. p. 4
[12] Politics and Erotics in Nizar Kabbani's Poetry: World Literature Today. University of Oklahoma. Vol. 74. No. 1. Winter 2000. pp.44 – 52.
[13] Ibid. p. 48.
[14] What Is World Literature? World Literature Today. University of Oklahoma. Vol. 77. No. 1. April – June 2003. pp. 9 – 14.
[15] Ibid. p. 9.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid. p. 13.

identity is evident in the work of Hungarian poet Gyorgy Petri,[19] and in the poems of Balkan writers like Ismail Kadare,[20] Aleksandar Lakovic[21] and Bilijana Obradovic.[22] These writers bring the reader into places torn apart by revolution and war, by totalitarian brutality and cultural repression, they instruct the reader in a way that the cold clinical facts of a history or geography text may not because they make the reader a participant in the events they describe. In *A Poetry Survey for the Arts Council of England* (1996)[23] it was found that Black and Asian participants felt that poetry from their own culture had 'a distinct and important role as a conduit for passing on culture and heritage to future generations.'[24] For some Black participants poetry was 'a vehicle for political expression'[25] while some Asians felt that it had an 'important cultural function as a feature of communal celebrations or ceremonies.'[26]

Poetry has considerable value and function in the development of societies, and it is argued that students should have full engagement with it to ensure their holistic development as human beings: 'If literature is the expression of a human dimension and connection then the experience of it should not be a matter of chance but of entitlement.'[27]

Given that poetry has an ancient tradition beginning in preliterate history and that it transmitted the myths and stories of our ancestors, it is arguable that it should be the easiest aspect of the English curriculum to teach. Yet, it would appear that this is not always the case, in fact, it is reported that the current state of poetry teaching is less than satisfactory, and to some it is deemed valueless and boring. The nature of the examination system at both Junior and Leaving Certificate level in Ireland has tended to make the teaching of poetry a rote learning experience and placed it in a cage like Rainer Maria Rilke's *Panther*[28] so that it lies behind a 'thousand bars;

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[19] Poems of Gyorgy Petri. World Literature Today. University of Oklahoma. Vol. 75. No. 1. Winter 2001. p.51.
[20] "Brotherly Wounds" Representations Of Balkan Conflict In Contemporary Balkan Literature. World Literature Today. University of Oklahoma. Vol. 75. No. 1. Winter 2001. pp. 67, 68.
[21] Ibid. p. 69.
[22] Ibid. pp. 71, 72.
[23] McKeone, Gary and O'Brien, Jane (1996) A Poetry Survey for the Arts Council of England: key findings. London. Arts Council of England.
[24] Ibid. p. 23.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Department Of Education And Science (1987) Teaching Poetry In The Secondary School: An HMI view. London. Her Majesty's Stationery Office. p. 33.
[28] The Panther by Rainer Maria Rilke published in The Barefoot Book of Classic Poems (2006). Bath. p. 67.

and behind the bars, no world.' This thesis is concerned with investigating whether, and to what extent, poetry has been dissipated in its historical significance and educative value.

1.2 Teacher – Researcher: a personal journey

As a teacher with more than twenty years experience in the classroom, and more recently, experience of working with student teachers as well, it is evident that the study of poetry in school is not highly regarded by all. Staffroom conversations and in-class discussions with students over many years reveal an antipathy and negativity towards poetry that is quite striking in comparison to teachers' and students' attitudes to other aspects of their English studies and to the curriculum as a whole. Similar attitudes have been presented at in-service training days, and even at meetings and events organised by the ATE (Association of Teachers of English). Anecdotal evidence and commentary provided in the media reveals quite negative attitudes and experiences of having studied poetry at school, experiences which appear to have turned people off poetry in their later life. As a teacher with a life-long love and interest in poetry, my own passion has rarely been understood by others in the education system and beyond, and even less frequently shared by other teachers and pupils.

As a way to informally quantify the attitude of others to the study and experience of learning poetry in school, I began over a number of years to ask almost everyone I met about this subject, and while the responses were almost always initially negative, on probing further, it would emerge that the actual teaching methods employed were central to the formation of a negative attitude towards the study of poetry in schools. Further investigation in the literature indicated that few substantive empirical studies existed which could actually support or challenge the anecdotal evidence about the role and value of the study of poetry in schools, which predominated in common parlance and in the mass media and society.

This genuine curiosity about the perception of poetry among students and teachers, and why particular attitudes were being held, spurred the decision to engage in a large scale audit of students' and teachers' experiences of studying poetry, and an exploration of whether the use of specific teaching and learning methods helped or hindered in the formation of those attitudes. This study developed out of my particular experiences of being a second level teacher and a desire to be able to respond reasonably conclusively to the question of what students and

teachers think about poetry in the classroom and its role, if any, in their daily lives. This led to a further investigation into whether teaching methods may have a role to play in the formation of attitudes to poetry, and to a review of the literature to determine the extent to which poetry was used in the education of people historically, and the emphasis, if any, placed on how it should be taught in schools.

1.3 Research design

This study therefore, is a mixed methods design, using both quantitative research instruments to gather a substantial corpus of information from 730 second level students, 92 primary school teachers, and 1,826 primary school pupils, and also using elements from the qualitative tradition such as observation and document analysis. The study aims to formulate a reliable and extensive overview of the status of poetry teaching and learning in primary and secondary school classrooms in Ireland, and to assess the impact of specially designed teaching and learning methods which adopt a creative and participative approach in classrooms.

The central research questions in this study are:

(a) what is the attitude of school students to the study of poetry at primary and secondary level;

(b) what is the attitude of teachers to the study of poetry; and

(c) what impact, if any, would specially devised creative and interactive teaching and learning methods have on the experience of studying poetry from both the teachers' and pupils' perspectives.

Data will be gathered from the following groups:

- primary and secondary students
- qualified primary and secondary teachers
- secondary school student teachers.

In order to create a robust theoretical framework which will subsequently inform the devising of the data collection process and the design, implementation and evaluation of the research project, an extensive review of the relevant literature in the field will be undertaken in order to determine the role and value, historically, of studying poetry, and also to investigate the earlier curriculum requirements and approaches to studying poetry in primary and secondary classrooms. A large scale quantitative survey will be used to collect data about teacher and student attitudes towards

poetry, the results of which will either sustain or challenge the argument that poetry is marginalised in both primary and secondary schools, and will explore the range and effectiveness of teaching methods being used currently. The initial intention for this thesis was to investigate the role and value of poetry in the holistic development of students in second level schools but as the project evolved, the baseline assessment data revealed that the root of the problems experienced with poetry at second level appeared to lie in the way it was taught to pupils in primary schools. Having deduced this and using a mixed methods approach, it was decided to initiate a poetry programme for newly qualified teachers at primary level, designed to investigate their perceptions of poetry as they experienced it during their own school days, as it was taught to them in the colleges of education, and as they teach it to their own pupils. This data will add greater authenticity and validity to the data gathered from the survey of the second level students because it will educe the emergence of a pattern of perception and attitude that was established from the earliest stage of the students' cognitive and aesthetic interaction with poetry. This thesis will offer a body of data that presents students' attitudes towards poetry from the infant classes at primary level to sixth year Leaving Certificate at second level. Participating primary school recently qualified teachers will also complete an assignment designed to perform two functions: to survey their pupils and assess their attitude towards poetry, and to design, implement and evaluate a series of lessons plans aimed to enrich their pupils' experiences of poetry. It is intended to be able to offer some practical guidelines and ideas on the teaching of poetry as a result of undertaking this study. The following section will outline the layout of the thesis.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

Chapter Two is concerned with tracing the historical importance of poetry in Ireland from preliterate history to the 1940s. The chapter examines the use of poetry, establishing it as a prehistoric instrument for recording laws, rituals and important events. Chapter Three examines the specific educative function of poetry from the 1940s to the twenty-first century. The chapter examines the use of poetry as an educative tool and analyses specific government publications, school texts, literary criticism, surveys, theses and academic perspectives as well as theoretical and practical manuals about the teaching of poetry. Chapter Four examines the methodologies used to address the research questions in this thesis. The chapter sets out the research methods used to establish a general picture of teachers' and students' perceptions of poetry and how it is currently taught in schools. The main research tools discussed will be survey method and

observations. Chapter Five will present and analyse the extensive data collated from the second level student questionnaires, using material from the review of literature to provide further comment on the findings. Chapter Six will present and examine the data from the primary school teachers' survey. Chapter Seven offers a summary of the key points and arguments raised in this study, and presents a synopsis of the main findings, recommendations and areas for further study arising from conducting this research. The appendices contain examples of the research instruments used and of material referred to in the review of literature.

Chapter Two
The Educative Function of Poetry

'Poetry is of little *use*, but of great *value*: like Beauty, or Goodness, or Love.' [29]

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to trace the educative function of poetry from ancient civilization to the early twentieth century. The rationale for this analysis is to establish that poetry was and still is an integral part of the education system, particularly in Ireland. Since I have made an extensive examination of sources in this chapter I will present a cohesive overview of how poetry was an integral part of learning in preliterate society and continued to be used in education in every century.

This chapter is divided into sub sections, each one examining the function of poetry in a particular period of history. The material presented begins with the educative function of poetry in ancient Ireland based on information extrapolated from ancient manuscripts and scholars in the field. The study presents an overview of how poetry was used as a learning tool in pre Christian Bardic schools, the early Christian Church, and in the Hedge schools which existed right into the eighteenth century. The investigation of the educative function of poetry in the nineteenth century is primarily based on analysis of original government publications such as those published by the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland. The analysis of poetry as a learning tool in twentieth century Irish schools is primarily based on existing official government publications, on government reports and inspections. Where material was deficient in exploring the educative function of poetry in the Irish context, particularly in relation to pedagogical and creative learning through poetry in the early twentieth century, it was necessary to examine reports and studies in this area from other countries, specifically Great Britain.

The approach taken in this chapter will allow the researcher to present a chronological and thematic representation of the educative use of poetry predominantly in the Irish context; this approach is also unique since there are no other studies in the field of education that examine the educative function of poetry over such a protracted period of time in one country.

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[29] Iyengar, K. R. Srinivasa (1962) Indian Writing In English. London. Asia Publishing House. p. 370.

2.2 Understanding poetry in the context of this study

This thesis is practitioner based, and as its purpose is to explore the educative function of poetry as outlined in government publications, education documents and manuals, syllabi as well as scholarly publications and current research material, it does not seek to provide academic definitions of poetry since perspectives from aesthetics, philology, philosophy and psychology are beyond the scope of this research topic. To attempt to provide a single definition of poetry in this thesis would be problematic and largely irrelevant to its aims since most of the official documents examined in this study, from ancient times to the present day, talk about the function of poetry in education outside of a strictly definable context.

There already exists a comprehensive body of research on the defence and definition of poetry from ancient to modern times including Plato,[30] Sidney[31], Johnson,[32] Shelly,[33] Spender,[34] Auden,[35] Eliot,[36] and respected scholars like Hollander,[37] Gifford,[38] Sayers,[39] Levi,[40] Bradford,[41] Barr,[42] Motion,[43] Gioia[44] and Bloom[45] for whom poetry is the 'crown of imaginative literature.'[46] Other scholars argue that poetry cannot be 'proved in the way that a theorem can,'[47] and perhaps the perspicacity of audiences, in relation to the meaning of poetry and how its reception and worth could be assessed depends upon their 'literary awareness'.[48] C. S. Lewis[49] in his essay *Is*

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[42]Barr, Helen (2001) *Socioliterary Practice in Late Medieval England.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[43] Motion, Andrew (2000) Poetry in Public. London. Arts Council of England.
[44] Gioia, Dana (1992) Can Poetry Matter? Essays on Poetry and American Culture. America. Graywolf.
[45] Bloom, Harold (2001) How To Read And Why. London. Fourth Estate.
[46] Ibid. p. 69.
[47] Heaney, Seamus (2002) Finders Keepers: Selected Prose 1971 - 2001. London. Faber and Faber.
[48] Ibid. p. 67.
[49] Walmsley, Lesley (ed)., (2000) C. S. Lewis: Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces. London. HarperCollins Publishers.

Theology Poetry?[50] found it easier to define what was meant by theology than poetry and felt that because of the lack of agreement in interpreting poetical truth he would purport a 'vague' and 'modest' notion of poetry 'as writing which arouses and in part satisfies the imagination.'[51] Adrienne Rich said that we go to poetry 'to receive the experience of the not me,'[52] while Alice Walker[53] stated that the requirements for the existence of poetry remain mysterious.[54] Armitage and Crawford[55] state that poetry is 'language which delivers its own promise,' and is something that can often 'trip' both reader and writer 'into another world potent with spiritual experience'.[56] Furniss and Bath[57] suggest that poetry is not one thing but many things; a definition they validate because the defining characteristics of poetry change through history.[58] Some dictionary definitions of poetry are pithy, stating that the word is a noun, is arranged in lines, usually with rhythm and sometimes with rhyme.[59] One dictionary referred to poetry as the art of a poet and 'any quality with a recognizably emotional effect'.[60] Encyclopedic[61] definitions of poetry sometimes conjoin 'imaginative expression of emotion, thought or narrative'[62] with metrical form and the use of figurative language. While others[63] might claim that poetry is defined not by what it is but by what it is not, a theory not dissimilar to the argument put forward by researchers like Horner and Ryf[64].

It is apparent, from the authoritative sources I have studied that there is no standardised definition of poetry, a fact aptly demonstrated in Frank Kermode's[65] discussion of *Beowulf,* and in T. S. Eliot's[66] essay *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism.* For the purpose of this thesis,

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[50] Ibid. pp. 10 – 21.
[51] Ibid. pp. 10, 11.
[52] MacMonagle, Niall (ed)., (1994) Real Cool: Poems to grow up with. Cork. Marino Books. p. 10.
[53] Walker, Alice (2003) Absolute Trust in the Goodness of the Earth. London. The Women's Press Ltd.
[54] Ibid. p. xii.
[55] Armitage, Simon and Crawford, Robert (eds)., (1998) The Penguin Book of Poetry from Britain and Ireland since 1945. London. Viking.
[56] Ibid. p. xix.
[57] Furniss, Tom and Bath, Michael (1996) Reading Poetry: An introduction. Essex. Pearson Education Limited.
[58] Ibid. p. 3.
[59] Hawkins, Joyce M. et al., (1997) Concise Oxford School Dictionary.Oxford. Oxford University Press.
[60] Brasier-Creagh, J. P. and Workman, B. A. (eds)., (1974) Illustrated Colour Dictionary. Vol. 2. London. The Caxton Publishing Company Limited. p. 584.
[61] Webster's New World Encyclopedia (1992). New York. Prentice Hall.
[62] Ibid. p. 889.
[63] Preminger, Alex and Brogan, T. V. F. (eds). (1993) The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics.
[64] Horner, Chris and Ryf, Vicki (2007) Creative Teaching: English In The Early Years And Primary Classroom. London and New York. Routledge.
[65] Kermode, Frank (2002) Pleasing Myself: From Beowulf to Philip Roth. London. Penguin Books. pp. 1 – 12.
[66] Kermode, Frank (ed)., (1975) Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot. London. Faber and Faber.

which is to examine the use of poetry as an educative tool, a definition of poetry is not provided as to do so could prove limiting to the scope of the enquiry. Scholars who study how poetry was used in other cultures, whether Western (see Trypanis, 1981), or Eastern (see Shkapskaya, 1979, Crnković, 2000, Milosz, 2006), ancient (see Gentili, 1990, Schmidt, 2004, Adonis, 2003) or modern (see Rexroth, 1936, Gifford, 1986, Bodunde, 2001, Egudu, 1978), do not typically provide definitions of poetry because it is superfluous to their task, and may narrow the scope of their specific enquiries, and a similar approach is adopted in this particular study. Neither the Teacher Guidelines for English Language at primary level nor the Guidelines for Teachers of English for Leaving Certificate students provide a definition of poetry. The latter text talks abstractedly about poetry working in a 'sensuous manner', and reiterates some of the theories about poetry from writers like Robert Penn Warren, Ted Hughes and Kenneth Koch, and the former states its broad objectives as that pupils should be able to explore and express reactions to poetry, but the guidelines do not provide teachers with a working definition of poetry nor do they suggest limiting students' exposure to certain types only. Across all levels of the education system teachers do not teach poetry according to strict definitions. Apart from poetry being a required element for study, the teachers I have surveyed for this thesis teach poetry because of its broad cross-curricular use, its potential for creative and imaginative play as well as its pedagogical application, and they draw on a wide and varied range of poetic form to engage and challenge their learners: 'Poetry, above all else, is a form of communication, a means by which people can connect with one another across space and time.'[67]

Having established that this thesis is not concerned with the definition of poetry it is important to state that as an educator I can discriminate between types of poetry in this study and do not equate the poetry of Nobel Laureates with mere jingles from advertising campaigns. However, in the course of this research the use of the word poetry is not concerned with discriminating between what is considered great or inferior works, but specifically in relation to its educative function and as it is described in the many sources examined. As a researcher I have been careful in my attempts to remain unbiased and objective in my analysis of the function of poetry in education and ascribe no other meaning than that presented in the research material which I will examine in this thesis.

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[67] Forristal, Brian & Ramsell, Billy (2008) This Is Poetry: An Anthology And Notes For Higher Level Leaving Cert. Cork. Forum Publications LTD. p. 1.

2.3.1 The educative function of poetry in ancient Ireland

Poetry has a very long and important function in the history of Irish education. Dowling,[68] Hyde,[69] Graham,[70] Bergin,[71] and McGrath,[72] all show that poetry was significant in the education of ancient Irish society. Manuscripts like the *Books of Leinster*[73] and *Ballymote*,[74] the *Lebor Gabála*,[75] the ancient book of the *Brehon Laws*,[76] the *Uraicept na n-Éigeas*[77] and the *Clanricarde Memoirs*[78] show that poems were used as depositories where the deeds of battles, the genealogies of ruling families and the laws and judgments that governed Ireland were recorded. The power of the 'filid' is described by some scholars as governing the 'social conscience'[79] of the Irish, while their poems have been described in more abstruse terms,

> 'They are sometimes emotional lyrics, sometimes moral or didactic essays in verse, sometimes political pamphlets ... And, as they follow unswervingly the old traditional standards, they form a great linguistic storehouse of classical Gaelic, unimpeachable in vocabulary, morphology and syntax. For the social history of Ireland it would be hard to exaggerate their importance'.[80]

Ó Tuathail's[81] article on *Druid Rhetorics from Ancient Irish Tales*[82] recounts the almost divine rank of the ancient poets in society equating them to modern scholars who are sometimes called upon to be government advisors.[83] He illustrates the power of ancient poets by citing Cairbre's

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[68] Dowling, Patrick John (1935) The Hedge Schools Of Ireland. Dublin & Cork. The Talbot Press Limited.
[69] Hyde, Douglas (1967) A Literary History Of Ireland: From Earliest Times To The Present Day. London. Ernest Benn Limited. New York. Barnes & Noble Inc.
[70] Graham, Hugh (1923) The Early Irish Monastic Schools: A Study Of Ireland's Contribution To Early Medieval Culture. Dublin. The Talbot Press Limited.
[71] Bergin, Osborn 'Bardic Poetry', Journal of the Ivernian Society, V, 155-66, 203-16.
[72] McGracth, Fergal S.J. (1979) Education In Ancient And Medieval Ireland. Dublin. Studies 'Special Publications'.
[73] Trinity College Dublin.
[74] The Royal Irish Academy.
[75] O' Rahilly, T. F. (1946) Early Irish History and Mythology. Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.
[76] Joyce, P. W. (1913) A Social History of Ancient Ireland. Dublin. M. H. Gill & Son Ltd.
[77] Hyland, Aine and Milne, Kenneth (1987) Irish Educational Documents Volume 1: A selection of extracts from documents relating to the history of Irish education from the earliest times to 1922. Dublin. Church of Ireland College of Education.
[78] Clanricarde, Ulick (1757) The Memoirs and Letters of Ulick Marquis of Clanricarde, and Earl of Saint Albans; Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, And Commander in Chief of the Forces of King Charles the First in that Kingdom, during the Rebellion, Governor of the County and Town of Galway, Lord Lieutenant of the County of Kent, And Privy Counsellor in England and Ireland. London. R. and J. Dodsley.
[79] McGrath, Fergal S.J. (1979) Education In Ancient And Medieval Ireland. Dublin. Studies 'Special Publications'. p. 37.
[80] Ibid. p. 38.
[81] http://www.imbas.org/articles/excellence *of* the ancient_word.html
Accessed 09/11/2010.
[82] Ibid. p. 1.
[83] Ibid.

satire, composed when he was denied hospitality in the court of Bress, king of the gods, in Tara. Apparently the satire was so powerful it toppled the king from his throne.[84]

2.3.2 The Bardic Schools

Between 590 AD and the seventeenth century[85] Bardic Schools, also known as ancient professional schools of Ireland[86] or the poetical seminary,[87] flourished as public institutions. According to the laws passed at the convention of Drumceatt,[88] which took place around 560 A.D., poets were given important duties to perform for the High King, the kings of the five provinces and the chiefs of each territory. They were also required to give 'public instruction to all comers in the learning of the day.' One of the laws passed also made the 'persons and property of poets sacred'[89] and gave them right of sanctuary in their own land from all the men of Ireland.[90] The convention also sanctioned the teaching of classical Irish epics as well as classical poets like Virgil, Ovid and Homer.[91]

It is important that Saint Columba mediated on behalf of the poets at Drumceatt not only because it indicates the value of poetry within the Christian Church but also points to the assimilation of both Christian and Pagan culture in Irish society.[92] It has been argued by academics that Saint Columba is representative of the first Christian missionaries who used Celtic poetic rhyme and in turn influenced the advancement made in the metrical structure of early Medieval Latin poetry.[93] The Bardic Schools like those in Rathkenry, County Meath and Masree, County Cavan taught poetry, law, the sciences and history and educated the lawyers, judges and poets of Ireland.[94]

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[84] Ibid.
[85] Hyde, Douglas (1967) A Literary History of Ireland: From Earliest Times To The Present Day. London. & New York. Ernest Benn Limited and Barnes & Noble Inc. p. 241.
[86] Dowling, Patrick John (1935) The Hedge Schools of Ireland. Dublin & Cork. The Talbot Press Limited. p. 2.
[87] Hyland, Aine and Milne, Kenneth (1987) Irish Educational Documents Volume 1: A selection of extracts from documents relating to the history of Irish education from the earliest times to 1922. Dublin. Church of Ireland College of Education. p. 31.
[88] Hyde, Douglas (1967) A Literary History of Ireland: From Earliest Times To The Present Day. London. & New York. Ernest Benn Limited and Barnes & Noble Inc. Hyde tells us that Drum Ceat was near Limavaddy in Northern Ireland.
[89] Ibid. p. 490.
[90] Ibid.
[91] http://american_almanac.tripod.com/monks.htm p. 8.
Accessed 09/11/2010.
[92] McGrath, Fergal S.J. (1979) Education In Ancient And Medieval Ireland. Dublin. Studies 'Special Publications'. pp. 117, 118.
[93] Hyde, Douglas (1967) A Literary History Of Ireland: From Earliest Times To The Present Day. London & New York. Ernest Benn Limited and Barnes & Noble Inc. pp. 480 – 486.
[94] Ibid. p. 490.

Hyde states that the educative function of the Bardic Schools seems to have been as important and influential as the foundation of the religious orders and that even the Norman Conquest could not suppress the importance of the bard in Irish society.[95] Hyde provides many fascinating examples that illustrate this and how their poetry symbolised the interconnectedness of the Celtic race in Europe. It is unfortunate, however, that they are beyond the scope of inclusion in this project, but the researcher recommends reading them as a means of discovering how literature has shaped and defined the social and cultural history of Ireland as well as yielding valuable information about the genesis of Irish literary trends.

In the Bardic schools the method of instruction according to numerous sources was through Irish and that the Irish language and literature, Irish history and Brehon law was intensively and scientifically studied.[96] The rigorousness of the training that the poets under went was essential because of their important function as recorders of ancient culture and tradition and in perpetuating the genealogical history of the ruling Gaelic houses.

The value of the Bardic schools is intrinsically linked to the survival of Irish culture and tradition and Auchmuty[97] reminds us that 'It was through them that the legendary stories of Ireland's mythological history were preserved in verse'.[98] The poetry of the Irish Bards represents the 'oldest vernacular poetry in Europe'[99] from which we learn about the social, political, economic and religious structure of our ancient past.

2.3.3 Poetry as an educative tool in the early Christian Church

The use of poetry as an educative tool in the early Christian church is indisputable. In *The Value to the Young of the Reading of Ancient Authors* Saint Basil urged Christian students to read poets, historians and orators as preparation for the study of Scripture.[100] According to Hughes and Hamlin[101] children fostered into the monasteries, usually between ages 5 and 7, were

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[95] Ibid. pp. 490 – 497.
[96] Dowling, Patrick, John (1935) The Hedge Schools Of Ireland. Dublin & Cork. The Talbot Press Limited. p. 3.
[97] Auchmuty, James Johnston (1937) Irish Education: A Historical Survey. Dublin. Hodges Figgis & CO. London. George G. Harrap & CO., LTD
[98] Ibid. p. 11.
[99] http://www.music.us/education/I/Irish-poetry.htm
Accessed 09/11/2010.
[100] Jarman, T. L. (1966) Landmarks In The History Of Education: English Education as part of the European Tradition. 2nd ed. reprint. London. John Murray. p. 43.
[101] Hughes, Kathleen and Hamlin, Ann (1977) The modern traveler to the Early Irish Church. London. pp. 9, 10.

educated partly through the use of poetry, particularly the use of Psalms. They also tell us that the clerics recited the Psalter because 'they loved its poetry'.[102] Other sources tell us that the Irish monastery schools used manuscripts of the Gospels, Psalms, classical Latin poets, Euclid and sometimes Homer.[103] Students like St. Columba were taught divinity, classical poetry, philosophy, Latin, Greek, science and general literature. In order for students to gain the first degree of learning they had to be able to recite all of the 150 Psalms.[104] Graham draws attention to the research of Sigerson[105] and Healy[106], both of whom highlight the importance of poetry in the early Christian church referring in particular to the Irish poet Sedulius the Elder (5th century AD) who produced the first Christian Epic based on events in the Old and New Testament. From about the 6th century A.D. students were being taught poems and stories written in the Irish vernacular

It is not surprising that poetry was incorporated into the curriculum of both lay and monastic schools since it was the predominant method of educating the majority of people in Ireland at that time. Joyce professes that poetry was the means of educating a vast illiterate lay population who schooled themselves by listening to recitations, 'the recitation of stories and poems was then as general as the reading of newspapers and story-books is at the present day'.[107] There is sufficient evidence in the research of Irish and other academics to state that the study of poetry was an essential part of monastic education and Charles Plummer[108] verifies this by arguing that the Psalms in Latin were probably the earliest subject of instruction;[109] while Stokes and Strachan[110] propose that the Psalms were learned by rote and intensively studied. Rote learning of poetry was not unusual for pupils in the monastic schools since many of the teachers composed 'educational poems embodying the leading facts of history and other branches of

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[102] Ibid.
[103] http://american_almanac.tripod.com/monks.htm
Accessed 09/11/2010.
[104] Ibid. p. 7.
[105] Sigerson, George (1925) Bards of the Gael and Gall. In Graham, Hugh (1923) The Early Irish Monastic Schools: A Study Of Ireland's Contribution To Early Medieval Culture. Dublin. The Talbot Press Limited. pp. 22, 23.
[106] Healy, John (1897) Insula Sanctorum et doctorum: or, Ireland's ancient Schools and Scholars. Dublin. Sealy, Bryers & Walker.
[107] Joyce, P. W. (1997) Social History of Ireland. Kansas City. Irish Genealogical Foundation. pp. 418, 426.
[108] Plummer, Charles (1910) Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae I. Oxonii: E. Typographeo Clarendoniano. p. cxv.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Stokes, Whitley and Strachan, John (1903) Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: a collection of old-Irish glosses, scholia, prose and verse. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. Vol. 2. pp. 3 – 481.

instruction',[111] the evidence of which is to be found in surviving manuscripts and in particular in the 'educational poems on historical subjects'[112] by Flann of Monasterboice.[113] Other poems like the *Geographical Poem* recorded in the *Book of Leinster* provides a fascinating insight into the understanding of the geography of the world in the tenth century. Hyde refers to the poem as 'a kind of simple text'[114] while Graham calls it 'a sort of text book on general geography.'[115] McGrath's brief synopsis of the poem indicates a knowledge and understanding of the geography of the world that is simply extraordinary for the period, 'For its time, the poem is remarkably accurate as to the situation of over a hundred countries and towns, their fauna and natural products'.[116]

W. Stokes[117] and Gearóid Mac Eoin[118] have provided very interesting commentary on a collection of poems called Saltair na Rann which again dates from about the tenth century and deals with a range of topics including a description of the universe which McGrath argues is 'sometimes remarkably accurate'.[119] There is sufficient evidence in the surviving libraries of Irish monastic settlements in Switzerland and Italy to suggest that the works of Virgil, Ovid, Cicero, Seneca and Horace were taught.[120] Irish monks from the earliest period undertook a very serious study of poetry and wrote treatises which dealt with grammar, the art of rhetoric and with versification, and they modeled, cited or imitated in their own writing the best attributes of the classical writers like Virgil, Horace and Juvenal.[121] The study of classical poets in the monastic schools is probably correlative to their inclusion for study in the curriculum of English schools. English humanists, like the Irish monks, felt that classical poets like Virgil and Horace offered

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[111] Graham, Hugh (1923) The Early Irish Monastic Schools: A Study Of Ireland's Contribution To Early Medieval Culture. Dublin. The Talbot Press Limited. p. 98.
[112] Ibid. Citing P. W. Joyce. P. 440.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Hyde, Douglas (1967) A Literary History Of Ireland: From Earliest Times To The Present Day. London & New York. Ernest Benn Limited and Barnes & Noble Inc. p. 213.
[115] Graham, Hugh (1923) The Early Irish Monastic Schools: A Study Of Ireland's Contribution To Early Medieval Culture. Dublin. The Talbot Press Limited. p. 98.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Stokes, W. ed. (1883) Saltair na Rann: A Collection of Early Middle Irish Poems. from MS. Rawl. B. 502 in the Bodleian Library. Oxford. Clarendon Press.
[118] Mac Eoin, Gearóid (1960-61) 'The date and authorship of Saltair na Rann', Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie XXVIII, 51-67.
[119] McGrath, Fergal S.J. (1979) Education In Ancient And Medieval Ireland. Dublin. Studies 'Special Publications'. p. 127.
[120] Ibid. pp. 111 – 115.
[121] Ibid. pp.130 – 135.

models of 'moral, political and philosophical truth'[122] and were a means of inculcating moral values.[123]

Perhaps the best summation of the importance of the monastic schools is encapsulated in the critical commentary of one historian who argued that they nurtured 'a classical spirit, a love of literature for its own sake and a keen delight in poetry'.[124] St. Columba's recruitment of large numbers of poets or bards to the church for the purpose of arranging the annals of the monasteries in poetic form and for the writing of old Irish epics so they could be disseminated and read meant that Irish monasteries were the largest repositories of books.[125] It is also interesting to note that despite the disintegration of Catholic influence in education in some European countries during the Reformation the literature prescribed for study by the monks still prevailed in the curricula of Protestant schools; therefore we find that Calvin's Schola Privata in Geneva advocated learning Virgil's *Aeneid*, Ovid, Cicero, Homer, Polybius and Livy.[126] In England post Reformation poets like John Milton who were educated in the classics advocated a belief in the instructive power of poetry and he used his epic poem *Paradise Lost* as a vehicle to intermingle religion and learning.

2.4 The Hedge Schools: preserving historical traditions

The Hedge schools emerged out of the political and religious upheaval of the sixteenth century when it became impossible for the Bardic and monastic schools to continue, and they survived into the nineteenth century despite continuous efforts by the British government to establish alternative systems of education in Ireland.[127] The ability of the poets to stir up 'the spirit of nationality'[128] has been put forward by many academics as one of the chief reasons for the English government's policy to repress the Bardic schools. However, the research of Corkery,[129]

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[122] Abrams, M. H., ed. (1986) *Norton Anthology of English Literature,* Vol. 1. 5th ed., New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. p. 415.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Poole, Reginald Lane (1884) Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought in the departments of Theology and Ecclesiastical Politics. London. S. P. C. K. P. 14.
[125] http://american_almanac.tripod.com/monks.htm p. 13. Accessed 09/11/2010.
[126] Jarman, T. L. (1966) Landmarks In The History Of Education: English Education as part of the European Tradition. 2nd ed. reprint. London. John Murray. pp. 152, 153. Citing from W. H. Woodward, Studies in Education.
[127] Dowling, Patrick, John (1935) The Hedge Schools Of Ireland. Dublin & Cork. The Talbot Press Limited.
[128] Ibid. p. 6.
[129] Corkery, Daniel (1967) The Hidden Ireland: a study of Gaelic Munster in the eighteenth century. Dublin. Gill and Son.

Parsons,[130] Mason[131] and Kenney[132] is testimony that poetry was so innate in the Irish psyche that it continued to dominate the cultural life of the countryside and 'Courts of Poetry' emerged in place of the Bardic schools. Dowling draws on Parsons' and Mason's research to affirm the educative value of the 'Courts of Poetry' describing the gatherings of poets 'with their people around them ... repeating the histories of ancient heroes'[133] while 'preserving the accuracy of tradition'.[134] There is countless testimony that both overtly and covertly suggests the value of poetry as an educative tool in post Reformation Ireland, the most obvious being the fear of its power expressed in documents drafted by government. Corcoran[135] refers to one such document drafted, he believes, by the Lord Deputy of Ireland Sir Henry Sidney, who argued that all Bards and Rhymers along with Brehons, Friars, Monks and Jesuits should be executed by martial law.[136] It is of course ironic that while successive parliaments in Britain were passing laws to repress the power of the Bardic tradition in Ireland, Sir Philip Sidney in his *Defence of Poesy* was arguing that poetry had tremendous 'social and moral value'[137] because it was

'... of all human learning the most ancient ... as from whence other learnings have taken their beginnings ... it is so universal that no learned nation doth despise it, nor barbarous nation is without it; since both Roman and Greek gave such divine names unto it, the one of prophesying, the other of making ... since his effects be so good as to teach goodness and to delight the learners; since therein (namely in moral doctrine, the chief of all knowledges) he doth not only far pass the historian, but for instructing, is well nigh comparable to the philosopher ... since the Holy Scripture (wherein there is no uncleanness) hath whole parts in it poetical, and that even our Saviour Christ vouchsafed to use the flowers of it ... I think the laurel crown appointed for triumphant captains doth worthily (of all other learnings) honour the poet's triumph'.[138]

The inability of post Reformation governments to stamp out the influence of poetry in Irish education was due largely to the efforts of lay schoolmasters who ran the illegal Hedge schools in remote districts and were 'well versed in the language, literature and history of the country'.[139]

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[130] Parsons, James (1767) Remains of Japhet, being Historical Enquiries into the affinity and origin of the European Languages. London. L. Davis, C. Reymess, J. Whiston, B. White, G. Faulkner.
[131] Mason, W. S. (1814-1819) A Statistical Account, or Parochial Survey of Ireland. 3 Vols. Dublin.
[132] Kenney, J. F. (1929) The Sources for the Early History of Ireland. Columbia University Press.
[133] Parsons. Cited in Dowling, p. 9.
[134] Mason. Cited in Dowling, p. 10.
[135] Corcoran, T. (1916) State Policy in Irish Education, 1536-1816. Dublin and London.
[136] Ibid. pp. 50, 51.
[137] Abrams, M. H., ed. (1986) *Norton Anthology of English Literature,* Vol. 1. 5th ed., New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. p. 504.
[138] Sidney, Sir Philip (1597) The Defence of Posey. In Abrams, M. H., ed. (1986) *Norton Anthology of English Literature,* Vol. 1. 5th ed., New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. pp. 517, 518.
[139] Dowling, Patrick John (1935) The Hedge of Ireland. Dublin & Cork. The Talbot Press Limited. p. 21.

Dowling asserts that these lay schoolmasters included some of the most eminent poets of the day who were scholars and well versed in Latin and Greek and who passed on to their pupils a knowledge of the classical poets.[140]

The importance of the Hedge schools is probably attributable to the opportunity they afforded storytellers to preserve and share traditional Irish lore, particularly poetical fragments from the poems and stories of Fionn Mac Cumhill. The Donegal Genealogy Resources Website[141] offers a fascinating insight into the importance of Hedge schools in Inishowen purporting that 'it was possible to meet men who had never left their district, never been to any school and who according to unimaginative census officials, were illiterate and yet were well "read" in the unwritten literature of the people.'[142] These Seanachai or storytellers were deemed to promote many of the values inherent in their society, values that included 'the brotherhood and equality of man, the finite nature of man but infinite nature of his soul.'[143] His stories were deemed to have therapeutic as well as educational value 'in so far as they were the literature of the people.'[144]

2.5.1 Reforming morality: the educative function of poetry in the eighteenth century

There is little obvious comparability between the intellectual understanding of the function of poetry in society espoused by literary figures like Pope and Addison and the educative use of poetry in schools for the poor in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The cultural changes in Europe, particularly in England and France, gave rise to a philosophy of human nature that was radically different to earlier periods and manifested itself in the exercise of benevolence and virtue. It also gave way, particularly in Britain, to the revival of Methodism and a puritanical zeal to reform the coarser aspects of human nature.[145] Locke's argument that 'Our business here is not to know all things, but those which concern our conduct'[146] added weight to the evangelical zeal of social reformers and philanthropists like Robert Nelson and the poet and playwright Hannah More; it also allowed them and others to argue that ignorance, sloth and debauchery would

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[140] Ibid. pp. 45 – 53.
[141] http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~donegal/inishowenhs.htm pp. 1 - 8. Accessed 09/11/2010.
[142] Ibid. p. 7.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Jones, M. G. (1938) The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action. London. Cambridge University Press.
[146] Locke, John (1693) Some Thoughts Concerning Education. London. A. & J. Churchill at Black Swan in Pater-noster-row.

disappear if 'the children of the poor were trained to habits of order and decency in the schools'.[147] There is evidence suggesting that the teaching of literature in the eighteenth century was considered to be a useful means of forming the 'moral' conscience of children, particularly poor children. The interesting thing about poetry in the eighteenth century is that the term 'moral', which is applied to its instructive power, is actually not defined by anthologists. Therefore, the term 'moral' can only be defined within the perspective given to it by the writers who published texts for children during this period. Ian Michael's[148] analysis of English texts used during the eighteenth century demonstrates that school anthologists imposed what he considered 'a straitjacket of moral comment and interpretation' on poetry and prose. In *The teaching of English*[149] He refers to a considerable body of textbooks published during the period that were intended to instruct children, whether in school or at home, about their actions and behaviour. Between 1706 and 1751 three verse writers for children published texts with specific moral instruction implied in the titles, specifically, Isaac Watts' Horae Lyricae (1706)[150] and *Divine Songs* (1715),[151] Thomas Foxton's *Moral Songs* (1728)[152] and Nathaniel Cotton's *Visions in Verse* (1751).[153] Michael states that Watts prescribed his 1706 anthology for young people who 'have been allowed to Sin beyond the Vicious Propensities of Nature, plung'd early into Diseases and Death, sunk down to Damnation in Multitudes'. There can be little doubt from Watts' comments in his preface that the poems in his anthologies be used for more than mere reading, spelling and grammar exercises. Schools texts, particularly volumes of prose and poetry were also used for instruction in drama and elocution and some were specifically designed in deference to girls' edification. While others like *On the Best Method of Exciting Literary Genius in Boys who Possess it*[154] were obviously aimed specifically at teaching boys. Some writers, like James Buchanan,[155] felt that certain selections of poems in anthologies should be taught because they dealt with important issues like 'monotheism, patriotism and the duties of husbands and wives.'[156] The range of anthologies during the eighteenth century is extensive and as Michael

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[147] Jones, M. G. (1938) The Charity School Movement: A Study Of Eighteenth Century Puritanism In Action. London. Cambridge University Press. p.14.
[148] Michael, Ian (1987) The teaching of English: From The Sixteenth Cetury To 1870. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid. p. 168.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid. p. 188.
[155] Ibid. p. 172.
[156] Ibid. p. 173.

points out difficult to categorise in relation to their specific use either in the home or in schools. However, it is evident that a considerable number of writers were publishing anthologies intended for instructing the morality of the youth in school and I would assume that this was by intention rather than by default. I make this assumption because of the proliferation of anthologies where authors categorically stipulate the moral emphasis of the selections to be taught. This is specifically evident in the latter part of the eighteenth century where themes identified in the texts include 'fear of passion, and a preoccupation with morality.'[157]

Publishers who first began commissioning authors in the 1780s to write juvenile fiction published books that would 'mould the character of their readers'.[158] Avery's[159] study of children's fiction from 1780 to 1900 proposes the argument that literature was used as a means of moral indoctrination, 'the business of the novel was to educate and to inculcate morality by example. If adults uncomplainingly received sermons, reflections on slavery and the penal laws, in the middle of a love story, children were hardly likely to be spared'.[160] In the same way that poetry taught in schools set out the virtues of good behaviour, modesty, humility and industry, juvenile fiction presented 'personifications of the very good or the very wicked, the sensible or the very foolish'.[161] Early juvenile fiction was sporadically laced with rhyming songs and verses that emphasised a moral to be learned or, as in More's verse tract called *The Carpenter*, or, *The Danger of Evil Company*,[162] included a rhyming verse for the protagonist to repeat every night like a mantra to keep him from committing the sin of drunkenness,

The Drunkard Murders Child and Wife.
Nor matters it a pin,
Whether he stabs them with his knife,
Or starves them by his gin.

The educative function of poetry particularly in sacred scripture became synonymous with moral instruction in the Charity and Charter Schools during the penal period in Ireland and this was later perpetuated by religious orders like the Christian Brothers, the Sisters of Mercy and the

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[157] Ibid. p. 193.
[158] Avery, Gillian (1965) Nineteenth Century Children: Heroes and Heroines in English Children's Stories 1780-1900. London. Hodder And Stoughton. p. 11.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid. p. 13.
[161] Ibid. p. 14.
[162] Ibid.

Commissioners of Irish Education. The 'literary curriculum' of the English Charity schools was primarily based on the religious principles of the Church of England for which they used the Anglican catechism, *The Book of Common Prayer* and in particular the *Psalms of David*, 'Select psalms, such as the first, eight, fifteenth and twenty-third, were learnt by heart'.[163] It would not be erroneous to argue that Charity children were taught *Psalms* and hymns so that they could be transformed into 'pious and respectful members of the community'[164] and to teach them 'the duties of humility and submission to superiors'.[165] This was an overt attempt to instill obedience and submissiveness and a sense of moral and social obligation in the children as is evident in the words of the following hymn,

Obscurer by mean and humble birth
In ignorance we lay.
Till Christian Bounty called us forth
And led us unto day.
Oh, look for ever kindly down
On those that help the poor
Oh, let success their labours crown
And Plenty keep their store.[166]

New child-centered approaches of learning through experience and play developed by Pestalozzi and Froebel, theorists like Maria and Robert Lovell Edgeworth[167] strongly advocated teaching classical poetry and mythology to young children. They recommended teaching variations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as the best introduction to the Latin classics and mythology[168] and Dr Darwin's *Botanic Garden* because of its 'beautiful poetic allusions to ancient gems and ancient fables'.[169] The Edgeworths believed that learning poetry was an effective way for children to exercise and improve their memory, 'In poetry the rhymes, the cadence, the alliteration, the peculiar structure of the poet's lines, assist us. All these are mechanical helps to the memory'.[170] The underlying intimation in the Edgeworth's philosophical arguments about education is that

[163] Jones, M. G. (1938) The Charity School Movement: A Study Of Eighteenth Century Puritanism In Action. London. Cambridge University Press. p. 79.
[164] Ibid. p. 74.
[165] Ibid. p. 74
[166] Ibid. p. 76.
[167] Manly, Susan ed., (2003) The novels And Selected Works Of Maria Edgeworth Volume II: Practical Education. London. Pickering & Chatto.
[168] Ibid. p. 239.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid. p. 318.

literature should be used to enable children to select from it 'what is best worth their attention, and for applying what they remember to useful purposes'.[171]

2.5.2 Summation of the educative function of poetry in the eighteenth century

There is extensive evidence that poetry had an educative function in the eighteenth century. British and Irish writers, child centered educationists and religious institutions were encouraging the teaching of literature, particularly poetry, because it could be adapted to fit the essential criteria of whomsoever was doing the teaching. This meant that those who favoured a child centered educational philosophy would push the imaginative and affective aspects of poetry while charity schools could use it to moderate, in a conformist way, the behaviour and inclinations of the poor.

2.6.1 Intellectual and spiritual learning: the educative use of poetry in Irish schools in the nineteenth century

The importance of poetry, as a didactic educative tool in nineteenth century schools, should not be underestimated. The education of a population divided by religious beliefs where one faith vied against another to maintain control was partly dependent upon the way in which literature was used to inculcate a sense of morality and submission in the children. It was apparent among some of the late eighteenth century writers, like Maria Edgeworth, that children's moral and religious development could be enabled through the study of poetry. Literature became the medium through which children, especially poor children, were taught to suppress their natural inclinations, accept their fate unquestioningly and save their souls from damnation. Among the prerequisites for teaching according to the *Twelve Practical Rules for the Teachers of National Schools* (c.1835) was to pay 'the strictest attention to the morals and general conduct of their pupils, and to omit no opportunity of inculcating the principals of truth and honesty: the duties of respect to superiors, and obedience to all persons placed in authority over them'.[172] The Commissioners for Irish education published several volumes of readers and poetry selections for use in the schools and these texts illustrate the pedagogic parameters within which Irish policy makers and educators operated.

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[171] Ibid. p. 328.

[172] Appendix XVII to the thirteenth Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, 1846. Cited in Hyland and Milne (1987) Irish Educational Documents Volume 1: A selection of extracts from documents relating to the history of Irish education from the earliest times to 1922. Dublin. Church of Ireland College of Education. p. 120.

Throughout the nineteenth century the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland published texts like *Sacred Poetry*,[173] the study of which was to be examined by the inspectors on their visits to the schools,[174] *Selections From The British Poets*,[175] *Poetic Selections* Volumes I[176] and II,[177] for use in the classroom. Apart from the broad range of poetry included in these texts the really interesting thing about *Selections From The British Poets* is its division into units of study that includes *Sacred*, *Moral* and *Didactic* poetry. In the preface the Commissioners emphasised the educative function of the poetry selected for study,

'The value of selections of good poetry for the use of schools in cultivating the taste, improving the moral character, and awakening a desire for the acquisition of useful knowledge, has been fully appreciated by the most eminent authorities on the education of the youth'.[178]

They argued that the selection of poetry was deliberately chosen 'to make strong religious impressions on the youthful mind'[179] and that other themes in the poetry 'open up a copious source of knowledge and intellectual gratification to readers of different ages, and of every variety of taste'.[180] The Commissioners recommend that teachers set aside 'at least one day in each week, during the hours of ordinary instruction, for the reading of poetry'[181] and they suggest the methodological approach that the teacher should adopt for the poetry lessons so that they 'invigorate the intellectual faculties of the pupils, sharpen their critical perceptions, exercise their memories, improve their taste for reading, and call their moral powers into vigorous action'.[182] The methodological approach discussed by the Commissioners involves choosing

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[173] Commissioners Of National Education Ireland (1897) Sacred Poetry Adapted To The Understanding Of Children And Youth: For The Schools. Dublin. Browne And Nolan, Limited.
[174] Appendix E to the Third Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, 1836. Cited in Hyland, Áine and Milne, Kenneth (1987) Irish Educational Documents Volume 1: A selection of extracts from documents relating to the history of Irish education from the earliest times to 1922. Dublin. Church of Ireland College of Education. p. 117.
[175] Commissioners Of National Education Ireland (1860) Selections From The British Poets, Chronologically Arranged From Chaucer To The Present Time, Under Separate Divisions, With Introductions Explaining The Different Species Of Poetry. Volume I. Dublin. Alex Thom & Sons, Printers And Publishers.
[176] Commissioners Of National Education Ireland (1869) Poetic Selections: For The Use Of Their Teachers And The Advanced Pupils Of National Schools, Volume I. Dublin. Alexander Thom, Printer and Publisher Abbey Street.
[177] Commissioners Of National Education Ireland (1871) Poetic Selections: For The Use Of Their Teachers And The Advanced Pupils Of National Schools, Volume II. Dublin. Alexander Thom, Printer and Publisher Abbey Street.
[178] Commissioners Of National Education Ireland (1860) Selections From The British Poets, Chronologically Arranged From Chaucer To The Present Time, Under Separate Divisions, With Introductions Explaining The Different Species Of Poetry. Dublin. Alex Thom & Sons, Printers And Publishers. p. v.
[179] Ibid. p. vi.
[180] Ibid. p. vii.
[181] Ibid. p. viii.
[182] Ibid. p. ix.

specific poems and reading them aloud to the students in a 'distinct tone of voice'[183] using 'appropriate emphasis and expression.'[184] As well as the poems, the teacher should also read a part of the biographical sketch of the author 'from whose works the extract is taken, and of the introduction to the species of poetry to which the piece belongs.'[185] The teacher should explain any allusions that may appear ambiguous in the writing as well as drawing attention to words and passages that need emphasising. The intention of the author and the meaning of the lesson should be conveyed to the students in simple and intelligible language. The teacher may ask questions chosen from the Biographical Sketches pertaining to the author's name, date and place of birth, his character, the important events in his life, his principal works and also,

' ... the department of poetry in which he was most distinguished; the names of the eminent writers who have criticised his works; the nature of the judgement they have prounced upon their merits and defects; and the rank they have assigned to him amongst his brother poets.'[186]

The students would then be required to read all or a portion of the poet's work which had already been explained to them and be prepared to answer questions on what they have read. Students could also be given various pieces of poetry to memorise and then recite in front of the whole school 'not with a view of encouraging declamation in a theatrical style, which has an injurious tendency, but of cultivating a natural, easy, and correct delivery.' [187] Accordingly, the prudent and well informed teacher would make the reading of poetry valuable not only for itself but as an additional means of communicating knowledge about 'the history and peculiarities of our language, and in instructing them how to parse, with facility and accuracy, the most intricate passages in the works of our poets.'[188]

The Commissioners realised that not all teachers were 'qualified' to teach poetry according to their 'minute and systematic course of instruction'[189] but since poetry was a fundamental component in the education of children they recommended these teachers should 'persue, with attention, after school hours, the *Biographical Sketches of the Poets*, the selections from their

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[183] Ibid. p. viii.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid. pp. viii, ix..
[189] Ibid. p. ix.

works, and the explanatory introductions to the different species of poetry. They should also, occasionally, read poetry aloud in their private apartments'.[190]

The inclusion of poems in this volume entitled *To my Soul*,[191] *Conscience*,[192] *A Contented Mind*,[193] *Virtue not Hereditary*,[194] *The immortality of the Soul*,[195] *Mercy*,[196] *Humility*,[197] *Charity*[198], and the reciprocation of Coleridge's and Southey's arguments about the positive effects of poetry on the mind and attitude of the reader indicate that the Commissioners believed poetry was an essential part of the curriculum.

In their introductory remarks on sacred poetry the Commissioners were adamant that not only in their opinion but also according to many other authoritative sources 'poetry is never more nobly employed than when it infuses into the mind a spirit of piety, and elevates the thoughts of man to his Maker'.[199] It is evident that the Commissioners selected the poems very carefully, and were familiar with scholarly publications on the function and value of sacred poetry for example, they refer to the Rev. R. Cattermole's *Specimens of Sacred Poetry of the Seventeenth Century* published in 1836,[200] Robert Aris Willmott's *Lives of the English Sacred Poets* published in 1839,[201] and J. W. Parker's *Gems of Sacred Poetry*.[202] It is clear from the inclusion of poets like Chaucer, Spenser, Herrick, Herbert and Milton and also from their allusion to the origin of the word 'didactic' that the Commissioners were relying on the long established theory from classical antiquity and particularly from writers like Plutarch that poetry could educate its audience; Plutarch had strongly advocated teaching poetry because of its educative function and

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[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid. p. xi.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid. p. 1.
[200] Ibid. p. 2.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.

drew on examples from Homer's *Odyssey* to prove that it provided 'useful insights'[203] into 'human character'[204] and 'examples of virtue'.[205]

In the section on didactic and moral poetry the Commissioners allude to the works of Dr Hugh Blair and Dr Nathan Drake to reinforce their argument that the poet is a 'teacher' and a 'moralist' and that poetry teaches by enlightening and reforming society either in the form of a philosophical treatise or by 'a series of observations on human life and character'.[206] They recommended that teachers familiarise themselves with works like the *General Nature of Poetry* by Dr James Beattie[207] and Henry Neele's *Lectures on English Poetry*[208] because they encompassed such useful information about the function of poetry, the former in particular was recommended since it discussed didactic poetry in its five forms of composition, the *Philosophical Poem*, the *Comic Satire*, the *Serious Satire*, the *Moral Epistle*, and the *Moral Apologue*, or *Fable*, 'intended to illustrate some one moral truth by a short allegorical tale'.[209] The Commissioners were so forceful in their arguments about the educative function of poetry that even their recommendations read like didactic tracts, they adamantly promoted the teaching of poetry because they believed in its power to uphold 'the truths of religion'[210] and enforce 'the principles of morality',[211]

'Youth should be taught to remember, that whatever department of literature is designed to make them wiser and better, to expand the mind and amend the heart, demands their thoughtful study. Didactic poetry, independently of its moral aim, is beneficial to the pupil by exciting him to think and reflect'[212] ... 'The reader of moral and philosophical poetry may carry with him the power of comparing, with the written page, the workings of his own mind, and the characters and actions of his fellow beings'.[213]

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[203] Stanford, W. B. (1980) Enemies of Poetry. London, Boston and Henley. Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 79.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Commissioners Of National Education Ireland (1860) Selections From The British Poets, Chronologically Arranged From Chaucer To The Present Time, Under Separate Divisions, With Introductions Explaining The Different Species Of Poetry. Dublin. Alex Thom & Sons, Printers And Publishers. p. 199.
[207] Ibid. p. 200.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid. p.
[210] Ibid. p. 201.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid, citing an unnamed source in the Edinburgh Review.

In *Poetic Selections Volume I*, published in 1869 for the use of teachers and advanced pupils of the National Schools,[214] the Commissioners selected excerpts from Shakespeare's plays for the edification of the pupils. In *Volume II* of the same text published in 1871[215] the Commissioners included a wide selection of scholarly poetry that included lots of classical, historical and religious allusions, for example, excerpts from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, excerpts from Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, excerpts from John Dryden including *Absalom and Achithophel* and excerpts from Alexander Pope. The range and scope of these selections are proof that the Commissioners intended the poetry to be used in the classroom as a means of intellectual and spiritual learning.

The *Sacred Poetry*[216] edition published by the Commissioners was a small booklet about prayer book size (A5) and the 'sacred truths and precepts' [217] embodied in the poems were to be committed to memory by the students because they would 'soften'[218] their manners, 'refine'[219] their taste and give them 'a relish for pleasures of a higher order and of a purer kind'.[220] The Commissioners considered *Sacred Poetry* worthy of study because it 'has prevailed in all nations that have made any advancement towards civilization or refinement'.[221] The commissioners stressed that the sacred poetry selections were chosen specifically with the 'peasantry of Ireland'[222] in mind and hoped that poems like *The Advantages of Early Religion*,[223] *The All-Seeing God*,[224] *Denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts*,[225] *Against Yielding to Temptation*,[226] *Turn off mine Eyes from beholding Vanity*,[227] *Love and Duty to Parents*,[228] *Against Wandering Thoughts*,[229] *Against Lying*,[230] *Against Pride in Clothes*[231] and *Against Idleness and Mischief*[232]

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[214] Commissioners Of National Education (1869) Poetic Selections: For The Use Of Their Teachers And The Advanced Pupils Of National Schools, Volume I. Dublin. Alexander Thom, Printer and Publisher Abbey Street.
[215] Commissioners Of National Education (1871) Poetic Selections: For The Use Of Their Teachers And The Advanced Pupils Of National Schools, Volume II. Dublin. Alexander Thom, Printer and Publisher Abbey Street.
[216] Commissioners Of National Education Ireland (1897) Sacred Poetry Adapted To The Understanding Of Children And Youth: For The Schools. Dublin. Browne And Nolan, Limited.
[217] Ibid. pp. iii, iv.
[218] Ibid. p. iv.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid. p. iii.
[222] Ibid. p. iv.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.

(see appendix 1 for complete list) could be learned and recalled for moral guidance when needed by the students in later life.

It is likely that poetry books and readers other than those published by the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland were to be used in schools for moral instruction, for example, Dr William Davis'[233] *The Book of Poetry for Schools and Families*[234] included excepts from poets whose work, if not predominantly sacred, was at least, inherently moralistic. It is not surprising therefore to find in Davis' anthology excerpts from poets like Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope and poems like *God the Author of Nature*,[235] *To Mary in Heaven*,[236] *Ode to Duty*,[237] *The Power of God*[238] and *The Hour of Prayer*.[239] His anthology also included *Poetical Gems*[240] which were quotations from well-known works and meant for memorisation by the students; these 'gems' were, he believed, 'household words with well-read people'[241] and were included to familiarise the 'young of both sexes, not only with these household words, but with their sources, and, in most instances, with the passages of which they form a part'[242] (see appendix 2 for examples of the quotations).

It is probable from the evidence available that the teaching of literature in nineteenth century schools was overtly used for evangelical purposes in both Ireland and England. This is evident in documents like the article written by an unnamed minister of the Established Church in Ireland in 1851[243] and by sermons like the one preached by the Rev. Henry Meynell at the *Dedication of the Chapel of the School of S. Saviour's, Ardingly, Sussex* in 1883.[244] The 1851 article is interesting because it states that the Board of National Education were striving to 'inculcate moral precepts – a feeling of repugnance to the common sins of theft, intemperance, lying,

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[232] Ibid.
[233] Davis, Dr William (1881) The Book of Poetry for Schools and Families. London. Simpkin, Marshall & Co.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid. p. 55.
[236] Ibid. p. 67.
[237] Ibid. p. 80.
[238] Ibid. p. 124.
[239] Ibid. p. 144.
[240] Ibid. pp. 172-183.
[241] Ibid. Preface.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Anonymous Parish Minister (1851) The Alternative; or; How Are The Poor To Be Educated? Being An Argument Respecting The National Board, Suited To The Times. Dublin. Hodges And Smith.
[244] Meynell, Rev Henry (1883) The Education Of The Middle and the Lower Middle Class In The Public Schools Of S. Nicolas College: A Sermon Preached At The Dedication Of The Chapel Of The School Of S. Saviour's, Ardingly, Sussex, on August 1. London. Parker and Co.

meanness, tyranny, cruelty, malevolence, selfishness'.[245] This indoctrination was two fold and in place of these heinously debased aspects of human nature the students were to be nurtured into the 'greatness and amiability of truth, generosity, and kindness'.[246] The students' 'awakening of desires for more advanced spiritual knowledge'[247] was to come through the choice of literature used in the schools which included the little volume of *Sacred Poetry*, [248] four volumes of *Scripture Lessons*[249] and a book of lessons on *The Truth of Christianity*.[250] Meynell's sermon was primarily concerned with the education of middle and lower middle classes in the public schools of St. Nicolas' College but in his opening statements he argued that 'teachers are God's ministers, and the children whom you teach are the children of the Lord. We must recognise the sacred ministry of teaching'.[251] He felt so strongly about this that he placed teachers third in importance to the church after the apostles and prophets.[252] It is clear from the poetry selections and instructions to teachers about the teaching of poetry that the Commissioners of National Education believed there was a correlation between the impact of the literature taught and the ways in which it was imparted to the students. There are other instances where this point is obvious also, in particular, in novels like Jane Eyre.[253] Charlotte Brontë's[254] depiction of Mr Brocklehurst and Lowood Institution are indicative of nineteenth century evangelical piety in the charity schools and show how Brocklehurst used poetry as a means of moral instruction for the children,

'I have a little boy, younger than you, who knows six psalms by heart; and when you ask him would he rather have, a gingerbread-nut to eat or a verse of a psalm to learn, he says: 'Oh! The verse of a psalm! Angels sing psalms,' he says; 'I wish to be a little angel here below;' he then gets two nuts in recompense for his infant piety'.[255]

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[245] Anonymous Parish Minister (1851) The Alternative; or; How Are The Poor To Be Educated? Being An Argument Respecting The National Board, Suited To The Times. Dublin. Hodges And Smith. p. 17.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Ibid. p. 18.
[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Meynell, Rev Henry (1883) The Education Of The Middle and the Lower Middle Class In The Public Schools Of S. Nicolas College: A Sermon Preached At The Dedication Of The Chapel Of The School Of S. Saviour's, Ardingly, Sussex, on August 1. London. Parker and Co. p. 5.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Brontë, Charlotte (1847) Jane Eyre. London. Thomas Nelson And Sons Ltd.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Ibid. p. 31.

The Commissioners of National Education also included poetry in their *Reading Books*[256] which were designed to give an 'introduction to the higher style of literary composition, through the medium of selected pieces of acknowledged merit, interspersed with biographical and other sketches calculated to awaken and stimulate the young mind, and to lead the pupil to cultivate a taste for reading for its own sake'.[257] The *Reading Books* were also used to prepare the students for examination, for example, between 1872 and 1900 the *Third Reading Book* was used to prepare third class students to 'read with ease, correctness, and intelligence ... and to answer simple questions on the words and phrases of the lesson read'[258] and to 'repeat correctly about 120 lines of the poetry contained in the *Reading Book* used in the class'.[259] In the *Minutes of Evidence* recorded during the *Final Report of the Commissioners on Intermediate Education in 1899*,[260] James J. Macken, examiner in English, advocated learning off lines of poetry because it was good training for the pupils.[261] Dr Barkley echoed Macken's sentiments by suggesting that students should only be expected to remember passages that were 'of the greatest poetic merit'.[262] It should be noted that the Intermediate Board had from its inception treated English and classics differently to other subjects because they received more mark weighting and higher results fees.[263] After the introduction of the revised programme of instruction in 1900 the *Third Book* was used to prepare the students to 'read with ease, distinctness of articulation, correctness, and intelligence'[264] and to 'answer, in fully formed sentences, simple questions on the words, phrases and matter of the lesson read. To repeat correctly and expressively, about 60 lines of the poetry contained in the *Reading Book*'.[265] The *Sixth Reading Book* published in 1889

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[256] The Commissioners of National Education Ireland published six Reading Books for first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth class.

[257] Commissioners of National Education (1889) Sixth Reading Book. Dublin. Alex Thom & CO. (Limited). p. Preface.

[258] Rules and Regulations for National Schools under the Commissioners of National Education, 1898. Cited in Hyland and Milne (1987) Irish Educational Documents Volume 1: A selection of extracts from documents relating to the history of Irish education from the earliest times to 1922. Dublin. Church of Ireland College of Education. p. 128.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Intermediate Education (Ireland) Commission: Final Report of the Commissioners. (1899) Dublin. Alexander Thom & Co. (Limited).

[261] Ibid. pp. 472-481.

[262] Ibid. p. 480.

[263] Coolahan, John (2000) Irish Education: Its History and Structure. Dublin. Institute of Public Administration. p. 63.

[264] Revised programme of instruction in national schools, published in appendix to the Annual report of the commissioners of national education, 1902/03. Cited in Hyland and Milne (1987) Irish Educational Documents Volume 1: A selection of extracts from documents relating to the history of Irish education from the earliest times to 1922. Dublin. Church of Ireland College of Education. p. 152.

[265] Ibid.

incorporates the study of poetry with excerpts from Shakespeare's plays which are, for the most part, moralistic or at least would have forced the students to encounter and think about ethical dilemmas. This aspect of Shakespeare's writing was estimated as vitally important by H. Schütz Wilson[266] who argued in *Poets As Theologians*[267] that the poet's work apprehended insightful and divine truths, 'Even Shakespeare's great criminals are conscious of a Divinity, at which they mock. Iago's powerful though demonic intellect has some dim sense of lofty things'.[268] Rob Graham[269] points out that *Othello* was perceived and billed in the 1700s in New England as *A Series of Moral Dialogues, in Five Parts, Depicting the Evils of Jealously and Other Bad Passions*.[270] Shakespeare presented the pupils with themes that permeated not just Renaissance England but every country and every age; he presented them with

'highly credible personalities, men and women capable of change, and recognizable as participants in the human condition which their audience also shared. He connected two new and important elements: the idea of genuine individuality – the solitary, reflecting, self-communing soul, which is acutely aware of its own sufferings and desires; and, correlatively, the idea of inner life as something that not only exists but can also be explored'.[271]

These sentiments are reflected in Dr Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare*[272] which interestingly was published in the *Sixth Reading Book* and obviously meant for the critical appraisal of the students. The inclusion of Johnson's commentary by the Commissioners is indicative of their belief that students could learn to be moral by understanding how Shakespeare's characters mirrored the 'genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find'.[273]

2.6.2 Poetry as an educative tool outside of Ireland in the nineteenth century

Poetry was also used for the instruction of children outside of Ireland in the nineteenth century. Having investigated the type of reading material published for children in America and England

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[266] Wilson, H. Schütz (1888) Poets As Theologians. London. Kegan Paul, Trench & Co.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid. p. 18.
[269] Graham, Rob (2003) Shakespeare: A Crash Course. Leicester. Silverdale Books.
[270] Ibid. p. 23.
[271] Nicholson, Colin ed. (2003) Actors On Shakespeare: Much Ado About Nothing, Saskia Reeves. London. Faber and Faber. p. v.
[272] Dr Johnson's 'Preface to Shakespeare'. Cited in Commissioners of National Education (1889) Sixth Reading Book. Dublin. Alex Thom & CO. (Limited). p. 267.
[273] Ibid.

it is obvious that poetry was an important part of their literature. In *An exhibition of early English children's books*[274] published by the Trustees of the British Museum, poetry features as an important part of children's reading as early as 1712. The Trustees point out that the texts, including *Alphabet books*, nursery rhymes, fables, fairy tales, hero tales and improving tales, were not explicitly for use in schools but do state that they were used for instruction purposes as well as to amuse the children.[275] The earliest text listed in the exhibition, William Ronksley's *The Child's weeks-work*[276] is described as 'A very early example of teaching tempered by kindly humour'[277] with verse that was used for moral instruction in the same way as the 'improving tales' of John Bunyan, James Janeway, Sarah Fielding, Thomas Day and Sarah Trimmer. In section three of the exhibition entitled the *Songs of Innocence* some of the 'main landmarks in English poetry for children down to the end of the 1840s' are listed. Some of the very early texts were published as versified scripture extracts, Divine songs, moral songs or hymns for children. The more popular versions of these were reprinted many times and used in the nineteenth century.

In America children in the nineteenth century were reading prose and verse designed to shape their morality as well as their intellect. As in the case of English publications some of the texts used in American schools and homes were reprints of earlier editions like *Love Triumphant; or, Constancy Rewarded*, by Abner Reed (1797).[278] This text, which we are told was presented to Anna Mills by a teacher in 1805,[279] is indicative of the type of reading material recommended because it has a moral lesson to be learnt. Apart from the prose the text includes a *Poetical Appendix*[280] that 'emphasizes spiritual preparation for death.'[281] Spiritual preparedness is even evident in a simple poem entitled *Yellow bird*[282] which reminds readers to 'be prepared for instant death.'[283] The emphasis here is obviously on living a good life and not committing sin;

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[274] An exhibition of early English children's books (1968) Trustees of the British Museum.
[275] Ibid. p. 3.
[276] Ibid. p. 3. Ronksley, William (1712) The Child's weeks-work: or A Little book so nicely suited to the genius and capacity of a little child, both for matter and method, that it will infallibly allure and lead him on into a way of reading with all the ease and expedition that can be desired. London. G. Conyers and J. Richardson.
[277] Ibid. p. 3.
[278] http://www.merrycoz.org/books/love/LOVE.HTM.
[279] http://www.merrycoz.org/books/love/MILLS.JPG.

[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid.

the didactic emphasis of the prose and poetry is meant to make children fearful of what would happen to bad people after death. Apart from various editions of *Riddle Books*[284], some of which provoked contemplation on serious issues, other texts like *Ditties for Children*, by Nancy Sproat[285] (see appendix 3 for examples of some of the poems in the book) contained collections of poems on 'subjects moral and charming'.[286] *Ditties for Children* included topics on every aspect of a child's life 'from having pudding and milk for supper, to the consequences of too much love of play.'[287] It is evident poems in the book were used to teach children about respect, piety, moral behaviour and humility. Poems entitled *Sunday*,[288] *Lazy Jane*,[289] *The Good Boy*,[290] *The Little Liar*[291] and *The Little Thief*[292] are filled with moralising verses aimed to indoctrinate children with Christian values; in *The Little Thief* for example, a boy is given ninepence to buy a 'little humming-top'[293] but he steals one while the shop keeper is not looking

> So then I caught one slily up,
> And in my pocket slid it,
> That no one would suspect the thing,
> So cunningly I hid it.
>
> And so I bought another top,
> And laid my ninepence down;
> Then laughed to think I own'd them both,
> But paid for only one.[294]

As the poem progresses it becomes obvious that the boy is frightened, guilty and worried about the consequences of his actions,

> For sure, thought I, he'll find it out,
> The angry man will come,--

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[284] There are examples of Riddle Books like those sold by J. Babcock & Son (1826), New Haven, Connecticut and S. Babcock, Charleston, South Carolina, *The Riddle Book* produced by Sidney's Press, see http://www.merrycoz.org/books/riddle/RIDDLE.HTM; and The Riddle Book (1828) printed by J. Metcalf, Wendell, Massachusetts, see http://www.merrycoz.org/books/riddle2/RIDDLE2.HTM

[285] Sproat, Nancy (1828-1843?) Ditties for Children. http:/www.merrycoz.org/books/ditties/DITTIES.HTM

[286] Ibid.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Ibid.
[292] Ibid.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid.

And I shall never see Mamma,
And never more go home.[295]

The boy's description of what might happen to him is graphic and chilling and would most certainly act as a disincentive to others reading the poem who might contemplate stealing something,

He'll tie a rope around my neck,
And hang me up on high;
And leave the little wicked thief
To hang there till he die.[296]

The poem propounds the boy's sense of terror when he imagines that God will not listen to the prayers of a thief,

No, no, I cried, God will not hear
A child so wicked, pray;
I dare not hope he'll let me live
To see another day.[297]

The boy's mother then instructs him to make recompense by returning the stolen humming top, praying for God's forgiveness and vowing never to steal again,

"Go, my poor wretched guilty child,
Go take the top you stole,
And give it to the man you've wrong'd;
And own to him the whole.
Then on your knees before your God,
Confess how vile you've been--
Beg him to save you, and forgive
This great and dreadful sin.

And never, while you live, again
To such a deed consent,
Lest he should take away you[r] life,
Before you can repent.[298]

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[295] Ibid.
[296] Ibid.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid.

There are similarities apparent in this poem with earlier works like *Love Triumphant; or, Constancy Rewarded*, by Abner Reed[299] and with the poetry prescribed for reading in Irish national schools where children were warned not to be sinful for fear that they would die without repentance or God's forgiveness.

In an 1831 edition of *Peter Parley's Method of Telling About Geography to Children*[300] (see appendix 4 for extracts from the text) Samuel Goodrich[301] includes a poem that sums up the principle features of the world. The inclusion of such a poem would no doubt be a useful method of getting children to learn aspects of their school curricula and is analogous to the method of teaching geography used in the tenth century in the Irish monastic schools as recorded in the book of Leinster.[302] Goodrich's text was designed for use in schools and in the preface his objectives are set out as not merely intellectual but moral instruction as well,

'I hope I need make no apology for having availed myself of occasional opportunities to inculcate lessons of morality and religion upon the youthful heart. The heart is as capable of being taught as the intellect, and happiness depends much more upon its proper and right cultivation, than upon the cultivation of the mind. Yet I fear that the moral part of children, the source of feeling and sentiment is often left to run to weeds, and consequently shoots up into wild, irregular, and sometimes over-mastering passions. The sooner the juvenile bosom can be made to feel the gentle and genial influences of truth, love, humanity, and religion, the better. A principal thing to be aimed at on this subject, is to adapt moral instruction to the character of those whom it is designed to benefit, and carefully to avoid wearying and disgusting children with unsuitable and unseasonable admonition.'[303]

To enable the students to remember what they have learnt Goodrich wrote a rhyming poem to be learnt by heart,

GEOGRAPHICAL RHYMES.
TO BE REPEATED BY THE PUPIL.[304]

The world is round, and like a ball

[299] http://www.merrycoz.org/books/love/LOVE.HTM.
[300] http://www.merrycoz.org/books/geog/GEOG.HTM
[301] http://www.merrycoz.org/bib/GOODRICH.HTM
[302] Hyde, Douglas (1967) A Literary History Of Ireland: From Earliest Times To The Present Day. London & New York. Ernest Benn Limited and Barnes & Noble Inc. p. 213.
[303] http://www.merrycoz.org/bib/GOODRICH.HTM
[304] Ibid.

Seems swinging in the air,
A sky extends around it all,
And stars are shining there.
Water and land upon the face
Of this round world we see,

The land is man's safe dwelling place,

But ships sail on the sea.
Two mighty continents there are,
And many islands too,
And mountains, hills, and valleys there,
With level plains we view.

The oceans, like the broad blue sky,
Extend around the sphere,
While seas, and lakes, and rivers, lie
Unfolded, bright, and clear.
Around the earth on every side
Where hills and plains are spread,
The various tribes of men abide
White, black, and copper red.
And animals and plants there be
Of various name and form,
And in the bosom of the sea
All sorts of fishes swarm.
And now geography doth tell,
Of these full many a story,
And if you learn your lessons well,
I'll set them all before you.

The inclusion of geographical rhymes by Goodrich shows an understanding of how children learn and retain information more effectively through rhythm and rhyme. This is certainly reflected in modern research where the prevailing standpoint is that children are actually 'born with a poetic voice, which manifests itself very early'.[305] Geography is by its nature a logical and factual subject and the retention of such information may be difficult for young students but transferring it into poetic format enables easier assimilation of the information. The value of *Geographical Rhymes* is therefore equivalent to what Gaston Bachelard argued in *The Poetics of Reverie* over a century later that poetic images 'melt into our reverie because the power of

[305] Carter, Dennis (1998) Teaching Poetry in the Primary School: Perspectives for a New Generation. London. David Fulton Publishers. p. 2.

assimilation is so great'.[306] The modern classroom teacher guidelines[307] for primary students refer to 'emotional and imaginative development through language'[308] and also point out that as well as heightened and compressed expressions of thought, poetic rhythm and rhyme can 'provide unique and striking glimpses into aspects of human experience'.[309] So Goodrich's *Geographical Rhymes* whether intentional or not, actually had a cross-curricular application using Geography and English to foster student's enjoyment of language by hearing and reading while also stimulating their aesthetic response and improving their memorisation skills.

Children's annuals like *The Pearl*[310] were also full of poems that served the purpose of moral instruction, 'Readers got a blend of morality and sentimentality, with advice for boys and for girls'.[311] Even though this text was not explicitly for use in schools it was recommended to parents as suitable reading material for their children; in the preface *The pearl* was described as 'admirably adapted to interest, instruct, and improve the young'.[312] An examination of the contents page (see appendix 5 for full contents list of the 1837 edition and sample extracts) shows that the subject matter of the text was premised on moral instruction, Christian values, manners and propriety and this is particularly evident in poems like *Advice to a Young Lady*[313]

> Life, dear girl! is but a flower,
> Gay but transient is its hour!
> And, though it blooms so fair in thee,
> Then nurse it well while yet it lasts,
> Shield it from the withering blasts;
> Let indolence ne'er gnaw its root,
> Nor folly blight the ripening fruit,
> Support it with the props of truth,--
> The noblest ornament of youth,--
> And watch and guard a bloom so fair,
> And shield it from each latent snare.
> On it let fancy waft a gale,
> And virtue's quickening suns prevail;

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[306] Bachelard, Gaston (1969) The Poetics of Reverie. Boston. Beacon Press. cited in Dennis Carter (1998) Teaching Poetry in the Primary School: Perspectives for a New Generation. P. 85.
[307] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) English Language Teacher Guidelines. Primary School Curriculum. Dublin. Stationery Office.
[308] Ibid. p. 25.
[309] Ibid. p. 69.
[310] http://www.merrycoz.org/books/pearl/PEARL37.JPG
[311] Ibid.
[312] Ibid.
[313] Ibid.

Let knowledge shed enriching dews,
And all its varied sweets infuse;
And hope stand by each storm to quell,
And gild it with her magic spell.
Then though in some ill-fated hour,
A nipping blast may blight they flower,
Though cruel death, with aspect drear,
Forbid thy bud to blossom here,
'Neath brighter suns and clearer skies,
It still will to perfection rise;
Will spring with beauty from the tomb,
Excelling e'en thy present bloom,
And show a brighter richer grace
Than e'en thy sweet ingenuous face.

This poem is essentially a guide or moral compass urging the young lady to appreciate the ephemeral briefness of the physical world. The language of the poem is value laden, words like indolence, folly, truth, virtue and grace are juxtaposed to each other in an attempt to show the young lady how to counteract evil with rectitude. In the poem *Wishes*[314] Julius and Emily are essentially mouthpieces for a debate about individual values and gender roles. Julius' metaphorical representations of himself as a 'comet', 'Niagara', 'an oak tree', 'a stout ship', are not condoned by Emily who associates herself with more modest and useful images, 'a taper', 'a streamlet', 'a snow drop' and 'a life boat'. The final lines of the poem are spoken by the children's mother,

MOTHER.--Right, Emily--and Julius,
Though man abroad may roam,
While woman's quiet duties
Are better learnt at home;
This truth, my dearest children,
On memory ever bind--
None but the *good* and *useful*
True greatness ever find.[315]

Her statements show the prevailing differentiation in gender roles in the nineteenth century as well as the fundamental Christian value system where goodness and usefulness are essential in achieving a sense of true worth in life and the next.

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[314] Ibid.
[315] Ibid.

2.6.3 Summation of the educative use of poetry in schools in the nineteenth century

What emerges from an overview of education in the nineteenth century is that poetry was an important learning tool. From the information provided in this section it is evident that poetry served the same purpose in other countries as it did in Ireland. There are also many comparable aspects between the type of poetry used both inside and outside of the classroom in Ireland, Britain and America. The most obvious comparable aspect is the use of poetry for moral instruction, whether through the use of Psalms, Classical poetry or writers like Shakespeare and Milton. Some critics argue that the teaching of poetry became more didactic and thus more restrictive because of the introduction of examinations in English. It is evident that poetry as a creative art was considered important by child centered educationalists and that it educed significant debate among writers and educators who in turn produced volumes of anthologies, manuals, articles and books about poetry all through the century.

2.7.1 A utilitarian approach: the use of poetry in schools in the early twentieth century

It is evident from researching the textbooks, particularly those concerning education in the *Pollard School Book Collection*[316] and the recommendations of the Boards of Education in Irish and English schools, that there was little difference in the function of poetry recommended for study between the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Literature, and poetry in particular, was used for its educative and moral value in schools and academics like David Shayer[317] suggest that literary study in second level schools evolved slowly in the twentieth century from mere 'allusion hunting, grammar, figures of speech spotting and paraphrasing'[318] to extending 'the experience and imaginative capacity of the pupil, encouraging him to 'place' and come to terms with emotional experiences and 'find himself' in the reading'.[319] At the beginning of the twentieth century in both Ireland and England poetry was a prescribed part of the curriculum; it was chosen for its moral edification, for its ability to train the memory and as a means of teaching grammar. In *Principals and Methods of Teaching*[320] published in 1906 James Welton

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[316] This is a collection of textbooks in Trinity College spanning the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The collection includes textbooks published by the Commissioners of National Education and used in schools in Ireland, England and the colonies.

[317] Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

[318] Ibid. p. 6.

[319] Ibid. p. 171.

[320] Welton James (1906) Principals and Methods of Teaching. London. In Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

stated that poetry taught in schools was valueless unless it produced 'ennobling sentiments'.[321] In 1915 Arnold Smith's[322] *Aims and Methods in the Teaching of English* purported that in certain schools the English curriculum had an ethical basis, '... so that a boy learns patriotism one year and some other civic virtue the next'[323] and that literature was being studied 'not merely for its own sake but for some didactic purpose'.[324] In the early twentieth century literature continued to be taught through other subjects like history and geography, Shayer draws our attention to 'A model literature lesson' published in a leading journal in 1908 where the writer suggested that after several readings of Tennyson's poem *Break, Break, Break* the students should be asked questions that would search out their 'most sensitive responses' and in order to do this question 3 asked them to 'Discuss the influence of geological strata on poetry.'[325] It is also evident that through the study of literature students were being trained to read for information and 'there was a strong bias towards studying any literary text to discover the light it might throw on the historical events of its time.'[326] Even as late as 1969 in *The Englishness of English Teaching* Fred Inglis[327] defended the connection between history and cultural identity and using T. S. Eliot's comments about history in *Four Quartets* he argued that

'...English is the place where the personal lives of the societies are studied, where we labour to understand what has been gained or lost and what remains similar. In the language of literature we find the values of the past, and thence we shape the values of the present.'[328]

Despite John Churton Collins'[329] criticism in 1891 of using English literature to teach 'grammar, syntax, and etymology'[330] poetry continued to be used in the classroom as a means of teaching grammar which many theorists of the day deemed to be essential for improving the use of

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[321] Ibid. p. 151. In Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
[322] Smith, Arnold (1915) Aims and Methods in the Teaching of English. London. In Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
[323] Ibid. p. 20.
[324] Ibid.
[325] Ibid. p. 34.
[326] Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 18.
[327] Inglis, Fred (1969) The Englishness of English Teaching. London. Longmans
[328] Ibid. p. 22.
[329] Collins, John Churton (1891) The Study of English Literature. InShayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
[330] Ibid.

language. Ian Michael's[331] work identified the dominant place of grammar in English teaching from earliest times to the mid-nineteenth century and other academics claim that educationists at the turn of the century believed the logic inherent in the study of grammar 'would strengthen all the mental faculties and promote lucid and analytical thinking',[332] thus pages of *Paradise Lost* were learnt by heart to 'train the memory.'[333] Grammar texts whether issued as titles in their own right or conjoined with composition continued to be published in considerable numbers in the twentieth century, some of them reprinted several times, and they appear torturous in their specificity of the parts of speech into divisions and subdivisions '... turning the English language into a complex system of points, tables, diagrams, lists and subsections as involved as the most involved of chemical formulae'.[334]

2.7.2 Creativity and literature

The pedantic use of poetry in the classroom at the turn of the century was rooted most probably in fear that creativity and imagination would produce undisciplined and ungovernable children who 'left to themselves, could not possibly have anything of the remotest significance to say, and would merely reveal the empty childishness of untrained, primitive minds, neither civilized nor sensible.'[335] The pedantic use of literature in the classroom also reflected the political and social norms of the day for example, the utilitarian approach to teaching which Dickens depicted so satirically in *Hard Times* was still implicit in early twentieth century life, '... the 3R's spirit of the Revised Code was still very strong, that elementary education was still seen by many as being a charitable gift to the 'lower orders''.[336] This point is also stressed in '*A Discussion of Educational Values in the Elementary Curriculum*' where Charles B. Gilbert argued 'To those from poor and sordid homes, literature and history, imparting ideals, should be made much of'.[337] The pedantic function of poetry in the school system was antithetical to theorists like Matthew Arnold who in the nineteenth century had advocated the centricity of literature in the cultural development of society,

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[331] Michael, Ian (1987) cited in Goodson, Ivor F., and Colin J. Marsh (1996) Studying School Subjects. London. The Falmer Press. p. 100.
[332] Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 19.
[333] Ibid. p. 20.
[334] Ibid. p. 37.
[335] Ibid. p. 23.
[336] Ibid. p. 26.
[337] Gilbert, Charles B., (1913) What Children Study And Why: A Discussion of Educational Values in the Elementary Curriculum. London. George G. Harrap & Company. pp. 5, 6.

'More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.'[338]

Arnold's philosophy was slow to manifest itself among educationists in the early twentieth century despite publications like *Education Through the Imagination*[339] in 1904, *The Writing of English*[340] in 1907, *Matter, Form and Style*[341] in 1912, anti 'Revised Code' texts like *What Is and What Might Be* in 1911[342] and *The Dramatic Method of Teaching* in 1911.[343] Arnold's philosophy may also have been slow to establish itself because of the conflict that existed between the different movements in educational thought that emerged early in the twentieth century most notably between what John Coolahan[344] calls the 'practical educationists' and the 'child-centered educationists'.[345] As early as 1897 the Belmore Commission had a more child-centered curriculum in mind for Irish schools because it found that in comparison to Britain, Europe and America the Irish curriculum was too narrowly focused and out of date.[346] The findings of this commission led to the *Revised Programme for National Schools* in 1900 and the adoption of a curriculum that where possible was to be integrated, practical and lead to 'discovery-type teaching methods'.[347] It is evident even in the short period between 1900 and the publication in 1904 and 1906 of the Board of Education's Regulations for Elementary Schools and Secondary Schools that poetry was an important aspect of student learning. Between the ages of 12 and 16 the Board of Education recommended the study of different genres of poetry with increasing levels of complexity so that a pupil may begin with English Ballads, Patriotic songs and lyrics and eventually study advanced poems from Chaucer, Shakespeare,

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[338] Arnold, Matthew in Abrams, M. H., et al., (1979) *Norton Anthology of English Literature,* Vol. 2. 4th ed., New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. p. 1445.
[339] Macmillan, Margaret (1904) Education Through the Imagination. In Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
[340] Hartog, Philip (1907) The Writing of English. InShayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
[341] O'Grady, Hardress (1912) Matter, Form and Style. In Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul. pp. 44, 45.
[342] Holmes, Edmond (1911) What Is and What Might Be. In Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 39.
[343] Finlay-Johnson, Harriet (1911) The Dramatic Methos of Teaching. Cited in Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 41.
[344] Coolahan, John (2000) Irish Education: Its History and Structure. Dublin. Institute of Public Administration.
[345] Ibid. p. 33.
[346] Ibid. p. 34.
[347] Ibid. pp. 34, 35.

Spenser, Milton, Pope, Wordsworth and Tennyson.[348] The Board of Education placed great emphasis on the student's ability to 'clause-analyse poetry' as the means of its 'appreciation and understanding'[349] but they also stipulated the importance of reading. This emphasis on grammar and reading in the Elementary Curriculum is the subject of Charles B. Gilbert's book *What Children Study And Why*[350] published in 1913. Gilbert had been a Superintendent of schools in America and was obviously familiar with the aims and objectives of syllabi and curricula. He argued that reading is 'the chief of all arts'[351] because

'... the great of all ages, poets, sages, seers, may be his friends and associates. He may pace the academe with Plato, may listen to the inescapable questions of Socrates. The verses of Hafiz, the gentle speech of Buddha, the laws of Moses, the songs of Homer, of Dante, of Goethe, and the dramas of Shakespeare, - all are his.'[352]

Gilbert identified four main aims of the reading lesson which move the student from mere word recognition to 'judge the values of what is read',[353] develop a discriminating taste and love for good literature and cultivate the 'power to think'.[354] Gilbert adamantly defended the selection of good literature, 'it stands to reason that the thought to be read should be worth the child's thinking'[355] and that students 'need to be led to see that poetic expression is not only the most beautiful, but is also the most effective and forceful, of all forms of literary art.'[356] The idea that reading material in the schools should be worthy of the students' time and effort is discussed in other works for example, Arnold Smith felt that students should be 'active in their desire to know, and should wish to apply their knowledge practically, either in creative work of their own or in the solution of the great problems of human life which are the subject of literature.'[357]

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[348] Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 29.
[349] Ibid. p. 31.
[350] Gilbert, Charles B., (1913) What Children Study And Why: A Discussion of Educational Values in the Elementary Curriculum. London. George G. Harrap & Company.
[351] Ibid. p. 14.
[352] Ibid.
[353] Ibid. p. 15.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Ibid. p. 20.
[356] Ibid. p. 23.
[357] Smith, Arnold (1915) Aims and Methods in the Teaching of English. pp. 15, 16.

Smith's theories that student creativity in the classroom should move away from mere imitative exercises was echoed and developed by other theorists including E. A. Greening Lamborn,[358] Robert Finch,[359] H. Caldwell Cook[360] and Dorothy Tudor Owen.[361] These theorists were advocating that students should be actively involved in their literature lessons and at least be given the opportunity to write their own poems, dramas and stories. Cook's approach to learning poetry led to the publication of *Playbooks* which published the work of his own pupils and advocated that 'Pupils should go in at the deep end – write stories, accounts, descriptions, plays and poems – with the teacher's task being to stimulate, encourage, provide a stream of ideas, finally standing back to allow the pupil to deal with things in his own way.'[362] The impact of these theorists' work on the actual methodological approach to learning in the classroom however was not palpable, on the contrary it provoked outbursts of an extreme and archaic nature with commentators fearing 'the possibility of excessive and precocious stimulation of the emotions.'[363] A writer like Dorothy Tudor Owen was attempting in 1920 to redefine the perceptions of childhood that had passed down from the Victorians. To ensure children's ''inner' growth and learning'[364] Tudor Owen would displace utilitarian approaches replacing them with 'genuine imaginative writing by children' so that 'the child can order, sort, come physically to terms with and 'realise' his inner feelings and emotions, and by so doing promote mental or personality growth.'[365]

2.7.3 Types of poetry taught in schools at the beginning of the century

Shayer is critical of children's poetry anthologies published between 1900 and 1930 because of their 'monotonous consistency'.[366] He divides the publications between two main types; the first type concentrates on the 'classics' and the second he castigates as 'a multitude of twee 'fairy

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[358] Lamborn, E. A. Greening (1916) The Rudiments of Criticism. Oxford. Clarendon Press.
[359] Finch, Robert (1919) How to Teach English Composition. London. In Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
[360] Cook, H. Caldwell (1917) Play Way: an essay in educational method. London. Heinemann.
[361] Owen, Dorothy Tudor (1920) The Child Vision. Manchester. In Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
[362] Cook, H. Caldwell cited in Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul. p.51.
[363] Quote taken from the Educational Supplement, April 1920, cited in Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 55.
[364] Owen, Dorothy Tudor (1920) The Child Vision. Manchester. In Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
[365] Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 53.
[366] Ibid. p. 56.

poems.'[367] He also argued that school anthologies were too difficult and over estimated the capacity of very young children to learn poems like Blake's *Reeds of Innocence*, *A Dream*, or *The Little Black Boy*.[368] However, an examination of the text books of English literature prescribed for the 1918 Intermediate Examination in Ireland at *Junior*,[369] *Middle*[370] and *Senior Grade*[371] indicate that the students had to study a range of intellectually sophisticated poems, the biographical details of the poets and a study of specific poetic genres. In the *Senior Grade* text the information about poetry was written in a style that far outstrips the language level of modern Leaving Certificate notes. The essay on *Lyric Poetry* for example is seven pages long and has a distinct academic tone and style, the essay refers to the antecedents of the lyric genre and there is no attempt to simplify or moderate the information in the essay for the less able or articulate students. In the notes on Shakespeare there is considerable emphasis on the function of drama, 'Its function is to point the moral inherent in every chronicle of human life, and to provoke sympathy with moral good and antipathy to moral evil'.[372] It is clear from these notes that literature of every kind was used to educate the mind and the soul of school children in the early twentieth century.

Schools at secondary level in England between 1910 and 1920 also expected students to read extensively in the areas of literary history and poetry and Shayer tells us that in *The Teaching of English Literature in Secondary Schools*, 1913, the author proposed a three year sixth form course,

'... which in effect covers every single major work in the English Language from Beowulf to Browning, including (whole or in part) The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, all Beowulf, Piers Plowman, Layamon's Brut, Havelok, Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight, most of Chaucer, Malory, The Faerie Queene, Gorboduc, ten Shakespeare plays, the Metaphysical poets, Jacobean drama, Milton, Pope, Johnson, Dryden, Swift, Addison, Steele, Smollett, Fielding, Jane Austen, the Romantic Poets.'[373]

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[367] Ibid.
[368] Ibid. p.55.
[369] Text Book of English Literature Junior Grade: With Examination Hints And Notes (Biographical, Critical and Explanatory). Dublin. M. H. Gill &Son, LTD. 1917.
[370] Text Book of English Literature Middle Grade: With Examination Hints And Notes (Biographical, Critical and Explanatory). Dublin. M. H. Gill &Son, LTD. 1917.
[371] Text Book of English Literature (Poetry) Senior Grade: With Examination Hints And Notes (Biographical, Critical and Explanatory) and Specially written life of William Shakespeare. Dublin. M. H. Gill &Son, LTD. 1917.
[372] Ibid. p. 55.
[373] Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 59.

In the section of the Irish Junior Grade textbook entitled *Preparation For The Examination* the expectations of the examiners are outlined and it is obvious that the student is meant to do more than merely rote learn the poems,

'He is introduced accordingly to the new material of knowledge, that is, the information acquired by mankind and recorded in books, and is taught the art of making that knowledge his own. This he does by acting on it with his own mind, submitting it to his own judgment, committing to his memory what part of it he approves of as true and useful, rejecting what he considers false and harmful, and stamping what he retains with the seal of his own individual expression, so that it becomes his-a part of his own mental being.'[374]

The sentiments expressed here are particularly evident in the essay entitled *The English of England and the English of the Gaedhealtacht*[375] which discusses aspects of the poetry included in the text. The style of this essay is academic and it is arguable that even the brightest Leaving Certificate student in the modern system would grapple with the content and the scope of information. This essay provides sufficient proof that poetry was not studied in isolation but rather was studied as an integrated part of the curriculum, and the chronology of historical events and the emphasis on contrasting styles of English, Irish and Scottish poetic tradition illustrate this. With the exception of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* the selection of poems included in the text are classed as 'minor poems'[376] and are meant to be 'useful as lessons to the beginner, who receives from them clear instances of a poet's shortcomings to be avoided as well as of perfections to be aimed at in the poetic art.'[377]

This essay also demonstrates that literature in the early part of the twentieth century was linked to a sense of national identity,

'For Irish students the opportunity afforded of contrasting the English of the English race with the English of the Gaedheal, whose political fate has given him English as his native language, is very interesting. And for any student of literature it is a scientific necessity to study the contrast. The Gaelic nature is inclined to the picturesque in writing ... the English writer's tendency is to excel in preciseness and blunt statement of fact, so that the reader can scarcely mistake the author's purpose.

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[374] Text Book of English Literature Junior Grade: With Examination Hints And Notes (Biographical, Critical and Explanatory). Dublin. M. H. Gill &Son, LTD. 1917. p. 5.
[375] Ibid. pp. 15-23.
[376] Ibid. p. 15.
[377] Ibid. pp. 15, 16.

... language does not alter national character in any essential point, even where a certain readiness to be denationalized is undoubtedly present, a readiness which the change of language has possibly gone far to create. An Irish student actively engaged in the great national movement of reviving the Irish language cannot omit to inform himself accurately of the historical facts underlying the language phenomena of Scotland, a mere superficial consideration of which would lead him perhaps to conclude that the Lowlands of Scotland are as English racially as they are in topographical and personal nomenclature'. [378]

Goodson and Marsh[379] also noted this link between literature and national identity in Applebee's[380] research into the teaching of English in American schools during World War I. Applebee argued that during the war period literature 'became a way to instill a sense of national heritage and to encourage patriotism'. The teaching of literature became intrinsically linked with the ideals of nationalism particularly in Britain long before the twentieth century, a fact clearly established in more recent research by Franklin Court and Brian Doyle.[381] The combined study of English literature and history in the nineteenth century meant that 'Literature came to be taken as a symbolic index to history. It served the need to find in the past traditional precedents that made current conceptions of progress and politics congruent with growing ideals of English nationalism'.[382] Coolahan also emphasises the influence of cultural nationalism on the shape and form of the curriculum in early twentieth century Irish schools, 'Inspired by the ideology of cultural nationalism it was held that schools ought to be the prime agents in the revival of the Irish language and native tradition which it was held were the hallmarks of nationhood and the basis for independent statehood'.[383]

Apart from the cultural nationalism associated with the teaching of literature in schools in the early twentieth century there was also a real desire by boards of education to develop the aesthetic side of secondary education for both boys and girls. In 1923 the British *Report of the Consultative Committee on Differentiation Of The Curriculum For Boys And Girls Respectively*

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[378] Ibid. pp. 16, 17.
[379] Goodson, Ivor F., and Colin J. Marsh (1996) Studying School Subjects. London. The Falmer Press.
[380] Applebee, cited in Goodson, Ivor F., and Colin J. Marsh (1996) Studying School Subjects. London. The Falmer Press. pp. 123, 124.
[381] Court, Franklin and Doyle, Brian. In Goodson, Ivor F., and Colin J. Marsh (1996) Studying School Subjects. London. The Falmer Press.
[382] Court, Franklin (1992) In Goodson, Ivor F., and Colin J. Marsh (1996) Studying School Subjects. London. The Falmer Press. p. 103.
[383] Coolahan, John (2000) Irish Education: Its History and Structure. Dublin. Institute of Public Administration. p. 38.

In Secondary Schools[384] was critical of the state of aesthetic learning in both boys and girls schools and argued that there was an intrinsic value in studying the arts in life 'as a channel for the issue of emotional instincts, especially in the case of adolescents'.[385] The report gives a very interesting, if brief, insight into the curricula of different schools from the 16th century to the 1920s making it apparent that literature was a fundamental part of teaching and learning. In chapter two of the report the committee, referring to Circular 826 on the Curricula of Secondary Schools, cite the Board's recommendations that junior students between eight and twelve years must learn writing, spelling, grammar, reading aloud and learning English verse by heart.[386] The recommendation by the Boards of Education to learn poetry by heart was not to be done at the expense of a thorough analysis and understanding of its content and meaning and this is evident in Extracts from the *Reports of the Examiners on the Intermediate Examinations in 1922.*[387] The examiners stated that at Middle Grade the answers to the literature questions showed a fair knowledge of the poems prescribed but that there was little evidence of appreciation of their inner meaning particularly on Milton's and Wordsworth's sonnets.[388]

The programme prescribed for the Intermediate Examinations in 1923 by the Ministry of Education for Northern Ireland is extensive in its cognitive demands on the students even at junior grade. The students were required as part of their Latin exam to learn Book III of the *Aeneid* from Virgil and in English to learn lines from Milton's *Il Penseroso* and *L'Allegro*, Gray's *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*, extracts from Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper*, *To a Skylark*, *To the Cuckoo, Fidelity*, Byron's *A Storm and The Rhineland*, Keats' *A Picture, I stood Tiptoe upon a little Hill*, Tennyson's *Sir Galahad and The Lady of Shalott* and Arnold's *The Forsaken Merman.*[389] The middle and senior grade students were expected to cope with more difficult literature and their tasks were more intellectually demanding. At middle grade students were expected to translate a passage of English verse into Greek iambics, translate a passage of English verse into Latin elegiacs or

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[384] Board of Education (1923) The Report of Consultative Committee on *Differentiation Of The Curriculum For Boys And Girls Respectively In Secondary Schools.* London. H.M. Stationery Office.
[385] Ibid. p. 69.
[386] Ibid. p. 50.
[387] Government of Northern Ireland (1922) Ministry Of Education. Intermediate Examinations. Extracts From The Reports of the Examiners. Belfast. Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
[388] Ibid. p. 9.
[389] Ministry of Education for Northern Ireland (1923) Rules and Schedule Containing The Programme of Intermediate Examinations. Belfast. John Adams. pp. 21, 22.

hexameters as well as studying Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelly and Keats.[390] At senior grade the students studied Books I and VI of the *Iliad* and Horace's *Odes* Book I as well as their English poets.[391]

Bodies other than the Boards of Education advocated the importance of literature in the curriculum, for example, the day continuation schools run by factories like Cabury Brothers Ltd., Bournville Works. The pamphlets issued by Bournville between 1912 and 1922 as well as numerous articles in educational journals show that literature was an important part of their broad curriculum. R. W. Ferguson[392] stated that it was the education of the workers that concerned the employers more than the firm's balance sheet since theoretically the money spent on the worker's education would be realised through their ability to fill positions of responsibility in the factory.[393] The workers would also be able to participate fully in the affairs of the district, in social activities and discharge the duties of home with great efficiency.[394] The Bournville Day Continuation School for boys at Cotteridge comprised unskilled workers, clerical workers and apprentices and aimed to provide a liberal education to broaden 'the outlook of the students, and ... to find additional interests in order that the youths may spend their leisure time more profitably.'[395] The curriculum for the Day Continuation School for Girls included English Literature at both junior and senior level. The aim of the school was to inculcate habits to help the girls discharge the duties and responsibilities of womanhood[396] and it is likely that the inclusion of literature and other aesthetic arts could be used to train, eliminate or modify their characters.[397] The factory also arranged lectures and study circles for adults including foremen, forewomen and charge hands and while the lectures were varied and sometimes associated with work issues they also included poetry.[398] Between 1920 and 1923 the lectures included *The Relation of Poetry to Music, Collecting English Folk-Songs in the Appalachian Mountains in*

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[390] Ibid. p. 32.
[391] Ibid. p. 45.
[392] Ferguson, R. W. (1922) Education In The Factory: An account of the Educational Schemes and Facilities at Cadbury Brothers Ltd., Bournville Works. London. Publication Department Bournville Works.
[393] Ibid. p. 5
[394] Ibid.
[395] Ibid. p. 16.
[396] Ibid. pp. 20, 23.
[397] Ibid. p. 20.
[398] Ibid. p. 50.

North America, My Own Poetry which was delivered by W. B. Yeats, *The Poet Wordsworth, Wordsworth's Boyhood in the Lake District* and *Robert Burns and His Country.*[399]

2.7.4 Pedagogical and creative learning through poetry

There is no doubt that between 1920 and 1940 literature was considered a significant part of pedagogical and creative learning and there is much diversity in the way these aspects of poetry in particular are discussed by academics and writers. Hard line educationists who advocated the importance of grammar, reading and writing in the curriculum were suspicious of child-centered learning approaches that emphasised aesthetic experience and the value of self-expression in verse writing. Many books, articles and reports about English teaching were written during the period and writers like H. A. Treble,[400] G. Y. Elton,[401] E. F. Davidson[402] scoffed at the notion that verse writing based on self-expression and originality had any academic significance compared to earlier classical imitative work.

There is considerable flux between what educationists and politicians deemed to be relevant education to prepare students for work and relevant education to enable students to lead a fulfilled life and this is evident in their attitude towards and development of the teaching of poetry. In Ireland, de Valera's[403] attitude to creative education was negligent, he advocated teaching the students the three Rs and allowing them to leave school enabled to deal with ordinary things like simple reading, 'I do not want anything complex ... I do not speak of literature, poetry, flights of the imagination or anything else.'[404] His attitude was utilitarian and functional and it is not surprising that he was more interested in the results that teachers achieved than the methods they used to teach the students.[405] In contrast to these views the Daily Mail's curriculum contest held in 1925[406] illustrated that the proposed grammar syllabus was based on traditional practice and functional English. It is however, the inclusion of poetry in different

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[399] Ibid. pp. 60, 62, 65.
[400] Treble, H. A., (1927) The Teaching of English. oxford.
[401] Elton, G. Y., (1929) Teaching English. London.
[402] Davidson, E. F., (1930) Modern English Teaching. London.
[403] Eamon de Valera Taoiseach and Minister for Education in the 1940s in the Fianna Fáil government.
[404] Hyland, Áine and Milne, Kenneth (1992) Irish Educational Documents Volume II: A Selection of extracts from documents relating to the history of education from 1922 to 1991 in the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland. Dublin. Church of Ireland College of Education. p. 110.
[405] Ibid. p. 111.
[406] Cited in Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 91.

forms at each level that interests the researcher; nine to ten year olds would learn *Hiawatha* and ballads, Folk songs and Fairy Tales while twelve to thirteen year olds would learn *Lyra Heroica* and *The Golden Treasury.*[407] This proposed curriculum submitted by a member of the public and judged by a panel that included educationists is testament that poetry was inseparable from and integral to education in society.

2.7.5 Poetry training for life

The primary school report published by the English Board of Education in 1931 seems to have embraced, at least in part, the importance of literature as a basis for the creative and imaginary engagement of students '... verse, read or learnt for enjoyment, has an indispensable place' and 'the exercise of creative as distinct from reproductive imagination should be cultivated.'[408] Whether the application of this theory was practiced en masse in classrooms across Great Britain is circumspect but during the 1930s a lot of writing emerged about the teaching of English. Some of the texts were exam based but others attempted to provide teachers with creative methodologies for teaching literature. In 1937 the Society for Teachers of English published a text called Teaching Poetry[409] in which the four-member sub-committee responsible for the publication stated that poetry could be regarded as a crux of English teaching.[410] The underlying argument in the first section of the introduction correlates very closely to the hypothesis being explored in this research that poetry is valuable and educative but the attitude towards it in the modern age has turned to indifference or dislike.[411] The introduction also suggests that teachers bear a great responsibility in cultivating positive attitudes towards poetry since they are mostly responsible for introducing it to children from an early age. The aim of the book was not to devise a 'method' for the teaching of poetry but to provide actual approaches to teaching specific poems and so three lessons were suggested for each age group of pupils[412] The Society emphasised the importance of choosing poems that excited the teacher's imagination and that reflected the objects of the student's everyday experience.[413] The Society argued that the aims of the poetry lesson should not be so narrow as to use it to merely increase vocabulary and enlarge

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[407] Ibid.
[408] Report on the Primary School (1931). Britain. Her Majesty's Stationary Office. p. 41.
[409] The Society For Teachers Of English (1937) Teaching Poetry. London. Oxford University Press.
[410] Ibid. p. v.
[411] Ibid. p. 1.
[412] Ibid. p. 2.
[413] Ibid. pp. 2, 3.

the general knowledge or power of expression in the students.[414] The real aim of the poetry lesson should be to allow students to glean pleasure and enlarge their powers of sympathetic imagination but not in an undisciplined way since poetry 'demands not less but more than mere intellectual concentration; it requires a response from the whole personality in which the intellect will be to the highest degree vigilant.'[415] As well as the poetry lessons there is an epilogue entitled *Why Teach Poetry*? that offers some very interesting arguments about the importance of poetry in the curriculum. In the same way that the Continuation Day Schools run by Cadbury Brothers Ltd., emphasised the importance of giving its students an education for life, the Society for English Teachers argued that going to school should train students to be aware of life. The Society felt that poetry contributed to that training for life. The arguments in the epilogue about the value of poetry are supported by references to great poets and critics like Bacon, T. S. Eliot, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Shelley and other writers like Edmond Holmes, Sir Ronald Ross, Dr. P. Gurrey's *The Appreciation of Poetry* and I. A. Richards. Richards' publication of *Practical Criticism* (1929) was very influential in changing the way poetry was perceived and taught in the classroom. Richards believed that students needed to be systematically taught how to read properly so that they acquired adequate language and language based concepts to respond imaginatively and emotionally to what the writer had written.[416] The epilogue attempts to marry earlier critical theory about poetry with the contemporary research and innovative methodologies of the day, for example, the reference in a footnote to Arnold Smith's word association in *The Art and Practice of English.*

The Society laid down three arguments that justified the teaching of poetry in schools; the first reason is based on the premise that poetry educates the students' response to life since it is the most potent of all civilizing influences.[417] Secondly poetry feeds their imagination and nourishes the roots of their mental life. Poetry can teach the students to sympathise, 'A school curriculum weighted against poetic and artistic appreciation tends to encourage a looking at things from the outside at the expense of imagining them – by a leap of sympathy – from within'.[418] Thirdly, poetry is a form of imaginative education that shapes personality and moral judgment and it

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[414] Ibid. p. 6.
[415] Ibid. p. 7.
[416] Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 125.
[417] The Society For Teachers Of English (1937) Teaching Poetry. London. Oxford University Press. p. 64.
[418] Ibid. p. 67.

allows us to experience moral dilemmas through the actions of others, 'A great poem does thus not so much satisfy reason as bring it to birth within us.'[419] The Society was emphatic about the educative value of poetry and the arts arguing that through them as much as through the moralising skill of preachers and politicians lies the salvation of the future.[420]

2.7.6 Imaginative expression and emotional growth

The importance of poetry as a form of creative learning is also evident in the number of books and articles that dealt with education of the emotions and imagination and the encouragement of children's free verse writing. Between 1931 and 1939 writers like Kathleen Leopold (1933), Ruth Griffith (1935), J.L. Bradbury (1932) and the 1937 *Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers* were advocating the importance of free writing because it had therapeutic benefits, encouraged spontaneity, enjoyment and active learning,

'The child at Junior School ... wants to be up and doing, and to savour the rhythm, the language and the sentiment of the poetry he likes through active forms of expression: reading it aloud, saying it aloud, chanting it in chorus or even dramatizing it; he may even be impelled by his enjoyment of it to compose verse of his own.'[421]

Between the publications of the *Report on Secondary Education* in 1938 and Marjorie Hourd's *The Education of the Poetic Spirit* in 1949 there exists an abundance of material about creative expression and active learning. The importance of this research lies not only in what it reflects about the changes in education but also what it tells us about the changes in society at that time. It is ironic however, that amidst all of this research we learn most about society and the experiences of World War II from the poems written by the children interned by the Nazis in the barracks of Terezín.[422] The irony is compounded by the realization that these poems embody the elements of articulation, creativity, self-expression, free verse and personal experience that researchers like Susan Isaacs (1930), Finch and Kimmins (1937) and Margaret Philips (1937) were advocating as essential aspects of child education. Isaac's arguments about the connection

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[419] Ibid. pp. 68, 70.
[420] Ibid. p. 71.
[421] Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers (1937). Britain. Her Majesty's Stationery Office. p. 371.
[422] Terezín was originally built as a fortress in Bohemia but from 1941 to 1945 it was used as a camp initially to ghettoise Jews but over time it acted as a temporary holding place before they were sent to Auschwitz. From the age of 14 children were expected to work like adults in the camp while younger children were allowed to play in the enclosed courtyards of the fortress. According to statistics 15,000 children were sent to Terezín but only 100 survived.

between imaginative expression and intellectual and emotional growth is certainly evident in the Terezín poems. It is possible to argue that the children drew pictures and wrote poetry that reflected their inner tensions and conflict and their attempt to deal with the reality of what was happening to them. In theory their poems were the embodiment of the third argument made by the Society of English Teachers in 1937, that poetry (in this instance the writing of it as a form of expurgation) enables students to make moral judgments and experience moral dilemmas through the actions of others. There is also evidence for this theory in the arguments made by Marjorie Hourd who believed that through writing poetry children could deal with their inner feelings and metaphorically and symbolically express what might otherwise be inexpressible. This is particularly evident in *The Garden* by Franta Bass because it tells us that the little boy will not live to see the roses bloom,

A little garden,
Fragrant and full of roses.
The path is narrow
And a little boy walks along it.

A little boy, a sweet boy,
Like that growing blossom.
When the blossom comes to bloom
The little boy will be no more.[423]

The 'fragrant roses' are symbolic of the child's youth and innocence, the narrow path could indicate the danger he faces every day or the threat of deportation to Auschwitz. This poem reminds us that in spite of the terrible things that happen in life we need to be strong and 'blossom' as best we can and leave our imprint on the world.

2.7.7 Summation of the value of poetry in the early twentieth century

A considerable body of research has been analysed in this section which highlights the educative importance of poetry in the early part of the twentieth century. It also shows how the teaching of poetry evolved away from a strictly didactic and moralistic use in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Poetry in the early twentieth century is more child centered, more significance was given to its imaginative and affective importance in children's holistic development. Academics

[423] I Have Not Seen A Butterfly Around Here: Children's Drawings And Poems From Terezín (2001) 8th edition. Joy Kadeckova, Jeanne Nemcova and Edith Pargeretova (trans.) Prague. The Jewish Museum.

and educators in Britain and elsewhere in Europe and America were concentrating on the link between poetry and pedagogy and arguing about the importance of aesthetic learning while in Ireland it has been suggested that the political inertness of leaders like de Valera was prohibitive for the development of a system of aesthetic learning.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the role and value placed on poetry in educational contexts and settings from ancient times to the present day. Having investigated whether poetry had a role and perceived value in education historically, it has been revealed that it had, particularly in terms of its didactic and moral function in society; but as was shown in this chapter, this dominance began to shift in the twentieth century and a more child-centered and creative understanding of the study of poetry began to emerge. The review of historical literature revealed that little emphasis was placed on pedagogical matters in terms of the study of poetry. However, as the twentieth century unfolded, and, particularly in the post World War II era, the study of poetry evolved even further from the shift begun at the turn of the century; this new understanding and emphasis brought with it a new demand for different methods of engaging with poetry in classrooms.

Chapter three will continue the historical documentation of the role and perceived value of poetry in formal educational settings from the 1940s, and will attempt to explore the nature and extent of pedagogical practices which developed to accompany these changes.
The political antipathy towards arts education in Ireland will also be discussed as well as an indepth analysis of the teaching of poetry in the post World War II period in Ireland and comparatively in other countries, when the study of poetry in schools was related more explicitly to the role of pedagogy and both teachers' and students' attitudes than had been the case heretofore.

Chapter Three
Poetry and Pedagogy

3.1 Introduction

Having discussed the educative function of poetry from preliterate times to the 1940s in chapter two, which revealed a strong predominance on utilitarian, spiritual and moral purposes, this chapter will continue the analysis from the 1940s and into the twenty-first century where attention gradually shifted to pedagogical issues. The educative function of poetry from the 1940s onwards is expounded through the varying teaching approaches suggested by academics and government bodies.

This chapter will also provide a brief overview of teachers' and students' attitudes towards poetry as outlined in British Department of Education reports and documents by researchers like Summerfield, and in surveys conducted in America, New Zealand and Ireland. Because this is a practitioner based thesis, it is important to note that the term 'attitude' as cited in this research is used to reflect how teachers and students feel about teaching and learning poetry; for example, a positive attitude towards poetry is mostly determined by teachers being happy and able to teach poetry well, while a negative attitude towards poetry is mostly determined by teachers being unhappy or ill prepared to teach it. In the same way, students' attitudes towards poetry can be determined by whether they like learning poetry or not. [This use of language emerged from the feedback elicited during the pilot phase of the research.]

The research in this chapter will also reveal that while there is an abundance of official documentation relating to the teaching of poetry in British schools, it is essentially a neglected part of the curriculum in Irish schools from the post World War II period until the late 1980s. Despite the survey of Raven et al.[424] conducted in Irish post primary schools in 1975 there was little obvious commitment from the Irish government to inspect the teaching of poetry which is

[424] Raven, John et al., (1975) A Survey of Attitudes of Post Primary Teachers and Pupils Volume I: Teachers' Perception of Educational Objectives and Examinations, with an appendix presenting basic data on the schools, teachers, and pupils involved in the survey. Dublin. Irish Association for Curriculum Development in Association with The Competency Motivation Project and
Raven, John et al., (1975) A Survey of Attitudes of Post Primary Teachers and Pupils Volume 2: Pupils' Perception of Educational Objectives and Their Reactions to School and School Subjects. Dublin. Irish Association for Curriculum Development in Association with The Competency Motivation Project.

evident in the scarcity of official publications on this topic. Therefore, in light of the absence of documentation relating to the Irish context and in order to achieve a perspective on the teaching of poetry in the post war period, it is necessary to examine reports, documents, research papers and surveys from other countries including Northern Ireland, Britain, New Zealand, America, Netherlands and France. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on available resources and approaches to teaching and experiencing poetry in classrooms.

3.2 Teaching approaches outside of Ireland

3.2.1 Value–seeking approach to teaching poetry in New Zealand

Helen Josephine O'Neill's Ph.D. thesis entitled *Once Preferred, Now Peripheral: the Place of Poetry in the Teaching of English in the New Zealand Curriculum for year 9, 10 and 11 students* (2006) sheds some light on her own experience of poetry at school during the 1940s. O'Neill was educated by the Sisters of Mercy and was introduced to poetry at a very early age, 'We all learned poems in the classroom, and our school day began with breathing and voice exercises. It was part of our curriculum.'[425] She specifies that in most Catholic schools from Standard One onwards the English classes ensued from literature[426] and that poets in particular, were used as models for 'descriptive, poetic and informative compositions.'[427] In fact O'Neill states that in her Catholic secondary school poetry was more important than fiction; even during the war years when libraries were in short supply of books teachers had poetry collections, 'poems were accessible as hand-printed copies.'[428] From O'Neill's experience poetry was a 'necessity rather than an option'[429] that was studied for both the School Certificate and for University Entrance examinations, 'poetry was learned exactly and set beside prose extracts, original stories and drama selections for a recital. Pages and pages of the theory of speech and a thorough research of the authors of the selections and the periods from which they came, were part of the preparation.'[430] In spite of the short comings of the 1945 New Zealand English syllabus which was later criticised for its narrowness, O'Neill's description of her poetry classes could have come straight from the *Prime of Miss Jean Brody* world where the teacher recited poetry from

[425] O'Neill, Helen Josephine (2006) Ph.D thesis Once Preferred, Now Peripheral: the Place of Poetry in the Teaching of English in the New Zealand Curriculum for year 9, 10 and 11 students. The University of Canterbury Christchurch, New Zealand.
[426] Ibid.
[427] Ibid.
[428] Ibid.
[429] Ibid.
[430] Ibid.

memory with a passion that emphasised its significance beyond the school room, 'Poetry was not studied just for an examination. It was studied to broaden our knowledge of the treasury of literary works.'[431] The range of poetry studied was extensive as were the methodologies employed to teach it,

'Passages from Isaiah, psalms, parables and passages from the epistles (Corinthians 1.13: 1-13) were committed to memory ... Poems in English, extracts from Virgil's epic, the *Aeneid*, in Latin, and the "Marseillaise" and Victor Hugo's poems in French extended our knowledge in both elocution and class subjects.'[432]

O'Neill recalls standing in the tennis courts beating out the blank verse rhythm with her feet on the court or with her hands on the desk in the classroom.[433]

It appears that poetry was integral to the study of literature specifically in Catholic schools in New Zealand in the 1950s and much like the recommendations in *The Experience of Poetry in School*[434] which was published in England in 1953, speaking poetry, particularly for group performances, was a very important aspect of poetry teaching. The availability of free textbooks to schools meant that students had a comprehensive selection of poets to study and also the opportunity to meet poets they studied at poetry readings. There was also a cross-curricular application of poetry in the classroom because certain thematic issues were dealt with in other subjects,

'Eileen Duggan's "The Bush Feller", R.A.K. Mason's "On the Swag" and Basil Dowling's "Canterbury" and "The Early Days" were linked into social studies lessons to supplement material about Christchurch and pioneering days. Poetry found its way into many niches and corners of the school day.'[435]

O'Neill points out that in her experience of examining speech and drama candidates all over the world the poetry of different cultures was extremely important to the performers, so for example,

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[431] Ibid.
[432] Ibid.
[433] Ibid.
[434] Brown, Victoria V. ed., (1953) The Experience of Poetry in School: Six essays on various ways of presenting poetry in secondary schools. London. Oxford University Press.
[435] O'Neill, Helen Josephine (2006) Ph.D thesis Once Preferred, Now Peripheral: the Place of Poetry in the Teaching of English in the New Zealand Curriculum for year 9, 10 and 11 students. The University of Canterbury Christchurch, New Zealand.

the poems of Sri Lanka dealt with issues that underpinned cultural, political or social issues, 'The students understood the misery of poverty and the unease in their country which their poets compared with the situation in Poland and other European countries during World War II.'[436] The premise of O'Neill's thesis is based on the contrast between her own experience of poetry and the present subordination of poetry in the modern curriculum and how this diminution of poetry is detrimental to the holistic development of students, 'Having taught poetry for nearly sixty years, I am convinced that depriving students of this essential aspect of the English programme condemns them to a narrow range of skills in speaking, writing and reading English.'

3.2.2 Active teaching and learning

O'Neill's account of a lively and active engagement with poetry in New Zealand and its attendant benefits to learners in the 1940s and 1950s was not limited to that part of the world, but was reflected in a wider international movement in that post war period towards the importance and value of experiencing and exploring poetry in more personal and creative ways. *The Experience of Poetry in School*[437] sets out six essays about the teaching of poetry in the secondary modern school although it is stated in the introduction that some of the material is also applicable to primary and grammar schools. The writer is forthright about the place of poetry in the classroom and states that the six contributors to the book abhor 'the compulsory learning of poetry by rote'[438] ... and that 'voluntary learning is to be encouraged.'[439] The six strategies outlined in the book are an attempt to get students to engage with poetry in a more personal and creative way. In chapter one Brown outlines the benefits of talking about poetry with the students and acknowledges that initially the 'experience and enjoyment come first'[440] and that the teacher should encourage 'an interested and friendly attitude to words and their sounds'.[441] Brown tentatively infers that the practice of active learning be used in poetry lessons particularly with younger children, 'a pronounced rhythm is sometimes actually accompanied by a physical movement like rocking, swinging, or tapping'.[442] Brown's observations about choosing poetry for weaker students are interesting in that they advise teachers not to choose subject-matter that

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[436] Ibid.
[437] Brown, Victoria V. ed., (1953) The Experience of Poetry in School: Six essays on various ways of presenting poetry in secondary schools. London. Oxford University Press.
[438] Ibid. p. xii.
[439] Ibid.
[440] Ibid. p. 11.
[441] Ibid. p. 12.
[442] Ibid. p. 14.

is limited to the student's interests only but that topics that interest students can be used as long as the teacher 'does not allow himself or the children to think that the subject-matter justifies a poem.'[443] This is very insightful and infers that students' exposure to poetry should not be limited to the level of their academic performance only. In this respect Brown's arguments are analogous with Flora J. Arnstein[444] who wrote in 1951 that poetry like music and the other arts should primarily be enjoyed 'and that this enjoyment is not purely an intellectual exercise'.[445] In chapter two of *The Experience of Poetry in School* W. G. Bebbington states that the chief aim in poetry lessons 'is to create a joyous atmosphere'[446] and that the teacher's duty 'is to restore poetry to a popularity – in the best sense of the word – which it need never have lost'.[447] Bebbington recommends that lots of poems be made available to students and that solo and choral speaking poems be chosen to maximise participation and discussion of how each poem should be delivered. The type of poems that Bebbington had in mind for choral speaking could be as simple as *He and She*

He was a rat, and she was a rat,
And down in one hole they did dwell,
And both were as black as a witch's cat,
And they loved one another well.

He had a tail, and she had a tail,
Both long and curling and fine;
And each said, 'Yours is the finest tail
In the world, excepting mine.'

He smelt the cheese, and she smelt the cheese,
And they both pronounced it good;
And both remarked it would greatly add
To the charms of their daily food.

So he ventured out, and she ventured out,
And I saw them go with pain;
But what befell them I never can tell,
For they never came back again.[448]

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[443] Ibid.
[444] Arnstein, Flora J., (1967) Children Write Poetry: A Creative Approach. New York. Dover Publications, INC.
[445] Ibid. p. 72.
[446] Brown, Victoria V. ed., (1953) The Experience of Poetry in School: Six essays on various ways of presenting poetry in secondary schools. London. Oxford University Press. p. 35.
[447] Ibid.
[448] Ibid. p. 55. There is no known author of the poem and it is simply attributed anonymous.

The delivery of the choral performance is well planned by the teacher, particular students are selected, two principle soloists are chosen, students are assigned specific lines and stand in a particular order and rehearsals take place. Students are made aware of certain features in the poem that need emphasis, for example pathos, the musicality, rhythm, rhyme scheme, punctuation and pausing. The teacher also selects a conductor who 'has to make with his whole body, but especially with his head, arms, and hands, those gestures which stimulate the choir to feel the whole spirit of the piece and to make each detailed sound.'[449] There is no doubt that while *The Experience of Poetry in School* falls short of the more modern creative strategies of David Orme,[450] Mario Petrucci,[451] Robin Mellor,[452] Moira Andrew,[453] Prim-Ed[454] or Collette Drifte,[455] its predominant objective was to make poetry a more creative and active learning experience for the students. Other contributors to the text, Hilda Adams, M. N. M. Beadle, J. Widdows and Frances M. Stevens outlined their methodologies including 'acting Poetry', 'illustrating poetry' and 'writing poetry'.[456] Hilda Adams believed that dramatising poetry was a good way of involving students who perhaps had difficulty with reading 'to re-create a poem in terms of speech and movement may convince these children that the poem lives – that it is not an arbitrary arrangement of words by someone who is difficult to understand and very probably dead.'[457] According to M. N. M. Beadle illustrating poetry had become an accepted practice by 1953 and the act of illustrating in fact intensified the child's experience of poetry.[458] In chapter VI of *The Experience of Poetry in School* entitled 'Leaving It Alone' Frances M. Stevens[459] argued that poetry 'is a necessity of school life'[460] and not withstanding the ability of teachers to do creative things with it the interface of teacher and students with poetry is a very complex and

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[449] Ibid. p. 57.
[450] Orme, David ed. (1997) Poetry 9-11: Teacher's Book. Warwickshire. Scholastic Ltd.
[451] Petrucci, Mario (2002) The Havering Poetry Study Pack. Published in conjunction with the poetry collection: The Stamina of Sheep. Romford. The London Borough of Havering.
[452] Mellor, Robin (1995) Making Poems With Infants: teaching Notes.Kent. Quillstring Press.
[453] Andrew, Moira (1999) Curriculum Bank Key Stage One Scottish Levels A-B: Poetry. Warwickshire. Scholastic Ltd.
[454] Prim-Ed publications have a selection of photocopiable poetry material for use in primary schools with children of all ages and learning abilities.
[455] Drifte, Collette (2003) Literacy Play For The Early Years Book 3: Learning through poetry. London. David Fulton Publishers.
[456] Brown, Victoria V. ed., (1953) The Experience of Poetry in School: Six essays on various ways of presenting poetry in secondary schools. London. Oxford University Press.
[457] Ibid. p. 67.
[458] Ibid. p. 95.
[459] Ibid. pp.156 – 184.
[460] Ibid. p. 156.

delicate act. Stevens stressed that 'the end of poetry is not a triumphant Q.E.D. but a sensation of new experience'[461] and juxtaposed the students' experience of poetry and the teacher's ability to teach it irregardless of learnt methodologies, 'More than any other subject, poetry is fundamentally connected with the personality of the teacher; precisely as far as the teacher possesses certain qualities, can it be taught.'[462]

In 1956 the *Programme for Primary Schools* [463] differentiated itself from the 1932 *Programme of Instruction for Public Elementary Schools* stating that the later document was more concerned with the students' all round development and had embraced the changes in educational thought and practice, 'a fuller recognition that all aspects of the child's personality – physical, intellectual, emotional, imaginative, social, moral, spiritual – are involved in the educational process.'[464] The document set out that for primary 1 – 3 about two and a half hours per week should be devoted to stories, poetry, dramatic work and music.[465] As well as telling and reading different types of stories students should be given time 'for speaking verse and for simple mime and dramatic expression.'[466] The role of the teacher in the English class was seen as supremely important and the choice of poetry was to be 'traditional jingles and nursery rhymes. Finger plays ... have also their value.'[467] The teacher was encouraged to choose poems with a direct style, suitable language and sentiment which is 'healthy and appropriate'.[468] For students in primary 4 – 7 jingles, tongue-twisters and patter rhymes were recommended for use in speech exercise 'for their effect is to improve activity of the jaw, lips, and tip and back of the tongue.'[469] The objective of poetry chosen for this age range should be to deepen the students' experience so the selection of poems should include narrative texts and ballads, long and short poems.[470] By choosing a variety of poems to study many different methodologies can be used to teach them including mime, dramatic presentations, choral work, memorization of poems and illustration of poems.[471]

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[461] Ibid. p. 165.
[462] Ibid. p. 184.
[463] Government of Northern Ireland Ministry Of Education (1956) Programme for Primary Schools. Belfast. Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
[464] Ibid. p. 5.
[465] Ibid. pp. 16, 17.
[466] Ibid. p. 17.
[467] Ibid. pp. 19, 21.
[468] Ibid. p. 21.
[469] Ibid. p. 33.
[470] Ibid. p. 36.
[471] Ibid. pp. 36, 37.

3.2.3 Teachers' attitudes towards poetry

Geoffrey Summerfield,[472] writing in 1965, was concerned that for some teachers teaching poetry was metaphorically perceived to be 'either a hair-shirt to be dutifully worn once a week or fortnight, or an Achiles' heel, a crippling defect.'[473] In contrast with these views Summerfield believed that poetry was a vital part of any English syllabus and that both the reading and writing of poetry should be accepted 'as perfectly normal accomplishments.'[474] Summerfield was particularly drawn to the sentiments of D. H. Lawrence about poetry making a new effort of attention and discovering a new world within the known world[475] and thus, he set out strategies to enhance the experience of poetry for the students fearing that once they leave school they will read and write very little of it. It is not surprising that he focuses attention on the responsibility of the teacher to teach poetry with 'intensity', to create a condition of 'receptivity ... of tranquility, in which the poem can be allowed to be itself and do its work.'[476] Summerfield felt that as a reader and a teacher poetry embodied a 'particular act of attention'[477] and is important because it helps both teachers and students 'to see, to perceive, to feel, to respond, more precisely, more vividly, more coherently.'[478]

In the same way as Summerfield expressed his concerns about teachers' attitudes towards poetry *A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)*[479] published in 1967, stated that it was doubtful whether poetry had ever been well treated in the majority of schools. In the same year Marie Peel[480] published *Seeing To The Heart* in which she stated that many junior school teachers were reluctant to take poetry classes, 'All these teachers tend to isolate poetry from their other activities, their mistrust infects their class and when conscience occasionally pricks them into doubtful action, the children – not surprisingly – are unresponsive or hostile.'[481] Peel's book is an attempt to make poetry not only an entity in itself worth teaching but also suggests ways in which this might be accomplished. Just as the 1967 report was critical of some

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[472] Summerfield, Geoffrey (1965) Topics in English for the secondary school. London. B. T. Batsford Ltd.
[473] Ibid. p. 20.
[474] Ibid. p. 20.
[475] Ibid. p. 21.
[476] Ibid.
[477] Ibid.
[478] Ibid. p. 22.
[479] Department of Education and Science (1967) Children and their Primary Schools: A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England). Volume I: The Report. London. Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
[480] Peel, Marie (1972) fifth impression, Seeing To The Heart: English and Imagination in the Junior School. London. Chatto & Windus.
[481] Ibid. p. 28.

poetry selections used in schools, Peel included an appendix of poetry books which she thought would be beneficial for teachers to read, among them Michael Baldwin's *Poems by Children 1950-1961*[482] and his *Poetry without Tears*,[483] material by Ted Hughes, Marjorie Hourd and Gertrude Cooper's *Coming into their Own*.[484]

Despite some criticism in the 1967 report of the number of poetry anthologies in schools that included too many traditional anthology pieces and 'too much tinkling verse about fairies and elves written especially for children,'[485] there was reference to changes in the quality of poetry being compiled for students. The report was concerned that some good teachers 'lack conviction about the value of poetry'[486] and that as a consequence once the nursery rhyme stage is over 'few teachers speak poems'[487] to the students and therefore 'Children may lose much when they are not set an example of getting poetry by heart'.[488] The report set out the benefits of poetry not only in terms of the pleasure and heightened sensibilities it may evoke in students but it also showed how it improved the quality of reading material and the writing standards of students, 'Children need extension of experience, both at first hand and through reading and listening, if they are to write well. They are often stimulated by hearing good poetry read aloud, partly by its whole flavour, partly because they are encouraged to convey their meaning in relatively few words.'[489] The report includes a sample of one young girl's poem which was written after she had read some extracts of T. S. Eliot's poetry and while the poem is a modest attempt to recollect the student's feelings about the previous evening in her home the poem illustrates that poetry can be used as a trigger to stimulate students' creative writing and to explore their inner emotive worlds;

The smell of fish and chips
Cooking in the kitchen.
The baby crying for its feed
And our old Dad reading the newspaper.
Slippers lying around the house,
And big sister telling us off.

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[482] Baldwin, Michael (1962) Poems by Children 1950-1961. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
[483] Baldwin, Michael (1962) Poetry without Tears. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
[484] Hourd, Marjorie and Cooper, Gertrude (1959) Coming Into Their Own. London. Heinemann.
[485] Department of Education and Science (1967) Children and their Primary Schools: A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England). Volume I: The Report. London. Her Majesty's Stationery Office. p. 216.
[486] Ibid. 217.
[487] Ibid.
[488] Ibid.
[489] Ibid. p. 220.

Mother has got a headache
And so have I.
The doors slamming to and fro.
Seven o'clock.
Time for television.[490]

The report also included a poem written by a young boy which was triggered by some poetry he had read, '... the poetry a boy had had extended his vision as he looked at scaled models of the planets, strung across his classroom'

Pluto the lonely traveler
Far out in the unconquered universe,
Like a hermit
In the mysterious desert of space.
Mercury the baby of the family,
The Sun the mother,
Watching over her nine sons.
Pluto the shy and lonely one,
Earth the educated son.[491]

These examples of children's writing show that the value of teaching poetry is multi-faceted, it can improve speech and memory function, it can heighten the sensitivity and empathy of the students, it is a powerful trigger for the imagination and for aesthetic appreciation, it can be used for learning across the curriculum and make it can make learning fun, 'English permeates the whole curriculum as it permeates the whole of life. We cannot afford to slacken in advancing the power of language which is the "instrument of society" and a principal means to personal maturity.'[492]

The strength of the argument for creative education became more apparent in the1960s and 1970s when a number of poetry anthologies written by children were published. It would be erroneous to suggest that children writing their own poems only evolved during this period, there are many examples of writers and educators published before 1960 who included examples of poems written by either their own pupils or by pupils who were part of a study or survey group in particular schools. Examples of children's anthologies published by writers like Michael

[490] Ibid.
[491] Ibid.
[492] Ibid. p. 223.

Baldwin,[493] Marjorie Hourd[494] or the samples published by Boris Ford[495] between 1955 and 1960 in the Journal of Education and in *Young Writers, Young Readers* are very important because they show that children can write about issues in a sophisticated style and often to a level that far surpasses their academic ability or the expectations of academic experts. Shayer identifies the anthologies written by children as a distinct and significant phenomenon in the history of English as a subject in the curriculum.[496] He also marks this period as distinct because of the publication of useful poetry method books that offered teachers interesting as well as practical ideas for teaching poetry.[497] The methods suggested are numerous and allow for active participation by the students. Shayer summarises the educative value of the creative approaches by writers like Marie Peel (1967), Margaret Langdon (1961), Barry Maybury (1967) and S. M. Lane and M. Kemp (1967) into twelve points.[498] Essentially he argues that children's writing is by this stage believed to have integrity and that imagination and individual viewpoint is encouraged. Children can now draw on their own memories and experiences as triggers for writing. It is accepted that the encouragement of children to write will in fact teach them how to write and that they must be given stimuli to induce their inspiration and imagination for writing. The children must be encouraged to express their feelings and emotions and written language has now become the means of developing their personality.[499]

The Practice of English Teaching,[500] a symposium of essays published in 1970, attempts to offer teachers practical approaches to teaching English. In their chapter on *Language as Educator* Britton, Martin and Rosen[501] argued that despite the publication of a number of texts about the teaching of English there was a general consensus that students were leaving school seriously deficient in the subject, 'They have no access to the resources of the language as a whole; in a sense they are maimed or disqualified, linguistically unfit to play a full part in the life of their society and effectively barred from undertaking further education.'[502] A. R. Tomkins'[503] chapter

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[493] Baldwin, Michael (1962) Poems by Children 1950-1961. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul
[494] Hourd, Marjorie and Cooper, Gertrude (1959) Coming Into Their Own. London. Heinemann.
[495] Ford, Boris (1960) Young Writers, Young Readers. London. Hutchinson.
[496] Shayer, David (1972) The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970. London and Boston. Routledge & Kegan Paul. p. 159.
[497] Ibid. p. 160.
[498] Ibid. pp. 163, 164.
[499] Ibid. pp. 164, 165.
[500] Owens, Graham and Marland, Michael eds. (1970) The Practice of English Teaching: A Symposium Of Essays On The Teaching Of English In Secondary Schools. Glasgow & London. Blackie.
[501] Ibid. pp. 3 – 12.
[502] Ibid. p. 3.

outlines why and how poetry can be enjoyable for students initially because of its rhythmic nature, imagery and its story-telling ability but also because of its subtly. Throughout the text there is a significant emphasis on the importance of the teacher in the teaching of poetry. It seems that as far as Peter Doughty[504] is concerned upon the teacher is heaped the responsibility of being an avid reader of poetry, being able to discern what is of interest to students, what is age appropriate for their emotional and intellectual levels, being able to devise suitable methodologies for teaching poetry on its own and in a cross-curricular fashion; as well as being an excellent speaker of poetry, 'A teacher reads well the poems that matter to him, which means that there must be poems that matter to him. A teacher cannot use poems in his teaching at all meaningfully unless he takes pleasure in reading them for himself and regards them as a natural part of his chosen reading.'[505] The damage caused to poetry by an ill-equipped education system is evident in Willem de Moor's[506] comments about the teaching of literature after the introduction of the Mammouth Law in the Netherlands in 1968.[507] He believes this law, which changed the school system, had a detrimental effect on poetry and negated the goals of the education system, which in pre 1968 appreciated literary education as a means of increasing the population's knowledge about their cultural heritage.[508] de Moor and his contemporaries were moved to initiate a project in 1988 in an attempt to redress the difficulties involved in teaching poetry, a task which has proved to be most challenging.[509]

It is evident from the analysis of research presented in this section that progressive educators were advocating the educative benefits of poetry but that the teaching of it was a source of much despondency inside the classroom. All through the 1970s and '80s researchers like Moody,[510] Bright and McGregor,[511] and Lawal,[512] demonstrated that the study of literature contributes to

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[503] Ibid. pp.197 – 200.
[504] Ibid. pp. 201 – 208.
[505] Ibid. p. 207.
[506] De Moor, Willem Teaching of Poetry in the Netherlands since 1968. In Thompson, Linda ed. (1996) The Teaching of Poetry: European Perspectives. London & New York. Cassell. pp. 63 – 69.
[507] Ibid. p. 63.
[508] Ibid.
[509] Ibid. p. 64.
[510] Moody, H. L. B. (1971) The teaching of literature with special references to developing countries. London. Longman
[511] Bright, J. A. and McGregor, G. P. (1979) Teaching English as a second language. London. Longman.
[512] Lawal, R. A. "Organising an Extensive Reading Programme in Nigeria Junior Secondary Schools: Problems and Recommendations." Literacy and Reading in Nigeria. Vol. 2. (1985).

the cognitive and affective development of students. Yet, the research of Aluko,[513] Ezeokoli[514] and Fatunsin[515] deduced that the quality of teaching literature during these two decades was deficient and in turn meant both teachers and students avoided the teaching and learning of poetry for as long as possible. This point is evident in the findings of Benton's[516] survey of teachers in 1982 which highlighted that they were struggling to teach poetry in the classroom. The survey conducted in 1982 analysed the practice and attitudes towards poetry of 170 secondary teachers in a single Local Authority Education. Benton found that teachers were concerned about many things in relation to teaching poetry including the resistance of older pupils, especially boys towards learning it.[517] The report also highlighted that 25% of those teachers most despondent in their attitude towards poetry had no discernible qualification to actually teach English.[518] *The Poetry Research Project* 1998[519] is a follow up study to the one conducted by Benton in 1982. The aim of the 1998 *Poetry Research Project* was to examine the extent of the change, if any, in teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of poetry. What emerges from the research is that teachers' concerns had shifted more towards the constraints of time, the demands of examinations and the syllabus content. Teachers were concerned that the demands of examinations led to decoding and deconstructing[520] the poems for the pupils; learning poetry was less about pupils exploring poems and more about teachers telling pupils what the poems were about, 'I feel constrained by the examinations to spoon-feed my classes rather than letting them develop their own views about poems.'[521] Benton points out that this response was reflected by 65% of the teachers surveyed.[522] An interesting issue which emerged from the 1998 survey was that 9% of teachers felt that they did not know enough about poetry to feel confident teaching it.[523] Although teachers were free to comment on the theory that shaped their strategies and methodologies for teaching poetry, very few of them did. Very few teachers were able to name

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[513] Aluko, O. (1985) The relationship between teachers' and students' attitude to teaching and performance in prose and poetry. University of Ibadan. Unpublished M.Ed Thesis.
[514] Ezeokoli, F. O. (1985) Effects of teacher classroom behaviour on students motivation and achievement in literature in English. University of Ibadan. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis.
[515] Fatunsin, M. T. (1985) An investigation into the problems facing poetry teaching and learning in secondary schools. University of Ibadan. Unpublished M.Ed Thesis.
[516] Benton, Peter "Unweaving the Rainbow: poetry teaching in the secondary school I. Oxford Review of Education, Vol. 25, No. 4. (1999).
[517] Ibid. p. 522.
[518] Ibid. p. 526.
[519] Ibid. pp. 521-531.
[520] Ibid. p. 530.
[521] Ibid.
[522] Ibid.
[523] Ibid.

theoretical texts, authors or anthologies that had influenced their attitudes towards the teaching of poetry other than those issued by the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board.[524] Overall then, while the survey showed that in 1998 fewer teachers felt overwhelmed by the prospect of teaching poetry there were still areas of concern for educators, particularly in relation to a decrease of 10% in the number of teachers who felt that learning poetry was important for the pleasure, fun and enjoyment that it gave to students.[525] This decrease runs counter to the aims of the National Curriculum which encouraged the teaching of poetry precisely because it would cultivate independent, responsive and enthusiastic readers.[526]

Throughout the twentieth century the interconnectedness of poetry and pedagogy, has educed a growing body of research that advocates the benefits of teaching poetry. Spaulding[527] in his assessment of poetry's formative power, a study based on the teaching of poetry in Tasmania from 1900 to 1950, asserts that poetry has always featured in formal learning programmes. Perloff,[528] Retallack and Spahr[529] have all conceded that there is a link between poetry and pedagogy, the latter in particular have edited a very interesting book from a collection of twenty-two essays that deal with both the use of contemporary poetry and teaching strategies in the contemporary classroom. *English Education* has published many interesting articles about poetry and pedagogy in recent years, and Jocson's[530] 2005 article about the pedagogy of June Jordan's poetry is well worth reading. Some of the research papers about the benefits of teaching poetry published in the Journal of Instructional Psychology[531] analyse the link between symbolic thinking and a child's process of learning, 'It is asserted that the questions asked by children in their poems guide us to their future and ours.'[532] Despite all the evidence of the educative value of poetry it is suggested that it is taught, at least in second level schools, in a constrained,

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[524] Ibid. p. 526.
[525] Ibid. p. 525.
[526] Department For Education (1995) English in the National Curriculum. London. HMSO.
[527] Spaulding, Ralph (2005) Poetry's 'formative power': teaching poetry in Tasmania 1900-1950. Australian Literary Studies. October 1.
[528] Perloff, Marjorie (2004) Differentials: poetry, poetics, pedagogy. Alabama. University of Alabama Press.
[529] Retallack, Joan and Spahr, Juliana (eds.) Poetry and Pedagogy: The Challenge of the Contemporary.
[530] Jocson, Korina M., "Taking it to the Mic": Pedagogy of June Jordan's Poetry for the People and Partnership with an Urban High School. English Education. Vol. 37. No. 2. January 2005. pp. 132-148.
[531] Nowak-Fabrykowski, Krystyna (2000) The Role of Poetry and Stories of Young Children in their Process of Learning. Journal of Instructional Psychology. March 1.
[532] Ibid.

examination framed format, and essentially antithetical to its imaginative power, 'Poetry suffers when literary standards are forced to conform with institutional ones.'[533]

3.2.4 Students' attitudes to the study of poetry

In 1972 Ann Terry[534] conducted a national survey of the poetry preferences of students in upper elementary grades in America which found that younger children like poetry more than their older counterparts. The survey highlighted that students' interest in poetry peaked about fourth grade and then declined and that students liked poems that were funny, had sound, rhythm and stories. It was obvious from the survey that the students did not necessarily like the poems chosen by teachers to study in class. A variety of reasons were offered as to why they didn't like poems, including a lack of rhyme, that they dealt with unfamiliar things that the students didn't understand or weren't interested in, that they had no story and that they dealt with things the students could not do or did not like doing.[535]

In the Primary Education Teachers' Guide[536] published in 1974 very little space is given to poetry despite the fact that poetry is acknowledged to be essential 'A child who does not have poetry and stories told and read to him at home and at school throughout his childhood goes through life poorer as a human being.'[537] The document also points out that children who come to school with little experience of hearing rhymes will need extra time from the teacher to help them to learn to read and enjoy literature. In the paragraph dealing with poetry teachers are recommended to 'make poetry live'[538] for the students in their class. It is also firmly established that there are very few topics of interest to children which 'cannot be further illuminated with the aid of poetry.'[539] Poetry writing was also encouraged because it could be used by students as a medium for 'self-expression.'[540] In 1977 Robert Burroughs[541] deduced from an informal survey that students in high school strongly disliked if not hated poetry. The students believed that only teachers could understand what a poem meant and they felt disgruntled that their own

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[533] Gioia, Dana (1992) Can Poetry Matter? Essays on Poetry and American Culture. USA. Graywolf.
[534] Terry, Ann (1974) Children's Poetry Preferences. Urbana. NCTE. Pp. 47 – 53.
[535] Ibid. pp. 47-53.
[536] Department of Education for Northern Ireland (1974) Primary Education Teachers' Guide. Belfast. Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
[537] Ibid. p. 24.
[538] Ibid. p. 34.
[539] Ibid.
[540] Ibid. p. 36.
[541] Burroughs, Robert (1977) "On Teaching Poetry," English Journal 66. February.

interpretation of a poem was contradicted by the teacher's understanding of its symbolic content.[542] In 1980 research carried out in six schools by Rachel McAlpine[543] in New Zealand yielded similar findings; poetry was a seriously underrated part of the English syllabus by both teachers and students. The attitude of Burroughs' students in high school may have resulted from what Sir Alan Bullock[544] identified as a concentration of study by American students of the generic characteristics of a work of literature and assembling patterns of image and symbol.[545] This concentration would make the poetry lesson weighted towards cognitive understanding as opposed to creative, imaginative or active. In British schools Bullock stated that students at second level may be less receptive to literature because of the pressure of learning it for examination.[546] He also stated that poetry opens the students up to more critical and intense observation in the classroom because every time they respond to a poem more is at stake than their knowledge of the text, 'Is the value-judgment he forms the one the teacher finds acceptable? Is he betraying himself ... as one who lacks discrimination?'[547] Bullock states that poetry starts at a disadvantage because it is viewed in the public domain as something rather odd and outside the current of normal life, 'it is either numinous, and therefore rarely to be invoked, or an object of comic derision.'[548] He refers to the prejudices that surround poetry by those who dismiss it as arcane and inaccessible and says that the teacher is left with the task of making it accessible.[549] He refers to the findings in Yarlott and Harpin's survey (1972/73)[550] of one thousand O and A level students of both sexes as dispiriting.[551] Of the one thousand students surveyed only 170 of them said that they would read poetry after leaving school.[552] The O level students disliked the four poetry anthologies and the A level students disliked Milton, especially

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[542] Ibid. p. 49.

[543] McAlpine, Rachel (1980) *Song in the Satchel: Poetry in the High School.* Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

[544] Bullock, Sir Alan (1975) A Language for Life: Report of the Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under the Chairmanship of Sir Alan Bullock F. B. A. London. Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

[545] Ibid. p. 124.

[546] Ibid. p. 131.

[547] Ibid.

[548] Ibid. p. 135.

[549] Ibid.

[550] Yarlott, G. and Harpin, W. S., (1972/73) 1,000 Responses to English Literature. Educational Research 13.1 and 13.2. In Bullock, Sir Alan (1975) A Language for Life: Report of the Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under the Chairmanship of Sir Alan Bullock F. B. A. London. Her Majesty's Stationery Office. pp. 131, 135.

[551] Ibid. p. 135.

[552] Ibid.

Paradise Lost.[553] Despite the attitudes of students poetry was still a significant part of the literature curriculum. The Bullock Report stated that the tradition of literature teaching was one that aimed at personal and moral growth and that this emphasis had grown since the 1950s.[554] However, despite the educative power of poetry, Bullock points out that in many schools its value is undermined by a lack of commitment and misunderstanding.[555] The real educative power of poetry needs nurturing through proper resources, good anthologies and teachers who are well read and committed to finding contemporary poetry and poems that their students can relate to.[556] Departments of English in schools must also be familiar with what is currently being produced, where to locate good resources and access the facilities available in the Arts Council such as the Writers in Schools scheme.[557] In 1987 the Department of Education and Science in England published '*Teaching Poetry in the Secondary School*',[558] a short document that stressed the importance of poetry in the curriculum. In the introduction the value of poetry was immediately highlighted because it shows the use that 'human beings make of words to explore and understand',[559] it encompasses a suggestion of 'human creativity and imagination and a notion of energy and value'.[560] The Department underscored the function of poetry as engagement with 'the living situations of men and women, with the shape and motive of human conduct'.[561] The Department outlined the dichotomy that exists within the education system between language and literature, arguing that by default the study of literature for examination purposes has 'institutionalised'[562] it and associated it in students' minds merely with content to be learnt for exams. The document however, stresses the importance of poetry for students,

'Poetry needs to be at the heart of work in English because of the quality of language at work on experience that it offers to us. If language becomes separated from moral and emotional life – becomes merely a trail of clichés which neither communicate with nor quicken the mind of the reader – then we run the risk of depriving children of the kind of vital resource of language which poetry provides.'[563]

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[553] Ibid.
[554] Ibid. p. 125.
[555] Ibid. p. 137.
[556] Ibid. pp. 136, 137.
[557] Ibid. p. 137.
[558] Department of Education and Science (1987) Teaching Poetry in the Secondary School. London. Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
[559] Ibid. p. 1.
[560] Ibid.
[561] Ibid.
[562] Ibid. p. 3.
[563] Ibid.

Colin Walter[564] in an attempt to paraphrase J. Brodsky's theories about the interconnectedness of poetry and language suggests that in essence without poetry we are 'sub-lingual.'[565] Whether he agrees totally with this theory is questionable but he does argue that students' perceptions about poetry and its value are formed very early in their lives, 'It is what happens to their perceptions and expectations of poetry in the first half of the time they spend at school which enables children to recognize that poetry is not an abstruse intellectual puzzle, nor just another school requirement.'[566]

A study carried out in France by the French National Institute of Pedagogical Research in 1992[567] yielded some very interesting information about the teaching of poetry in second level schools. It appears that in French second level schools there is more flexibility among teachers to choose their own texts for study as opposed to the Irish system where the Department of Education prescribe the poets for study, 'The poets and poetry for each level will be prescribed.'[568] However, in French schools, extracts of poetry studied appears to be predominantly the work of nineteenth and twentieth century poets, the former constituting 65.4% of the poets studied and the latter constituting 23% of the poets studied.[569] In this respect the historical range of poetry studied by Irish and French students seems to be equally constrained to certain periods perhaps because the scope of thematic issues is easier to deal with or the more modern language makes it easier to concentrate on the denoted meaning of the poems. While the French system offers some structure for the study of poetry it appears that students in Germany are unenthusiastic about it, 'young people, adolescents and students at universities, even those who study literature, tend to reject poetry.'[570] According to Mattenklott[571] this rejection of poetry by older students is in stark contrast to what Hans Magnus Enzensberger[572] called the 'prima

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[564] Walter, Colin Thinking Through Form: Preparing to Teach Poetry in school. In Thompson, Linda (1996) The Teaching of Poetry: European Perspectives. London & New York. Cassell.
[565] Ibid. p. 77.
[566] Ibid. p. 78.
[567] Fournier, Jean-Marie Teaching Poetry in the Secondary School in France. In Thompson, Linda (1996) The Teaching of Poetry: European Perspectives. London & New York. Cassell. pp. 55 – 62.
[568] The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) The Leaving Certificate English Syllabus (Higher Level and Ordinary Level). Dublin. The Stationery Office. p. 17.
[569] Fournier, Jean-Marie Teaching Poetry in the Secondary School in France. In Thompson, Linda (1996) The Teaching of Poetry: European Perspectives. London & New York. Cassell. p. 56.
[570] Mattenklott, Gundel Poetry as Play: Rules for the Imagination. Translated by Brian Poole. In Thompson, Linda (1996) The Teaching of Poetry: European Perspectives. London & New York. Cassell. pp. 12 – 21.
[571] Ibid.
[572] Ibid. p. 12.

poesis'[573] experience of young children. Their first encounter with poetry is about pleasure and play, small children love to integrate rhymes with body movement and gesture, 'Small children love this physical play with language, just as they love song. When they begin to attend school we, as teachers, can address and enliven the pleasure the children already find in the rhythm, repetition and sounds of language.'[574] Mattenklott's chapter proposes some interesting strategies for use in the classroom that would enhance the experience of learning poetry for students including games with sound, games with letters, games with word meanings and games with rhyme.[575]

3.2.5 Teaching approaches that facilitate success

In *Reading Poetry and Primary School Practice*[576] Linda Hall states that current practices in the teaching of poetry at primary level in England actually mitigate against its success as a subject rather than facilitate it, 'The difficulty lies in the fact that certain ideas and approaches which predominate at present at the primary level ignore the intrinsic value of poetry and fail to pay it the respect that it deserves and needs if it is to work its magic on children.'[577] Hall believes that integrating poetry into lessons, presumably she means using poems in other subjects as a means of learning specific points about that subject, 'fails to allow pupils the opportunity to 'stand and stare' in admiration and wonder at a poem.'[578] In some ways Hall's arguments exude an almost idealistic view about how poetry should be dealt with in the classroom. Her statements are made in the absence of any consideration of special needs students being taught in mainstream classes or students for whom English is not their first language or students with behavioral problems. What she considers the 'exploitation'[579] of poetry or the study of poems for reasons other than for their own sake is at odds with other theorists who encourage the use of poetry as a pedagogical tool. Hall's stance on the exploitation of poetry may be irreconcilable with Lorraine La Croix's[580] use of poetry to raise the test scores of students including those with basic reading

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[573] Ibid. Citing Enzensberger's anthology of children's verse 'Allerleirauh' published in the 1960s.
[574] Ibid. p. 13.
[575] Ibid. pp. 15 – 19.
[576] Hall, Linda Reading Poetry and Primary School Practice. In Thompson, Linda (1996) The Teaching of Poetry: European Perspectives. London & New York. Cassell. pp. 22 – 29.
[577] Ibid. p. 22.
[578] Ibid. p. 23.
[579] Ibid. p. 24.
[580] La Croix, Lorraine (2005) Inspired English: Raising Test Scores and Writing Effectiveness Through Poetry and Fiction. California. Corwin press.

skills especially when her work is not based on empirical data. Yet La Croix's work proves that poetry has a practical as well as aesthetic application, and her objective goes beyond simply admiring poetry. La Croix's practical application of poetry had already been proposed in *Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Volume II*, 1994. In an article entitled *Using Poetry in Teaching Reading to Special Education Students* William Dillon[581] discussed a unit designed for students with specific learning difficulties, social and emotional handicaps and those labeled educable mentally retarded. Dillon contends that using poetry to teach special education students to read 'provides excellent opportunities to read aloud to students and have them be active listeners.'[582] He rated poetry a more advantageous methodology than decoding and word attack skills used in other strategies, 'The rhythm and rhyme of simple poems can provide prompts to the reader ... Poems that rhyme offer an excellent opportunity to listen for and find rhyming words.'[583]

In an attempt to prepare teachers to teach in diverse classrooms Cheryl L. Rosaen's[584] research in Michigan State University examined the potential of poetry writing as a pedagogical tool in her teacher training programme. Rosaen's concern about the competence of her student teachers to teach poetry is comparable with the findings of Hipple[585] who found that even the mention of poetry raised a hostile response from students. Hipple conceded that 'The failure of teachers of English to make poetry one of the exciting highlights of the school year represents one of the many paradoxes found in the teaching of adolescents.'[586] Rosaen used poetry to create "participatory spaces", a term she adopted from B. Hooks' *Teaching to transgress: Education as a practice of freedom* published in 1994.[587] Rosaen wanted to enable the teacher candidates to explore aspects of their own culture, share their knowledge and 'consider ways in which poetry can be explored by making connections with their personal lives and with other texts they have

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[581] Dillon, William (1994) Using Poetry in Teaching Reading to Special Education Students. Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute. Vol. II. http://www.cis.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1994/2/94.02.01.x.html Accessed 23/02/2006.
[582] Ibid. p. 2.
[583] Ibid. p. 3.
[584] Rosaen, Cheryl L. (2003) Preparing Teachers for Diverse Classrooms: Creating Publis and Private Spaces to Explore Culture Through Poetry Writing. Columbia University. Teachers College Record Vol. 105, No. 8, October. pp. 1437 – 1485.
[585] Hipple, Theodore W. (1973) Teaching English in Secondary Schools. New York. The MacMillan Company.
[586] Ibid. p. 132.
[587] Hooks, Bell (1994) Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom. London. Routledge. In Rosaen, Cheryl L., Preparing Teachers for Diverse Classrooms: Creating Public and Private Spaces to Explore Culture Through Poetry Writing. Columbia University. Teachers College Record Vol. 105, No. 8, October. p. 1439.

read or have written in order to support meaningful learning.'[588] Rosaen believed that by using poetry to explore their own culture the teachers would in turn be better able to help students from diverse backgrounds to fully participate and appreciate their own place in society. In this respect Rosaen was adapting her teaching programme based on the research findings of Johnson,[589] Probst,[590] Banks[591] and Christensen (1999[592] and 2000)[593]; essentially Rosaen conjectured that writing poetry would help teachers to 'understand how their own histories and roles as future teachers connect to concepts such as equity versus equality, cultural capital, and the hidden curriculum, and ultimately to the goal of building inclusive learning communities.'[594] Rosaen's research yielded some very interesting insights from her students about the value of 'using poetry as a site for engagement'.[595] Her analysis was conducted using C. Bennent's[596] framework for multicultural education using four theoretical clusters of ideas which included 'curriculum reform, equity pedagogy, multicultural competence and societal equity.'[597] The value of writing poetry in the curriculum was estimated by one teacher to be worthwhile for the experience that students would gain in the art of writing and engagement with literature as well as the potential to learn about themselves as people.[598] The pedagogical value of writing poetry was deemed to be an effective way for teachers to glean information about their students' interests, families and individual experiences. Poetry writing could also be a way of getting students to get to know each other; by getting students to share information about their backgrounds teachers would be

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[588] Rosaen, Cheryl L. (2003) Preparing Teachers for Diverse Classrooms: Creating Public and Private Spaces to Explore Culture Through Poetry Writing. Columbia University. Teachers College Record Vol. 105, No. 8, October. p. 1439.

[589] Johnson, D. M. (1990) Word waeving: A creative approach to teaching and writing poetry. Urbana. National Council of Teachers of English.

[590] Probst, R. E. (1990) Literature and literacy. In G. E. Hawisher & A. O. Soter eds. On literacy and its teaching: Issues in English Education. Albany. State University of New York Press. pp. 100 – 110.

[591] Banks, J. A. (1994) An introduction to multicultural education. Boston. Allyn & Bacon.

[592] Christensen, L. (1999) Critical Literacy: Teaching reading, writing, and outrage. In C. Edelsky ed. Making justice our project. Urbana. National Council of Teachers of English. pp. 209 – 241.

[593] Christensen, L. (2000) Reading, writing, and rising up: Teaching about social justice and the power of the written word. Milwaukee. WI. Rethinking Schools.

[594] Rosaen, Cheryl L. (2003) Preparing Teachers for Diverse Classrooms: Creating Public and Private Spaces to Explore Culture Through Poetry Writing. Columbia University. Teachers College Record Vol. 105, No. 8, October. p. 1458.

[595] Ibid. p. 1465.

[596] Bennett, C. (2001) Genres of research in multicultural education. review of Educational Research, 71(2). pp. 171 – 217. In Rosaen, Cheryl L. (2003) Preparing Teachers for Diverse Classrooms: Creating Public and Private Spaces to Explore Culture Through Poetry Writing. Columbia University. Teachers College Record Vol. 105, No. 8, October. p. 1452.

[597] Ibid.

[598] Rosaen, Cheryl L. (2003) Preparing Teachers for Diverse Classrooms: Creating Publis and Private Spaces to Explore Culture Through Poetry Writing. Columbia University. Teachers College Record Vol. 105, No. 8, October. p. 1465.

initiating a way of getting to know students culturally 'in order to engage in culturally responsive teaching'[599] as purported in the research of Villegas and Lucas.[600] Other teachers felt that writing poetry could help students to achieve a deeper understanding of characters in comparative literature studies and help them to establish empathy and compare and contrast their own experiences with those of other characters.[601] Rosaen asserted that not all of the teachers were initially comfortable writing poetry and that the majority of them did not consider themselves as readers or writers of poetry.[602] This assertion is not an isolated incident among teachers but it does point to a very serious problem in the perception and value of poetry in the classroom, if teachers don't value poetry, don't read it and don't write it then how can their students learn its educative value? In 2002 Patty Sosnowski[603] investigated the effect of sensory workshops on twenty-two tenth grade honours English students' attitudes towards poetry writing in an urban high school in western North Carolina. Sosnowski argued that students must have a motivating inner drive to become active participants in their learning process and that poetry writing is one way in which this can be achieved, 'Writing poetry is risky, especially to adolescents who may fear their own new, intense feelings. But, in today's impersonal world, poetry can be a vehicle for lifelong learning, for escaping from reality, for examining reality, for connecting with the past, and for moving toward the future.'[604] Sosnowski, drawing on the evidence of researchers like Joan Bell,[605] Veronica O'Brien[606] and M. P. Ford [607] asserts that poetry is viewed negatively by older students particularly because of the way it is dealt with in

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[599] Ibid. p. 1466.

[600] Villegas, A. M. and Lucas, T. (2002). Educating culturally responsive teachers: A coherent approach. Albany. State University of New York Press. In Rosaen, Cheryl L. (2003) Preparing Teachers for Diverse Classrooms: Creating Publis and Private Spaces to Explore Culture Through Poetry Writing. Columbia University. Teachers College Record Vol. 105, No. 8, October. p.1466.

[601] Rosaen, Cheryl L. (2003) Preparing Teachers for Diverse Classrooms: Creating Publis and Private Spaces to Explore Culture Through Poetry Writing. Columbia University. Teachers College Record Vol. 105, No. 8, October. p.1466.

[602] Ibid. p. 1467.

[603] Sosnowski, Patty (2002) Attitude Assessment and Change Toward Poetry Writing by High School Students. Department of Education. University of North Carolina at Asheville.

[604] Ibid. p. 4.

[605] Bell, Joan A. (1984) Poetry and the high school student. English Quarterly, 17 (1) 60-81. In Sosnowski, Patty (2002) Attitude Assessment and Change Toward Poetry Writing by High School Students. Department of Education. University of North Carolina at Asheville. p. 8.

[606] O'Brien, Veronica (1985) Teaching poetry in the secondary school. Dublin: Edward Arnold. In Sosnowski, Patty (2002) Attitude Assessment and Change Toward Poetry Writing by High School Students. Department of Education. University ofNorth Carolina at Asheville. p. 8.

[607] Ford, M.P. (1987). Young children' s concepts and attitudes about poetry. University of Iowa. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 309 456). In Sosnowski, Patty (2002) Attitude Assessment and Change Toward Poetry Writing by High School Students. Department of Education. University of North Carolina at Asheville. p. 4.

the classroom and in some degree because of the selectivity of poets they have to study. It is clear that Sosnowski's student group and Rosaen's teacher group had similar attitudes towards poetry since neither group believed it had any real value. Both researchers anticipated difficulty in attempting to change their subjects' attitudes yet both felt strongly enough based on their own experience and in Sosnowski's case research carried out by Nicole Baart,[608] that poetry writing has value. Basing her approach to sensory writing on Baart's workshop design, students were encouraged to write poetry based on their sense of smell and taste.[609] The effectiveness of the workshop in precipitating attitudinal change in the students was measured by administering a pre-workshop questionnaire and a post workshop questionnaire. Sosnowski's findings show a positive attitudinal change in 41% of the students toward poetry writing and despite the obvious limitations of the study such as its small size and restricted timescale,[610] it shows that it is possible to change students' attitudes towards poetry with creative interventions.

Jan Thwaites[611] published a small scale research project that investigated the effect of small group discourse on the imaginative responses of children to a poem in 1997. Undoubtedly there are some similarities between what Rosaen and Thwaites were attempting to do in so far as the sharing of ideas and experiences can propel changes in those who participate, 'Research has shown that group work can encourage autonomous learning'[612] and Thwaites predicted that 'individuals exploring the meanings of a poem collaboratively might review their original ideas in the light of new ones generated within the group and, therefore, move towards a greater degree of consensus in their thinking.'[613] While her prediction appears overly optimistic considering the scale of the study, the time frame for its implementation and the age range of the students (nine and ten year olds), it is conceivable that by sharing their experiences of the poem there would be some evidence of changes but not necessarily those anticipated by the researcher. The real value in the research carried out by Thwaites and Rosaen is that students and teachers were given opportunities to interface with poetry. They had a specific experience, whether that involved

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[608] Baart, N. (2002). Saying it *more intensely*: Using sensory experience to teach poetry writing. English Journal, 91 (3) 98-103. In Sosnowski, Patty (2002) Attitude Assessment and Change Toward Poetry Writing by High School Students. Department of Education. University of North Carolina at Asheville. p.4.

[609] Ibid. p. 9.

[610] Sosnowski, Patty (2002) Attitude Assessment and Change Toward Poetry Writing by High School Students. Department of Education. University of North Carolina at Asheville. . p. 17.

[611] Thwaites, Jan (1997) A Study into the Effect of Small Group Discourse on the Imaginative Responses of Children to a Poem. United Kingdom. Educational Research UnitUniversity of Wolverhampton.

[612] Ibid. p. 3.

[613] Ibid.

reading and discussing or writing and discussing which impinged on them in several ways and perhaps in ways that can lie sedentary in the subconscious waiting to be made sense of at some future date. Thwaites' results may not have been definitive but she is certainly not alone in propounding the theory that group work affects the educative outcome of studying poetry. For instance, Hayhoe was influenced by research in the 1970s and '80s which showed attainment in high levels of critical analysis in teacherless groups through free discussion of poems[614] and he is not adverse to the usefulness of group work on poetry which he suggests could range within four alternative structures, 'free peer group', 'open agenda', role-specific group' and 'pre-specified agenda'.[615] At its most basic, Hayhoe believes the function of group work on poetry could be 'for the best pupils as well as some of the worst to encounter new ideas, new values.'[616] Having examined the international perspective on the teaching of poetry in the post World War II educational context, I will now focus on the situation in Ireland, which is the key concern of this thesis.

3.3.1 The teaching of poetry in Irish schools

Compared with other policies on the teaching of literature, Irish schools according to various reports had essentially neglected the arts in education. Hyland and Milne[617] note that as early as 1949 and intermittently thereafter, Irish schools were accused of neglecting the arts. A discussion paper from the INTO education conference in 2009[618] on creativity and the arts in primary level schools states that the arts did not play a central role in the Irish curriculum until the latter years of the twentieth century.[619] Education policy in the nineteenth century had focused on providing the basic minimum education, the main aim being 'the development of literacy in the English language and the attainment of a level of numeracy'[620] for everybody. Very little changed in the provision of education in the early part of the twentieth century and the introduction of the compulsory primary certificate in 1943 narrowed the scope of the curriculum in Irish schools.[621]

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[614] Hayhoe, Mike (1988) Words Large as Apples: teaching poetry 11-18. Great Britain. Cambridge University Press. p. 38.
[615] Ibid.
[616] Ibid. p. 39.
[617] Hyland, Áine and Milne, Kenneth (1992) Irish Educational Documents Volume II: A Selection of extracts from documents relating to the history of education from 1922 to 1991 in the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland. Dublin. Church of Ireland College of Education.
[618] INTO (2009) Creativity And The Arts In The Primary School. Discussion Paper. Education Conference.
[619] Ibid. p. 17.
[620] Ibid.
[621] Ibid.

In contrast with official government policy, there was a growing interest in the ideas of progressive educators in Britain during the 1950s culminating in the publication of the *Plowden Report* in 1967.[622] The philosophy and pedagogy of education discussed in the report was concerned with the importance of an arts curriculum and its influence is evident in the *New Curriculum for Irish primary schools* published in 1971.[623]

A very interesting survey published in two volumes in 1975 by the Irish Association for Curriculum Development, investigated the attitudes of post primary teachers' *Perception of Educational Objectives and Examinations* [624]and pupils' *Perception of Educational Objectives and Their Reactions to School and School Subjects.*[625] The survey was collected from 4, 222 post-primary students in twenty-six counties who were in third year and upwards.[626] The survey revealed interesting attitudes towards literature in the curriculum. The survey found that boys thought English much less interesting than useful but girls found English the most interesting and useful subject.[627] It emerged that teachers of English underestimated the percentage of their students who thought it was a useful subject[628] but felt that their subject broadened the mind and evolved an awareness of other values and ways of life in their students.[629]

In 1976 the Arts Council initiated an investigation into the arts in Irish education. The report showed that arts education had been neglected in Irish schools and stated that the reasons for this neglect were complex. Several factors such as teacher training at both first and second level, lack of funding and lack of commitment from the Department of Education were responsible for the peripheral role of arts in Irish schools. The Report on *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education*[630]

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[622] Ibid. p. 18.
[623] Ibid.
[624] Raven, John et al., (1975) A Survey of Attitudes of Post Primary Teachers and Pupils Volume I: Teachers' Perception of Educational Objectives and Examinations, with an appendix presenting basic data on the schools, teachers, and pupils involved in the survey. Dublin. Irish Association for Curriculum Development in Association with The Competency Motivation Project.
[625] Raven, John et al., (1975) A Survey of Attitudes of Post Primary Teachers and Pupils Volume 2: Pupils' Perception of Educational Objectives and Their Reactions to School and School Subjects. Dublin. Irish Association for Curriculum Development in Association with The Competency Motivation Project.
[626] Ibid. p. iii.
[627] Ibid. p. 48.
[628] Ibid. p. 63.
[629] Raven, John et al., (1975) A Survey of Attitudes of Post Primary Teachers and Pupils Volume I: Teachers' Perception of Educational Objectives and Examinations, with an appendix presenting basic data on the schools, teachers, and pupils involved in the survey. Dublin. Irish Association for Curriculum Development in Association with The Competency Motivation Project. p. 40.
[630] Benson, Ciaran (1979) The Place of The Arts in Irish Education. Dublin. The Arts Council.

purported that there was neglect in the arts in education and this meant that 'whole generations ... lost the opportunity ... of learning about their own artistic past and of acquiring the skills necessary to build upon it'.[631]

The Curriculum and Examinations Board issued a discussion paper in 1985 on the *Arts in Education*. This paper highlighted that previous reports and recommendations in relation to the arts had been ignored and that action must be taken to redress this, 'The lack of understanding of the value of the arts in our society is the greatest impediment to change and to better provision for arts education.'[632] The White Paper on the arts in 1987 redefined the significance of arts education and stressed the need for the development of creativity in Irish education.[633] In the same year a research report published by the Department of Higher Education and Educational Research in Trinity College Dublin[634] purported in its conclusions that

'As Western society lays its emphasis on verbal and rational abilities, formal education is directed at the development of conscious reason so that what one recognizes here is an extremely partial relationship between the poetic phenomenon and education, as the latter cannot institutionalize the unconscious impulse towards creation but it can guide people towards mastery of the language and forms which are the material of their art.'[635]

Against such a background, the revised syllabi at both first and second level have emphasised the importance of aesthetic learning and the importance of poetry. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999)[636] stated that at primary level literature allows the child to explore the imagination and appreciate how language makes it vivid.[637] They argue that poetry should have a special place in listening and reading because it can provide 'unique and striking glimpses into aspects of human experience.'[638] Poetry offers the students an opportunity to enjoy

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[631] Ibid. p. 16.
[632] Hyland, Áine and Milne, Kenneth (1992) I rish Educational Documents Volume II: A Selection of extracts from documents relating to the history of education from 1922 to 1991 in the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland. Dublin. Church of Ireland College of Education. p. 527.
[633] Ibid. pp. 529, 530.
[634] Murphy, Daniel et al (1987) Education And The Arts: The Educational Autobiographies of Contemporary Irish Poets, Novelists, Dramatists, Musicians, Painters and Sculptors. A Research Project. Dublin.Department of Higher Education and Educational Research, Trinity College, University of Dublin.
[635] Ibid. p. 275.
[636] The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) Primary School Curriculum: English Language. Dublin. Stationery Office.
[637] Ibid. p. 8.
[638] Ibid.

language and awaken their aesthetic response as well as a sense of beauty.[639] The Teacher Guidelines (1999)[640] discuss the role and repertoire of poetry and emphasise the importance of the children's enjoyment of poetry in the classroom.[641] The choice of poems is fundamental to nurturing a positive attitude towards poetry and conveying that it more than other forms of language 'has to do with a very special use of words, their meanings and connotations'.[642] The guidelines specify the range of poems suitable for different age levels and stress the importance of choosing poetry of the highest quality and not to underestimate the ability of children to respond to its challenges, 'the child's experience of a poem ... may be much more than he/she can express about it.'[643] The guidelines even suggest that part of the children's experience of poetry may not be expressible because each poem is 'a unique statement that cannot be paraphrased.'[644] The selection of poems should encourage children to respond in a variety of ways and help them to develop discerning taste and conviction in the pleasure of poetry.[645] The guidelines also specify that poetry can be integrated with other areas of the curriculum and this makes it a very valuable learning tool. There are suggestions about how to approach poems in the classroom, how to encourage students to respond to poems and to write their own poetry. There are also exemplars included as model approaches to studying poems like *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* by Robert Frost, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*, by W. B. Yeats and *He Refuses to Read His Public's Favourite Poem* by U. A. Fanthorpe. It is interesting that the exemplars include poems by famous poets and poems that are quite complex in their range and scope of content. The guidelines do not include any mention of contemporary children's poets like John Foster, Brian Moses, Pie Corbett, Michael Rosen, Jackie Kay or Roger McGough nor do they include anthologies of modern poems like *The Works*[646] series that are specifically designed for the demands of the modern poetry class and cross curricular learning.

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[639] Ibid.
[640] The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) Primary School Curriculum: English Language, Teacher Guidelines. Dublin. Stationery Office.
[641] Ibid. p. 69.
[642] Ibid.
[643] Ibid. p. 70.
[644] Ibid.
[645] Ibid.
[646] There are several volumes of The Works published and edited by a selection of poets, for example, Moses, Brian and Corbett, Pie (2002) The Works 2: Poems on every subject and for every occasion. London. Macmillan Children's Books.

The lack of teacher's cognisance of contemporary children's poetry, theoretical texts, academic research and surveys about the teaching of poetry is subtly reflected in *Fifty School Reports: what the inspectors say*[647] published in 2002. The purpose of the report is to provide 'evidence of practice ... more or less typical of what exists in Irish schools today.'[648] The report was compiled under the headings curriculum, learning and teaching, assessment, organisation and management, resources, and home-school links.[649] Some of the issues cited in the report give serious cause for concern about the quality of teaching in some schools particularly in relation to the lack of variety in methodological approaches, insufficient use of differentiated learning, activity based learning, and an over emphasis on textbooks.[650] These issues are compounded by a lack of some teachers' compliance with rule 126 of *Rules for National Schools* which specifies their responsibility to plan their work.[651] Concerns were also raised about some schools in relation to the lack of objectives in their planning and the need to link individual planning to the *Primary School Curriculum.*[652] In relation to the teaching of English the general quality of provision was felt to be good or very good yet, the drafting, editing and redrafting process of writing was evident in only a few schools and this would be an important aspect of poetry writing in the classroom.[653] Less than half the schools inspected provided opportunities for pupils to write in a variety of genres and even more alarming is the fact that inspectors' observations of the teaching of poetry was positive in fewer than half of the schools they inspected.[654] Some of the reasons for the concerns outlined by the inspectorate in 2002 can be identified in *Beginning to Teach: Newly Qualified Teachers in Irish Primary Schools*,[655] a survey undertaken to present the views of newly qualified teachers about the supports available to them and their preparedness for teaching. 354 newly qualified teachers were surveyed during the final term of their probationary period in 2004;[656] 54% of those issued with a questionnaire responded and the report presents the views of these teachers.[657] Some of the difficulties experienced by newly qualified teachers

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[647] Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science (2002) Fifty School Reports: what inspectors say. Dublin. Stationery Office.
[648] Ibid. Foreward.
[649] Ibid.
[650] Ibid. p. 13.
[651] Ibid. p.12.
[652] Ibid. p.
[653] Ibid. p. 18.
[654] Ibid.
[655] Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science, (2005) Beginning to Teach: Newly Qualified Teachers in Irish Primary Schools. Dublin. Stationery Office.
[656] Ibid. Introduction.
[657] Ibid.

related to infrequent visits by inspectors, the change of inspectors assigned to them, all of which led to inconsistencies in the expectations of teachers' work in the classroom.[658] Dates for final inspections were also felt by some teachers to be inappropriate because of their nearness to the end of the school year and it made planning for lessons extremely difficult.[659] 42% of the teachers felt that Education Centres did not provide adequate induction support for them.[660] Only 20% of the 63 teachers who commented on their initial teacher education course made positive comments about how they were taught.[661] Most of the negative comments were in relation to feeling unprepared to teach the curriculum to certain age groups, lack of preparedness for planning, lack of confidence in relation to classroom organization, multi-class teaching and lack of preparedness in relation to the learning and behavioural needs of certain types of students,[662]

'I have found that I was well prepared on the administrative side but found I was sorely lacking in knowledge of how to apply the curriculum to the class level I have. I feel in college we should have had more lecture time on the subjects we would have to teach and we should have been shown how to teach the topics.'[663]

Other comments criticised the theoretical nature of their training at the expense of more practical and useful information like 'where to get additional material on different subjects if the class textbook is lacking,'[664] and how to 'bring the curriculum to life for children.'[665] 12% of teachers surveyed felt that they were poorly prepared to teach English while only 30% felt very well prepared to teach it.[666] All of these issues impede the teaching of poetry, and help explain why inspectors found the teaching of poetry a positive experience in less than half of the fifty schools they inspected in 2002. Inspectors' recommendations for improvement in the subject referred to a broad spectrum of the syllabus including the need for teachers to develop pupils' higher-order thinking through different genres of writing and in particular to encourage pupils' 'emotional and imaginative responses to a variety of stimuli'[667] such as poetry. The inspectors also felt that

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[658] Ibid. pp. 26, 27.
[659] Ibid. p. 27.
[660] Ibid.
[661] Ibid. p. 28.
[662] Ibid.
[663] Ibid. p. 29.
[664] Ibid.
[665] Ibid.
[666] Ibid. p. 34.
[667] Ibid. p. 36.

students should be encouraged to articulate personal opinions, argue a viewpoint and 'develop receptive and expressive language skills.'[668]

At second level the teaching of English is adversely affected in some schools by inadequate timetabling, inadequate deployment of teachers, formation of classes and placement of students, insufficient resources and the lack of continuing professional development. These are the issues that emerged in a composite report based on the analysis and synthesis of inspection reports on the teaching and learning of English in 75 second level schools, published by the inspectorate in 2006.[669] The inspectors acknowledge that the skills learned in English have an application across the curriculum and also in the world of adult life and work.[670] However, they found that first year English is not given high priority in many schools[671] and in a few schools first years were allocated only three periods of English a week. This finding is alarming because it seriously curtails the amount of time a teacher can spend on poetry; in fact, schools where teachers have only three periods of English would probably only teach poetry once in the academic year, and it is be doubtful that they would even manage to fit it in at all. The report also suggests that since more class periods are allocated to exam classes the teaching of English is focused more 'on preparation for certificate examinations and the delivery of content rather than on the development of skills.'[672] The inspectors outlined that in a significant minority of schools students had limited exposure to literature over the three years of the Junior Cert course and had 'a very limited exposure to poetry.'[673] They recommended that students should encounter a range of poems appropriate to their developing skills and maturity[674] and that teachers should be careful not to concentrate on terms and definitions at the expense of exploring the effect or purpose of the language in poetry, 'It should be remembered that it is useful for students to master the terminology only insofar as it assists their understanding of and response to the poem. It is not an end in itself.'[675]

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[668] Ibid.
[669] Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science (2006) Looking at English: Teaching & Learning English in Post Primary Schools. Dublin. Stationery Office.
[670] Ibid. p. 4.
[671] Ibid. p. 6.
[672] Ibid. p. 7.
[673] Ibid. p. 23.
[674] Ibid. p. 24.
[675] Ibid. p. 34.

3.3.2 How might these concerns be mediated?

As has been suggested in earlier sections, the issues of a lack in confidence, access to resources, inadequate pre and in-service education and a lack of awareness of suitable and age appropriate poetry for their pupils, seem to inhibit teachers in their approaches to teaching and engaging with poetry. Many of these concerns could be mediated if a serious effort to fully understand and utilise the educative power of poetry was undertaken. As was suggested earlier, some teachers feel that their own skills are inadequate but they can do something about it because there are thousands of websites now devoted to helping teachers become more competent to teach poetry. A Google search for this thesis found about 22,200 websites on the function of poetry in the classroom, about 4,540,000 websites on the function of poetry for children in society. Even a brief search of the University of Western Ontario's online library catalogue shows a vast amount of current research and publications on the teaching of poetry. Accessing this online catalogue could enable teachers to choose from a wide variety of information from authors like Vardell,[676] Hanauer,[677] Sloan[678] or the research of the American Council of Learned Societies[679] about how to teach poetry effectively to students of all ages. There are numerous websites designed to make poetry interesting and more stimulating to teach, for example, gigglepoetry.com[680] have several poetry sites that make poetry accessible for both teachers and students. In Minnesota, Giggle Poetry Theatre travels to schools with a show that lasts forty-five minutes and includes children's poetry written by Shel Silverstein, Jack Prelutsky and Bruce Lansky.[681] The aim of the performance is to turn students who 'don't think they like poetry into performers who can't wait to read poetry.'[682] Information on the authorsinschools.com[683] provides teachers with opportunities to learn about children's poets, the age group they perform to, their publications, writing workshops for students, the type of poems they perform as well as workshops for educators. Poets like Robert Pottle can be enjoyed by stocking school libraries with his

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[676] Vardell, Sylvia M. (2006) Poetry aloud here!: sharing poetry with children in the library. Chicago. American Library Association.

[677] Hanauer, David Ian (2004) Poetry and the meaning of life: reading and writing poetry in language arts classrooms. Toronto. Pippin Publishers.

[678] Sloan, Glenna Davis (2003) Give them poetry!: a guide for sharing poetry with children K – 8. New York. Teachers College Press.

[679] American Council of Learned Societies (1995) Poetry in and out of the classroom: essays from the ACLS Elementary and Secondary Schools Teacher Curriculum Development Project. New York. ACLS.

[680] http://www.gigglepoetry.com/askthepoet/eosong.html
Accessed 02/12/2005.

[681] http://www.authorsinschool.com/author_details.aspx?AuthorID=67
Accessed 02/12/2005.

[682] Ibid.

[683] http://www.authorsinschools.com

anthologies, and few students (or teachers for that matter) wouldn't laugh out loud reading *I Ripped My Pants at School Today*,

I ripped my pants at school today
while going down the slide.
It wasn't just a little tear
I ripped 'em open wide,
Now everyone at school can see
my purple underwear.
Although the sight makes people laugh
I'm glad I've got them there.[684]

The poetryzone.com feature links to other poetry websites with a short review of the content of each of the sites, which enables teachers to browse a wide selection of information and to select the sites best suited to their needs. The poetryzone has a number of interview sites with well known children's poets, for example, John Foster, John Hegley, Brian Moses, Ted Scheu, Joan Poulson, Valerie Bloom, Wes Magee, Brain Patten and Kenn Nesbitt. These interview sites give students the opportunity to ask the poets questions that interest them; it provides a one to one contact space between poet and child which they cannot get from their teacher and they learn that poets are ordinary individuals, with a sense of humour and most importantly that they have memories of childhood that might be similar to their own.

The poetryclass.net,[685] poetrysociety.org.uk, kristinegeorge.com[686] as well as website articles like *Seeing with the Heart: Poetry in the Classroom*[687] are helpful in so far as they discuss strategies and resources for teaching poetry. Lorna Dils[688] sets out seven very practical and manageable objectives in the unit she prepared for a group of seventh grade talented and gifted students. In the course of the eleven page article, which includes a student and teacher bibliography, Dils discusses how she uses poetry to develop students' writing skills, vocabulary, analytical skills, creativity and to appreciate different genres of poetry including the study of

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[684] Pottle, Robert (2004) If Kids Ruled the School. USA. Meadowbrook Press.
[685] http://www.poetryclass.net accessed 06/05/2009.
[686] http://www.kristinegeorge.com/celebrate_poetry.html
Accessed 06/05/2009.
[687] http://www.yale.educ/ynhti/curriculum/units/1991/4/91.04.07.x.html
Accessed 23/02/2006.
[688] Ibid. pp. 1-11.

contemporary American poems.[689] The *Ecopoetry Study Packs*[690] produced by the Poetry Society, which are free and downloadable, provide teachers with complete resource packs and lesson plans on environmental issues. According to the Poetry Society scientists and environmental activists all over the world are 'turning to poetry to engage these most pressing matters'[691] and therefore the packs include poetry that deals with important environmental issues, biomimicry, the natural world, soil and trees and local self-sufficiency.[692] The resource packs are designed for use in conjunction with or adapted to suit the National Curriculum year 9 and older, creative writing GCSE, FE and HE, course work for schools and universities, The Foyle Young Poets of the Year, the National Poetry Day and all poets interested in the environment.[693]

English teachers would be well advised to read current research published by Faust and Dressman (2009),[694] Karen E. Moynihan (2009),[695] K. Wissman (2009),[696] Sara Winstead Fry (2009),[697] Petra Kuppers and Neil Marcus (2009),[698] Christopher Greig and Janette Hughes (2009)[699] and Dietrich Marcum et al. (2009), because, as academics, they confirm that poetry is a serious and worthy subject, that it has value both inside and outside of the classroom. Teachers should be influenced by articles like *Marrying the "Muse" and the thinker: "Poetry as Scientific Writing"*[700] because it discusses how poetry can be used to teach scientific concepts. The article is based on the collaboration of two high school teachers, 'Inspired by poet John Updike's (1960) "Cosmic Gall," these two teachers crafted writing tasks aimed at teaching science content

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[689] Ibid. p. 1.
[690] http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/education/poetryclass/news
Accessed 06/05/2009.
[691] Ibid. p. 3.
[692] Ibid. p. 2.
[693] Ibid.
[694] Faust, Mark and Dressman, Mark The Other Tradition: Populist Perspectives on Teaching Poetry, as Publish in "English Journal", 1912 – 2005 in English Education. Vol. 41. No. 2. pp. 114 – 134. January 2009.
[695] Moynihan, Karen E., Local Authors in the Classroom: Bringing Readers and Writers Together in English Journal. Vol. 98. No. 3. pp. 34 – 38. January 2009.
[696] Wissman, Kelly, Reading and Becoming Living Authors: Urban Girls Pursuing a Poetry of Self-Definition in English Journal. Vol. 98. No. 3. pp. 39 – 45. January 2009.
[697] Fry, Sara Winstead, Exploring Social Studies through Multicultural Literature: "Legend of the St Ann's Flood." Social Studies. Vol. 100. No. 2. pp. 85 – 92. March – April 2009.
[698] Kuppers, Petra and Marcus, Neil, Contact/Disability Performance. An Essay Constructed between Petra Kuppers and Neil Marcus. Research in Drama Education. Vol. 14. No. 1. pp. 141 – 155. February 2009.
[699] Greig, Christopher and Hughes, Janette, A Boy Who Would Rather Write Poetry than Throw Rocks at Cats Is Also Considered to Be Wanting in Masculinity: Poetry, Masculinity. Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education. Vol. 30. No. 1. pp. 91 – 105. March 2009.
[700] Marcum, Dietrich et al., Marrying the "Muse" and the Thinker "Poetry as Scientific Writing" in Science Activities: Classroom Projects and Curriculum Ideas. Vol 44. No. 4. pp. 14 – 18. Winter 2009.

through literary devices.'[701] Wissman's article '*Reading and Becoming Living Authors: Urban Girls Pursuing a Poetry of Self-Definition*'[702] is worthy of study because it shows how reading and writing poetry related to issues that are central to the students' ethnicity, race and cultural identity gave them space for introspective reflection about themselves and who they were becoming. Wissman also purports that their writing 'provides further insight into the possibilities of framing English education as orient social critique and change.'[703] Against recent evidence from the literature, it is arguable that teachers should be using more active learning techniques in the teaching of poetry and should be encouraging students to perform poems in the classroom. Teachers who feel inhibited or too inexperienced to try this approach could be encouraged to watch poetry recitals like those broadcast by the BBC. In conjunction with a production company, Silver River, the BBC initiated a poetry recital competition called *Off by Heart* for children aged between seven and eleven years; it is open to all primary schools who can select one student to part take in regional heats.[704] The students who reach the final will have a master class with actors and poets who will help them with their performance techniques. Apart from reintroducing memorisation as a key skill in engaging with and appreciating poetry, the aim of the competition is to 'put pupils in direct contact with the nation's greatest poetry'[705] and to tackle criticisms made by an Ofsted report in 2007 about the dull and unchallenging methods used to teach poetry in schools.[706] The competition specifies that students will need to learn classic poems by poets like Wordsworth, Kipling, Burns, A. A. Milne and W. H. Davies and any criticism about the level of difficulty involved in learning these kinds of poems is addressed in the argument that '100 years or even 50 years ago, poems of this length and complexity would have been learnt routinely by children of this age.'[707] This competition is probably not that dissimilar to Irish poetry competitions where students can participate in poetry recitals and teachers could encourage their students to become involved in these.

Despite the many resources and approaches, which this brief trawl of the literature has unearthed, it would appear from the various DES reports and inspections, cited here, that many teachers are

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[701] Ibid.
[702] Wissman, Kelly, Reading and Becoming Living Authors: Urban Girls Pursuing a Poetry of Self-Definition in English Journal. Vol. 98. No. 3. pp. 39 – 45. January 2009.
[703] Ibid.
[704] A poem learnt by heart is a friend for life article by Daisy Goodwin featured in The Sunday Times. May 10, 2008. p. 3.
[705] Ibid.
[706] Ibid.
[707] Ibid.

not using such resources in their teaching of poetry. Consequently, many students are not experiencing poetry in an active, personal and creative manner as discussed in the early sections of this chapter, approaches dating back more than fifty years. The subsequent chapters of this thesis will discuss the design and implementation of a large scale study which aims to ascertain whether teachers' and also students' reservations towards the study of poetry is related to their perception of its role and value in education and also in their own lives, and/or the degree to which they are aware of, and use, a variety of teaching and learning approaches in their classrooms to make the exploration and engagement with poetry a more enjoyable and personally meaningful activity and experience.

3.4 Concluding comments

Poet, Josephine Hart,[708] believes that poetry can ignite a passion for language in young people and she asserts that she has learnt more values from reading great poetry than in religion or any other experiences. Such is the strength of her conviction that she launched her own West End Poetry Hour where well known actors like Ralph Fiennes performed public readings.[709] Hart believes that poetry has value and function in society, but that the way it is taught in schools has destroyed its effect for the young and thus alienated them from enjoying it, 'what poetry does is it encapsulates the great experiences of life ... You have the journey of life with Eliot, the passion of life with Yeats, the more intellectual approach of Auden, and the deeply philosophical approach of Larkin.' [710]

Morag Styles in her introduction to *Teaching Through Texts*[711] discusses the changes in the British curriculum and the National Literacy Strategy[712] which promotes reading and writing for one hour per day in schools. Despite her criticism of the Literacy Hour, Styles sees the merits of teaching a diverse range of literature and suggests ways in which the time can be best utilised. Styles reminds us of the centrality of poetry in the curriculum in the early years of childhood and referring to the work of Vivienne Smith she agrees that children use rhyme as a means of

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[708] A Poet At Hart interview by John Costello with Josephine Hart featured in the Evening Herald Saturday 21 February 2009. p. 18.
[709] Ibid.
[710] Ibid.
[711] Anderson, Holly and Styles, Morag eds., (2000) Teaching Through Texts: Promoting literacy through popular and literary texts in the primary classroom. London and New York. Routledge.
[712] The National Literacy Pilot Scheme was established in 1997 and evolved into the principles and philosophy of the National Literacy Strategy.

defining themselves as individuals and as a means of bonding them to family and community.[713] She also reaffirms Smith's argument that responding to poetry requires real listening skills and that it is the rhythm and musicality of verse that make children responsive to it.[714]

There is no doubt that in Irish and English schools poetry is a very important part of the curriculum. In the absence of any major academic research or government survey, anecdotal evidence would suggest that children's experience of poetry in the classroom is far from the ideals set out by government bodies in curricula and syllabi. Official publications by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment at both levels in Ireland and reports from the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education[715] in Britain reaffirm with passionate certainty the educative value of poetry and creativity for the students' intellectual and emotional development. Despite the paucity of studies in this area, the evidence from the literature presented in this chapter, would suggest that students' indifference to poetry will continue without regular inservice training, financial investment in researching creative methodologies for affective teaching, and the provision of resources specifically for poetry like the ones devised by David Orme in the Scholastic Poetry Workshop. This latter point is particularly evident in an article that appeared in the Daily Mail[716] about the 2010 Irish Leaving Certificate Paper; Michael Beirne, a teacher in Celbridge Tutorial College, Co. Kildare suggested that in the interests of broadening the appeal, and use of the Irish Language '... they should also consider removing the poetry and prose from the Leaving Cert higher and ordinary levels, and focus on speaking the language.'[717] This attitude and the fact that it reflects the opinion of an Irish teacher is disheartening because if teachers dismiss the importance of learning poetry how can students ever appreciate or come to understand its importance? Beirne is probably not the only teacher with these views but they are contrary to the requirements of the curricula at both first and second level, the Department of Education and Science and contrary to beliefs of professional bodies like the ASTI, which represents second level teachers. In fact Seamus Heaney was invited

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[713] Anderson, Holly and Styles, Morag eds., (2000) Teaching Through Texts: Promoting literacy through popular and literary texts in the primary classroom. London and New York. Routledge. p. 5.
[714] Ibid. p. 6.
[715] National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999) All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture & Education. Suffolk. The Department for Education and Employment.
[716] History repeats itself: Cries of 'trick question' as part of 2008 paper returns article by Helen Bruce published in the Irish Daily Mail, Wednesday June 10, 2009.
[717] Ibid. p. 21.

to address the ASTI Centenary Education Conference[718] where he delivered a speech about poetry and pedagogy as inseparable entities all through the history of civilization,

'...poetry and pedagogy have long been seen as allied and complementary, allied in the service of the good at personal and public levels. In fact, much that has been said in famous defences of poetry from classical times until the present could equally well describe the good experience that a teacher and his or her students can share in the course of a successful period in the classroom.'[719]

This chapter has established that arts education has been a neglected area in the history of Irish education until the latter part of the twentieth century. I have discussed the difficulties experienced by teachers and students in relation to the teaching and learning of poetry as expounded in official documentation and as verified by studies carried out by educators and academics both inside and outside of Ireland. I have revealed that the study of poetry is very important in the holistic education of students and that it affects their intellectual, emotional and imaginative needs. I have cited researchers from Europe, America, New Zealand, India and from the African continent who have provided evidence in academic and scientific journals proving that poetry is an educative tool and that its affect goes far beyond the confines and rigidity of school based learning. The recent reports from the inspectorate portray in some instances a gloomy picture of the state of English as a subject in some schools and more particularly the state of poetry teaching and learning, yet, they reiterate in every recommendation that poetry is important, that students should be taught a diverse and challenging range of poets and poems. One of the more subtle issues related to the teaching of poetry emerging from this chapter is the paradoxical position of poetry as a creative and liberating art form, and its position in school, where it is taught as an authoritative and conservative hierarchy governed by the principles of functionality. Perhaps this is what Holub had in mind when he argued,

'... just as the immune system works constantly to maintain the good health of the individual yet cannot provide infallible defences against malignancy and disease, so the arts function as a constant force for the intellectual and imaginative good of individuals and society – yet it is not within their power to prevent abuses and injustices.'

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[718] Astir Volume 28. Number 1. January 2010.
[719] Ibid. p. 12.

Overall then, what has emerged from the literature is compelling evidence that poetry was and still is a valuable learning tool in education. However, the research also shows that there are concerns about the way that poetry is taught to students and that these concerns must be addressed if students' interaction with and attitudes towards poetry are to be resolved. The review of literature reveals that despite such concerns being expressed in scholarly articles and DES inspection reports, there is still a lack of empirical evidence quantifying the extent of these concerns among students and teachers. Similarly, the evidence cited in this chapter points to the value of teachers employing a range of teaching and learning approaches, a position that appears to be well established in the literature from the 1940s onwards, but there is little evidence quantifying and exploring the impact that the use of such pedagogical approaches may have in practice with students in schools. Thus in the following chapter, a study designed to elicit both teachers' and students' responses to the teaching and learning of poetry, and to the range of pedagogical approaches employed will be described and discussed from a methodological perspective. The results of this extended study will be presented and discussed in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Four
Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Arising from an extensive review of the literature in the field, which attests to the role and value of both an aesthetic and educational appreciation of a study of poetry historically and contemporaneously, there is a dearth of information in the literature pertaining to its current status in the education system, especially in Ireland. This is particularly relevant in relation to the opinions and attitudes of Irish school students and teachers to the study of poetry. Therefore, the main aim of this thesis is to elicit this data and this chapter will outline the methodological process relating to the devising, implementation and evaluation of a practitioner based study, designed to assess students' and teachers' attitudes to the value of studying poetry, and to determine the range of teaching and learning approaches employed in its delivery in schools. A creative teaching and learning module which was designed to support newly qualified primary school teachers' personal and pedagogical engagement with poetry will be described, as will the approach to the analysis of data and issues of bias, triangulation and validity.

Sax has stated that the 'need for reliable knowledge concerning education has never been as keenly felt as it is today'[720] and the necessity of undertaking this research project is consequential of an evident vacuity of data on the teaching of poetry or of its educative value in Irish schools. The lack of any recent edifying body of research on the teaching and learning of poetry in Irish schools shows that there is a need to assess its value and function within the English curriculum and its potential as a learning tool in other subject areas. In order to assess whether poetry is deemed to have any value according to the opinions of students and teachers, it is necessary to undertake a systematic and thorough investigation using the right research tools because 'Information is only useful if it's accurate.'[721] If this research is to be of use to other practitioners then the gathering of data must adhere to empirical documentation and avoid unsubstantiated assertions. There must also be evidence of replication in the findings of this research in order to avoid unbalanced and uncorroborated conclusions being drawn. A lack of

[720] Sax, Gilbert (1979) Foundations of Educational Research 2nd edition. New Jersey. Prentice-Hall Inc. p. 1.
[721] Ruane, Janet M., (2005) Essentials of Research Methods: A Guide to Social Science Research. USA. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

replication would suggest that the 'skeptical "show me" attitude of science'[722] had not been adhered to and may, in fact, invalidate conclusions drawn from the data gathered.

4.2.1 Nature of educational research

Educational research is beneficial because it helps to form effective educators who, by their nature, must continually 'examine what they are doing'[723] and inevitably broaden and change the framework of learning. The goal of good research is to enable us to evaluate the information gathered and to assess its contribution to our knowledge of the subject matter investigated, 'Information that is the product of carefully conducted scientific research is less likely to be in error, more deserving of our attention and trust.' [724]

In undertaking research it is important to work within ethical boundaries that ensure the well being of all those who participate in the study. The motivation for this research project is to work in the interest of teachers and students and to explore their engagement with poetry. It is also aimed at informing practitioners and educators about the importance of poetry historically and in the modern context of education. All of the data I need to collect through the use of questionnaires and observations will be done with the full consent and voluntary participation of teachers and students because the 'principle of informed consent is about the right of individuals to determine … whether they want to be part of a research project.'[725]

For the purposes of this research project the most appropriate methods will be used. Research methodologies are, essentially, divided into two paradigms, the quantitative and qualitative approaches.

4.2.2 Quantitative research

Best and Kahn[726] assert that quantitative research has been defined as 'a numerical method of describing observations of materials or characteristics.'[727] This definition points to the scientific nature of the quantitative method, which by its nature, should provide valid, precise, objective

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[722] Ibid. p. 11.
[723] Best, John W. and Kahn, James V. (2006) Research In Education. Boston. Pearson Education Inc. p. 3.
[724] Ruane, Janet M., (2005) Essentials of Research Methods: A Guide to Social Science Research. USA. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. p. 14.
[725] Ibid. p. 19.
[726] Best, John W. and Kahn, James V. (2006) Research In Education. Boston. Pearson Education Inc.
[727] Ibid. p. 289.

and interpretable data. In terms of measurement, quantitative research has often been ridiculed by behavioral scientists because they feel it is a limited means of dealing with real human behaviour.[728] In terms of the frequency of its use in various disciplines, quantitative research methods tended not to be applied in historical studies though that is currently changing. The quantity of verbal content in historical documents has until recently precluded it from quantitative analysis but according to Bailey[729] there is a desire among academics to change this practice and to transform 'a verbal non-quantitative document into quantitative data.'[730] Cohen, Manion and Morrison[731] perceive a role for quantitative research methods in the analysis of educational documents because it could clarify and explicate content, the origin of the communication, aspects about the author and its intended recipients.[732] Quantitative research necessitates careful planning and procedure because in most instances the researcher is testing a theory or hypothesis that will be verifiable from surveys and experiments. The procedures for quantitative research must be strictly adhered to so that the findings are unambiguously apparent and offer other researchers the opportunity to test their credibility by replication if necessary.

4.2.3 Qualitative research

Marshall and Rossman[733] purport that using the qualitative method provides opportunity for exploratory and descriptive research. This point of view is based upon the premise that the qualitative approach concerns itself with the people affected by the research, their attitudes, and behaviour. This is again evident in Patton[734] who identified three kinds of data collection in qualitative research, 'in-depth, open ended interviews, direct observation and written documents.'[735] These techniques, whether used together or on their own, show that the focus of qualitative research is person centered rather than objectively scientific. Qualitative research is contentious by its nature which is not a spurious condemnation but a recognition that research which deals with factors of intention and meanings in certain events and situations[736] is not likely

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[728] Ibid. p. 291.
[729] Bailey, K. D. (1978) Methods of Social Research. Basingstoke. Collier-Macmillan.
[730] Ibid. In Cohen, Louis, Manion, Lawrence & Morrison, Keith (2007) Research Methods In Education. London and New York. Routledge. p. 197.
[731] Cohen, Louis, Manion, Lawrence & Morrison, Keith (2007) Research Methods In Education. London and New York. Routledge.
[732] Ibid. p. 197.
[733] Marshall, C. and Rossman, C. B., (1999) Designing Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage.
[734] Patton, M. Q., (1990) Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage.
[735] Ibid. p. 12.
[736] Cohen, Louis, Manion, Lawrence & Morrison, Keith (2007) Research Methods In Education. London and New York. Routledge.

to yield to the same rules of predictability as quantitative research. Cohen et al[737] refers to the instruments of qualitative research as 'eclectic'[738] and points to the difficulty of interpreting reliability from methods that investigate a multilayered reality.[739] Ruddock[740] points out the predominant criticisms of qualitative research including bias, short sightedness and subjectivity[741] but on the other hand researchers who use qualitative methods argue that some of the human dimensions of education cannot be encapsulated by mere generalised statistical representations.[742] Smith and Heshusius[743] assert that quantitative researchers believe that there is a 'mind-independent reality "out there"'[744] that is knowable to a certain extent but that their counter-parts in qualitative research deny this possibility. There is certainly a need to point out that the use of non-quantitative methods is not detrimental to the value of qualitative research because the latter is usually linked with educational research that pertains to 'human betterment'.[745]

4.2.4 Mixed methods research

It is evident that both qualitative and quantitative research methods have strengths and weaknesses and neither one method nor the other can be said to be more important to the academic world. Some researchers have argued that qualitative and quantitative methods should be thought of as a continuum instead of 'a mutually exclusive dichotomy.'[746] There are forms of data collection, for example, the use of surveys that are used in both qualitative and quantitative research. The link between the two methods is also evident when there is use of numerical data presentation; this shows an incontrovertible association between qualitative and quantitative research methods. In fact, Best and Kahn[747] state that a good researcher will combine a range of these methods over the course of their career.[748] Jayaratne[749] proposes that qualitative data can

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[737] Ibid.
[738] Ibid. p. 149.
[739] Ibid.
[740] Ruddock, J., (1981) Evaluation: A Consideration of Principles and Methods. Manchester. University of Manchester.
[741] Ibid.
[742] Keeves, John P. and Lakomski, Gabriele, eds. (1999) Issues in Educational Research. Oxford. Pergamon. p. 43.
[743] Smith, J. K. and Heshusius, L. (1986) Closing Down the Conversation . The End of the Qualitative/Quantitative Debate Among Educational Inquirers. In Keeves, John P. and Lakomski, Gabriele, eds. (1999) Issues in Educational Research. Oxford. Pergamon. p. 44.
[744] Ibid.
[745] Keeves, John P. and Lakomski, Gabriele, eds. (1999) Issues in Educational Research. Oxford. Pergamon. p. 45.
[746] Best, John W. and Kahn, James V. (2006) Research In Education. Boston. Pearson Education Inc. p. 81.
[747] Best, John W. and Kahn, James V. (2006) Research In Education. Boston. Pearson Education Inc.
[748] Ibid. p. 81.

sustain and clarify the meaning of quantitative research,[750] while Wolcott[751] rejects the treatment of the two research methods as exclusively distinct paradigms.[752] According to Bell[753] qualitative researchers will use quantitative methods.[754] Qualitative and quantitative methods can be mixed to good effect according to Loxley,[755] and in Keeves'[756] opinion the distinction between the two paradigms of scientific and humanistic is insignificant compared to the importance of 'a coherentist approach to inquiry.'[757]

Having considered the merits of academic debate about qualitative and quantitative methodologies, it was decided that a mixed-methods approach was best suited to the demands of this study; thus an accurate and representational insight could be gained into the attitudes and perceptions of teachers and students towards the teaching of poetry in Irish schools while also exploring the potential role of creative interventions in making poetry a valuable and enjoyable learning tool. When designing this study, a pragmatist stance was adopted to fulfill an exploratory perspective of this study. A mixed methods approach was seen as appropriate to help answer the specific research questions:

1.) What is the opinion of students and teachers to the study of poetry at primary and secondary level?
2.) What teaching and learning approaches are used in the study of poetry at primary and secondary level?
3.) Can the use of poetry specific teaching and learning methods make a difference to students' and teachers' engagement with and opinion of the study of poetry in schools?

The aim of the study was not on searching for absolutes or to arrive at a universal truth, but on using different ideas to explore school based attitudes to the study of poetry and its value in the education system and beyond. The research focuses not on developing an understanding of what

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[749] Jayaratne, T. E. (1993) The Value of Quantitative Methodology for Feminist Research. In Hammersley, M. (ed.) Social Research: philosophy, politics and practice. London. Prentice Hall.
[750] Ibid. p. 17.
[751] Wolcott, H. F. (2001) Writing up Qualitative Research. California. Sage.
[752] Ibid. p. 40.
[753] Bell, J. (1987) Doing Your Own Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers in Education and Social Science. Milton Keynes. Open University Press.
[754] Ibid. p. 4.
[755] Loxley, A. (2006) Introduction to Educational Research Methods. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
[756] Keeves, J. P. Overview of Issues in Educational Research. In Keeves, John P. and Lakomski, Gabriele (1999) Issue in Educational Research. Oxford. Pergamon.
[757] Ibid. p. 14.

ideologies are at play in students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences of poetry in their personal and professional/school lives, as would be the concern of a critical theorist, but rather on how students and teachers talk about and understand their experiences of poetry and the extent, if any, to which these experiences are related to or informed by the teaching methods used in schools. Therefore, the status of knowledge generated from this research is not one of certainty and neutral objectivity, but is bound by time, place and context (Johnson and Christensen, 2008).

In order to test these boundaries of time, place and context, it was decided to adopt a large-scale survey designed to access a wide range of different school types and access the full spectrum of age range at primary and secondary school level. In this way, not withstanding the issues of subjectivity, local emphasis and culture in a school, and personal bias, it was intended to be able to access and identify trends and themes in response to the project's research questions.

The following table provides a summary of the methods used in this thesis and provides evidence of the application of a mixed methods approach.

Table 4.1 Overview of research methods

Research Instrument	Cohort	Dates	Number administered and returned	Aim
Questionnaire Baseline assessment Second level	Postgraduate Diploma in Education Students (English Methodology)	January 2004	15/(15)	To elicit student teachers' perceptions about poetry and how it should be taught.
Non-participant observation in schools Baseline assessment Student teachers	Postgraduate Diploma in Education Students (English Methodology)	2003/04	12/(12)	To observe second level student teachers teach poetry to second level students.
Participant observation	Postgraduate Diploma in Education Students (English Methodology)	March 2004	15/(15)	To observe student teachers' responses to material and skills for teaching poetry, delivered as an intensive workshop.
Questionnaire Second level – post training workshop appraisal	Postgraduate Diploma in Education Students (English Methodology)	April 2004	15/(15)	To elicit student teachers' responses to the extended training session on poetry and to ascertain if it could enhance their approach to teaching poetry.
Questionnaire	Qualified,	June 2004	50/(9)	To discover the attitude

Baseline assessment Second level ATE Summer School	experienced English second level teachers			and methodological approaches of qualified teachers to the teaching of poetry.
Questionnaire primary level	Newly qualified primary school teachers	Oct. 2004 Oct. 2005 Oct. 2006 Oct. 2007	19/(19) 25/(25) 24/(24) 24/(24)	To establish an overview of primary teachers' attitudes and methodological approaches towards the teaching of poetry.
Participant observation (journal) during training workshops Primary level	Newly qualified primary school teachers	2004/05 2005/06 2006/07 2007/08	19/(19) 25/(25) 24/(24) 24/(24)	To record primary teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of poetry during the training workshops.
Document analysis (essay, lessons plans and evaluations) Primary level	Newly qualified primary school teachers	July 2005 July 2006 July 2007 July 2008	19/(19) 25/(25) 24/(24) 24/(24)	To evaluate teachers' response to the training workshops, and to elicit the extent to which the training workshops impacted on their practice.
Questionnaire Primary level (administered orally/written as age appropriate)	Primary school pupils whose teachers were participating in the training workshops	Oct. & May 2005 Oct. & May 2006 Oct. & May 2007 Oct. & May 2008	374/(374) 506/(506) 484/(484) 462/(462)	To establish an overview of the attitudes and perceptions of primary pupils towards the teaching and learning of poetry (pre and post creative teaching intervention).
Questionnaire Second level	Secondary school students, first to third year	Oct. – Dec. 2004	633/(633)	To establish an overview of the attitudes and perceptions of second level students towards the teaching and learning of poetry.
Questionnaire Second level	Secondary school students, fourth to sixth year	Oct. 2005	97/(97)	To establish an overview of the attitudes and perceptions of second level students towards the teaching and learning of poetry.

4.3.1 Aims of the research

As the review of literature provided an understanding of the current state of knowledge in relation to the study of poetry in schools, and identified gaps in research about students' and teachers' perceptions of it in schools in Ireland this research project aims to explore the role and value of poetry specifically in the formal education system. It aims to elicit students' and teachers' attitudes both to the value of studying poetry and to the efficacy and range of current teaching methods employed in its exploration. Within the context of this study, poetry is conceptualised as incorporating the full range of poetic practices as identified in the primary and

secondary English syllabi, including reading a wide range of poetic forms and engaging in writing poetry as well. In order to explore these research questions further, data was gathered from the following groups, in order to examine:

- Qualified, practicing second level teachers' attitudes and perceptions of the teaching of poetry from first to sixth year in second level schools in Ireland. Their own recollections of being taught poetry, the training they received to teach poetry, their awareness of DES documents/publications on the teaching of poetry and/or inservice provided by the Department of Education and Science on poetry, the resources they use to teach poetry, cross-curricular approaches to teaching poetry, their methodological approaches to teaching poetry and the difficulties they encounter with it as a subject, insights into their students' perceptions about poetry and the way it is taught to them.

- Second level student teachers' (studying for their Postgraduate Diploma in Education) attitudes and perceptions of the teaching of poetry; their recollections of their own poetry lessons experienced whilst in school, the training they received to teach poetry in teacher education departments, their methodological approaches/strategies for teaching poetry, the resources they use to teach poetry, cross-curricular approaches to teaching poetry, their awareness of DES publications on poetry teaching, insights into their students' perceptions about poetry and the way it is taught to them.

- Recently qualified practicing primary schools teachers' attitudes and perceptions of the teaching of poetry to all age ranges in the primary school system in Ireland. Their own recollections of being taught poetry in school, the training they received in poetry teaching in the education colleges, their awareness of Department of Education and Science publications about the teaching of poetry, inservice courses they attended or were aware of on poetry teaching, their methodological approaches to teaching poetry with different age groups, the resources they use to teach poetry, cross-curricular approaches to teaching poetry, the difficulties they encounter in teaching poetry, the value of studying poetry, insights into their pupils' perceptions about poetry and the way it is taught to them.

- The attitude of second level students from first to sixth year to their experiences of poetry teaching in both primary and secondary school. The amount of poetry studied, the genres of poetry studied, the likes/dislikes of studying poetry, the resources they used, the value of studying poetry, what they would change about their poetry experiences in school.

In order to assess the efficacy of specially targeted and designed teaching methods for poetry, data was gathered from the following groups:

a. second level student teachers who participated in a half day training programme (baseline assessment and pilot exercise);
b. recently qualified primary school teachers who participated in a year long training programme;
c. primary school pupils who reported on their experience of studying and exploring poetry with their teachers who had participated in the training in b. above.

4.3.2 The project's intended significance

This study is unique in Ireland and is intended to offer the first significant survey of poetry undertaken since the introduction of an official system of Irish education in 1831. This research will give a cohesive overview of the importance of poetry in Irish education from preliterate history to the present century, the first study to offer such a survey. It will also add to the body of literature that presently exists on arts education in Ireland. The study's results may be of particular interest to other practitioners in education, to researchers in the field, to teacher unions, to the Department of Education and Science and to the NCCA who are responsible for curriculum development.

4.3.3 Rationale and sequencing of research design

As the researcher is principally a teacher at secondary school level, the original research design reflected this interest and emphasis, and thus the pilot and baseline assessment exercises in 2003/04 focused on the experiences of second level teachers [the ATE, (Association of Teachers of English) survey], and second level student English teachers (via an initial questionnaire, observation of their practice of teaching poetry in their placement schools, attendance at a half day training workshop on the teaching of poetry, and a follow up questionnaire to assess their response to, and the practical impact of, the specially devised training workshop). The results of

the pilot and baseline assessment exercises revealed quite starkly that the situation at primary school warranted more urgent exploration and attention (which will be discussed fully in chapters five and six), than that at second level. Thus based on the evidence a decision was made to continue to collect data from second level pupils in schools regarding their opinions and experiences of studying poetry in the formal education system in order to track and identify patterns or themes emerging from the data, and to focus attention instead on the education of primary school teachers rather than secondary school teachers in the area of specific teaching methods for the exploration and study of poetry. This led to the creation of a year long methodology course entitled 'Poetry in the Primary Classroom'. Data was gathered over a four year period (2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07/ 2007/08) in order to assess the impact of the specifically devised teaching and learning programme delivered during 2 hour sessions for 22 weeks during each academic year of the research period as indicated above, to four different cohorts of recently qualified teachers. Participants were initially surveyed at the beginning of each course, and again at the end, and they were also required to survey their own primary school pupils in their classrooms both before the teaching poetry course began, and at the end of the academic year in order to elicit pupils' responses to the way poetry was experienced that year. The primary school teacher participants were required to submit a portfolio of work at the end of the course that outlined their understanding of the role and value of teaching poetry, offered concrete lesson plans and ideas to explore and experience poetry with their pupils, and provided quantitative and qualitative data from their own reflective standpoint having experienced and participated in the project and training workshops, and from their pupils' perspectives as recipients and co-explorers of the new approaches to studying poetry.

4.4 Sample selection and profile

In order to yield substantial data, capable of identifying robust patterns and trends, it was decided to administer a large scale survey to second level students and to work with large numbers of primary school teachers. A sample frame was constructed for the qualitative and quantitative components of the study. Data in this mixed methods design was collected from different samples, and due to the practical constraints on time and resources, convenience sampling was chosen to include teachers and students who could be both quite easily accessed and willing to participate in the study. As a teacher-researcher working in proximity to TCD and involved as a part-time member of staff on the initial teacher education programme for the subject of English,

it was decided to work with student teachers and recently qualified teachers associated with the School of Education in TCD. These teachers also facilitated the distribution of questionnaires to their own students in primary and secondary schools as appropriate. This strategy yielded a 100% response rate which allowed for appropriate quantitative analysis of the questionnaires and facilitated the investigation of similarities and differences in patterns of response across and within the data sets.

Convenience sampling was used to select participants for the year long course on teaching poetry in the classroom. These recently qualified teachers self-selected to attend this course as part of their continuing professional development on the TCD senior sophister B.Ed programme.
The research sample consisted of:

- 730 mixed gender second level students from first to sixth year attending a wide range of secondary schools mostly in the Dublin area (cohorts from 2004 and 2005);
- 92 recently qualified practicing primary school teachers from all over Ireland with between 1 – 3 years teaching experience, teaching in a wide range of schools, mostly in the greater Dublin area (surveyed between 2004 and 2008); with an average male to female ratio of 1:7;
- 1,826 mixed gender primary school pupils attending a wide variety of schools, mostly in the greater Dublin area (cohorts from 2004 – 2008);
- 50 qualified practicing second level teachers from all over Ireland, teaching in a wide variety of schools (surveyed in 2004 – initial baseline assessment exercise);
- 15 second level student teachers on a Postgraduate Diploma in Education course, teaching in a variety of second level schools (surveyed in 2004 – initial baseline assessment exercise).

4.5 Research instruments in this study

4.5.1 Literature review

This research project required an extensive review of the national and international literature relating to the history and educative value of teaching poetry and to the range of pedagogical approaches employed. Poetry in this study reflects the full range of material which teachers use in the first and second levels of the education system, and thus it does not differentiate between different types of poetry. The literature review is included in the research study as a means of

gauging its relation to other research on the same topic, and to provide a critical, theoretical framework against which the findings can be considered, reviewed and evaluated. By its nature the review of literature is in no way an exhaustive investigation of all studies done on the topic, at best it is an attempt to 'describe the problem ... and the current state of knowledge on the topic to be investigated.'[758]

4.5.2.1 Questionnaires

Thomas[759] asserts that the word questionnaire is generally applied to any printed set of questions which participants are asked to answer in a survey.[760] Questionnaires are designed to gather facts and opinions, the former relating to the knowledge respondents have about certain issues and the latter, in contrast, to express their attitude about certain issues.[761] The use of questionnaires allows researchers to compare, aggregate and summarise the findings of data collected.[762] Questionnaires are one of the most effective research tools used to gather factual information. Researchers like Best and Kahn[763] argue that the questionnaire has 'unique advantages'[764] and when it is constructed and administered properly, it may be a most appropriate and useful means of gathering data.[765] The unique advantages of the questionnaire is probably best defined by Loxley[766] who suggests that it works like a kind of proxy for the researcher, which in the case of this research project, is an appropriate representation of its function. The questionnaire attempts to educe 'feelings, beliefs, experiences, or activities of respondents.'[767] Sax argues that using questionnaires to gather information is indicative that the data cannot be obtained in 'more reliable and valid ways'[768] and this was a major consideration in determining its use in this study. The scale of data collection necessary for this project predisposed the questionnaire to be the most effective research tool since it did not require the expense or time necessary to train and disperse interviewers to interview individual respondents. Using questionnaires also ensures uniformity because each respondent answers identically phrased sets of questions, which are

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[758] Sax, Gilbert (1979) Foundations of Educational Research. New Jersey. Prentice-Hall, Inc. p. 53.
[759] Thomas, R. Murray (2003) Blending Qualitative & Quantitative Research Methods in Theses and Dissertations. California. Corwin Press, Inc.
[760] Ibid. p. 66.
[761] Ibid.
[762] Bulmer, Martin (ed.) (2004) Questionnaires: Volume I. London. Sage Publications Ltd.
[763] Best, John W. and Kahn, James V. (2006) Research In Education. Boston. Pearson Education Inc. p. 313.
[764] Ibid.
[765] Ibid.
[766] Loxley, A. (2006) Introduction to Educational Research Methods. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
[767] Sax, Gilbert (1979) Foundations of Educational Research. New Jersey. Prentice-Hall Inc. p. 244.
[768] Ibid. p. 246.

without overt or covert manipulation by an interviewer. According to Oppenheim[769] questionnaires are easy to dispense, and Sax[770] believes that the standardised nature of questionnaires can yield more comparable data than interviews.[771] The advantage of using questionnaires is that there must be strict adherence in its construction to the content, wording, mode of response and sequencing of questions asked to ensure that the data collected has validity. The functionality and accuracy of interpretable data from questionnaires depends on the avoidance of using language that is ambiguous, vague and speculative to the respondents. Bell[772] warns that words may represent one type of meaning for the researcher that is not implicit for the respondents, so consideration must be given to how questions could be interpreted before the questionnaires are distributed.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison[773] purport that the design of the questionnaire must be considered a serious component of its success, 'It must look easy, attractive and interesting rather than complicated, unclear, forbidding and boring.'[774] Researchers stress the importance of the layout of the questionnaire because respondents do not want to expend a lot of time or energy answering long and complicated questions. Respondents should be presented with clear instructions about which questions to answer and the format of answering, for example, circling or ticking answers. Essentially questionnaires can be designed in such a way as to maximise the cooperation[775] of the respondents, which in turn, will result in more cohesive and significant results.

There are several types of questions and response methods used in questionnaires, including, 'dichotomous' (yes or no response answers), 'multiple choice' (a range of possible response choices is given), 'rating scales' (the choice of responses are rated in importance), and 'open-ended questions'.[776] Closed questions are a prescriptive method of questioning respondents where, according to Oppenheim, data can be used to compare findings across groups in a

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[769] Oppenheim, A. N. (1992) Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement. London. Pinter.
[770] Sax, Gilbert (1979) Foundations of Educational Research. New Jersey. Prentice-Hall Inc. p. 245.
[771] Ibid.
[772] Bell, J. (1987) Doing Your Own Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers in Education and Social Science. Milton Keynes. Open University Press.
[773] Cohen, Louis, Manion, Lawrence & Morrison, Keith (2007) Research Methods In Education. London and New York. Routledge.
[774] Ibid. p. 338.
[775] Ibid.
[776] Ibid. p. 321.

sample.[777] The advantages of using closed questions are that they require less time to code and analyse than 'word-based data'[778] and this is especially effective where a vast amount of word-based data must be analysed. Unlike closed questions, there is very little curtailment in open ended questions where respondents are able to express view points and attitudes; this approach yields valuable information particularly for questions that require investigation of complex issues and, for which, simple answers will not suffice. Researchers like Robson[779] recommend the use of both closed and open ended questions in questionnaires in order to glean as much information as possible from the data, while others suggest that open ended responses might reveal 'gems'[780] of information that otherwise might not be attained in the questionnaire.

4.5.2.2 Questionnaires used in this study

The questionnaires used in this research were distributed to four distinct groups: trainee teachers, qualified teachers and first and second level students. The questionnaires administered to the primary school pupils were devised by their own teachers, in recognition of the age and stage of development of young children and of their language abilities (see appendix 6 for an example). As the questionnaire was the main instrument selected for data collection, particular care was exercised about the sequencing of questions and the language used to elicit a response. In view of the results of the literature search which revealed a number of studies relating to the value of studying poetry in educational settings but a lack of evidence citing teachers' and students' opinions on poetry in classrooms, this practitioner based study adopted a language use familiar to the participants. All questionnaire instruments were trialled and piloted with a small group of 23 representative students and 6 teachers in two schools in the Dublin region and the order, sequencing and phrasing of questions amended as a result. The piloted instruments initially employed a 5 point Likert scale in all questions in an attempt to quantify responses but results revealed that respondents found it difficult when asked to indicate numeric values on their experiences of engaging with poems in school, and unanimously favoured the use of broader categorisations in 3 and 5 point ordinal scales such as none to a lot. As a substantial number of questions on the pilot instruments were returned incomplete, and comments provided via a

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[777] Oppenheim, A. N., (1992) Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement. London. Pinter. p. 115.
[778] Bailey, K. D., (1994) Methods of Social Research. New York. The Free Press. p. 118.
[779] Robson, C., (2003) Real World Research. London. Blackwell Publishing.
[780] Cohen, Louis, Manion, Lawrence & Morrison, Keith (2007) Research Methods In Education. London and New York. Routledge. p. 330.

feedback mechanism on the piloting exercise revealed that both students and teachers experienced difficulty in accurately reporting for example, how much poetry they experienced in primary school, it was decided to use a more generic description which elicited a much better response rate than attempts to quantify the experience on a Likert scale. Notwithstanding the problematic nature of using an ordinal scale in a study of this nature, it was decided in the interests of facilitating a better response rate, and in recognition of feedback from the pilot respondents that it was extremely difficult to remember exactly how many poems they had studied at different stages of their education, to incorporate an ordinal mechanism into some sections of the questionnaire. Similarly, the issue of accessing and accurately reporting students' and teachers' attitudes to the study of poetry encountered difficulties in the use of language during the pilot phase, and feedback clearly suggested that the use of direct questioning in relation to 'your attitude' in the instruments was a preferred option among both teachers and students. Justifications to support this choice of language centered around its use in the education system, and students and teachers reported a strong familiarity with this terminology in the curriculum, in examinations, text books, educational resources and general discourse in the classroom. Despite the potential for ambiguity and the difference between individual respondent's conception of 'attitude' in their own lives, the feedback provided was conclusive in favouring its use as a clear indication of whether someone was positively or negatively disposed towards poetry, i.e. whether they liked teaching it or not, and whether they liked learning it or not. The questions which required yes/no type of answers were also included. The questionnaire consisted mainly of closed questions with pre-determined answers, but a small number of open-ended questions were also included to allow the respondents to express their point of view in relation to the themes identified from the literature review in chapters 2 and 3.

The Key questions were set by the researcher as a guideline to elicit a degree of standarised data. The key closed questions in the student questionnaires, notably numbers 5, 6, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19 and 20 were asked to elicit yes or no answers about their experiences of poetry. The data from the open questions where students were invited to expand on their responses will be presented as a summary format illustrative of more indepth and edifying information about students' attitudes towards and experience of poetry. In the same way as key questions were set in the student questionnaires as a guideline to elicit a degree of standardised data, key closed questions, notably questions 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 26, 27, 30, 33, 34 were

used by the researcher in the teacher questionnaires for analysis. These questions were specifically set for analysis because they are pertinent to the enquiry and will elicit yes or no answers about teachers' experiences of poetry. The data from the open questions where teachers were invited to expand on their responses will be presented as a summary format illustrative of more indepth and edifying information about teachers' attitudes towards and experience of poetry.

The first questionnaire was distributed during 2004 and 2005 to a wide range of second level schools, which included, disadvantaged, fee paying private, state funded secondary, single sex and co-educational schools (see appendix 7 for example). The questionnaires were distributed to schools all over Dublin and as far west as Sligo. The questionnaires were distributed to students from first to sixth year in order to achieve a comprehensive overview of their perception and experience of poetry at both first and second level. Each participating school was sent a covering letter outlining the nature of the research (see appendix 8 for copy of covering letter). The total number of questionnaires completed and returned by the students was 730 and represented a balanced gender profile. Each questionnaire consisted of twenty-two questions, and the total number of questions analysed in the student questionnaires was 16,060. Despite the fact that the questionnaire was long, all questions have been included for analysis because they are germane to the focus of the research project. The study relies heavily on the use of questionnaire as its main data collection instrument and acknowledges the weaknesses of this form of data in comparison to the rich data which can be yielded from interviews. The issue of time and resources was a key factor in excluding the use of interview; and observations were used which facilitated a post-observation discussion with participants in order to validate my observations with their experiences of the same event, and further allowed for an unstructured discussion of the same areas explored in the questionnaires.

The second questionnaire was distributed to fifty qualified second level English teachers with many years teaching experience during the Association of English Teachers Summer School on Tuesday 15th June, 2004. This cohort of teachers returned only nine of the questionnaires despite a stamped addressed envelope being attached. Since the respondent numbers were so small it was decided to exclude them from the sample and treat them as a further baseline assessment

exercise. The information deciphered from their answers was valuable and became a motivating factor for the inclusion of primary school teachers in the research group.

The third questionnaire was administered at the commencement of the academic term in October for four years to recently qualified teachers attending the Bachelor of Education Senior Sophister programme for the years 2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 in Trinity College, Dublin. The teachers were a disparate group of educators from all over the country with a range of experience teaching poetry in a variety of schools and to a diverse range of students. In total 92 primary teachers between 2004 and 2008 were administered questionnaires, each of which contained 40 questions, so that in total 3,680 questions were analysed (see appendix 9 for example).

Another questionnaire was compiled in 2004 as a pilot exercise to ascertain student teachers' attitude towards and perceptions of poetry teaching in second level (see appendix 10 for example). This questionnaire was distributed to a cohort of English Methodology students studying for their Postgraduate Diploma in Education in 2003/04. Assessing information from these initial respondents was a vital predictor that the scale of the research project needed to be extended to include analysis of the teaching of poetry at primary level, and also served to validate the use of this instrument.

4.5.3 Observational methods

Observation is used to gather data because it offers the researcher an immediate first hand opportunity to see the evidence of what is taking place 'in situ'.[781] Researchers like Morrison,[782] Patton[783] and Robson[784] advocate the use of observation as a research method because it enables data collection on aspects of covert and overt behaviour, the physical environment where the research is taking place as well as non-verbal methods of communication or interaction. According to Best and Kahn[785] the use of observation as a research method needs 'rigorous adherence to the spirit of scientific inquiry';[786] they outline specific standards for good

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[781] Cohen, Louis, Manion, Lawrence & Morrison, Keith (2007) Research Methods in Education. London and New York. Routledge. p. 396.
[782] Morrison, K. R. B. (1993) Planning and Accomplishing School-Centered Evaluation. UK. Peter Francis.
[783] Patton, M. Q. (1990) Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods. London. Sage.
[784] Robson, C. (2002) Real World Research. Oxford. Blackwell Publishing.
[785] Best, John W. and Kahn, James V. (2006) Research In Education. Boston. Pearson Education Inc.
[786] Ibid. p. 312.

observation which include careful planning, to be aware of the wholeness of what is observed, objectivity, to be able to separate fact from the interpretation of the facts, checking, verification and meticulous recording.[787]

Observation methods are delineated into two categories, participant observation and non-participant observation. Participant observation allows the researcher to observe behaviour, actions and reactions as a group participant. Cohen et al.[788] purport that in participant observation the researcher stays with the group for a substantial period of time to diminish any reactivity effects and they record what is happening while 'taking a role in that situation.'[789] Non-participant observation means that the researcher observes behaviour, actions and reactions from outside the group.

In this research project both methods of observation were used. As a non-participant observer the researcher observed unobtrusively at the back of second level classrooms and recorded semi-structured observations of second level student teachers teaching poetry and their students learning poetry. The researcher recorded observations of the impact of student teachers' methodological approaches and attitude towards poetry on the students. As a participant observer in this project the researcher facilitated poetry workshops to both the second level student teachers, and the primary school teachers, and unstructured observations of participants' responses were recorded in a research journal after the workshops.

4.5.4 Research journal

Kane[790] recommends that researchers record and organise their information adequately, otherwise relevant information may not be recorded. It is preferable, according to Robson,[791] that researchers record from the moment the project is undertaken; keeping a complete record of all activities related to the project in the form of a research journal will inevitably save time when writing up the thesis. This researcher kept a research journal as a means of documenting every detail related to the implementation of the research methods, observations and workshops as well

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[787] Ibid.
[788] Cohen, Louis, Manion, Lawrence & Morrison, Keith (2007) Research Methods in Education. London and New York. Routledge.
[789] Ibid. p. 404.
[790] Kane, E. (1993) Doing your own Research. Dublin. Marion Boyans Publication.
[791] Robson, C. (2002) Real World Research. Oxford. Blackwell Publishing. P. 314.

as dialogue and critical incidents related to all areas of the project. The journal also facilitated the researcher's personal introspective and reflective thoughts about the research process, findings and interpretations. The journal was also used as part of the triangulation process and as a means to offset bias.

4.6 Analysis of data

The data in this thesis was gathered in order to collate and explore the role and value of poetry in the formal education system. In order to do this a review of the literature was undertaken as well as comprehensive surveys which were administered to both students and teachers. Each survey included key closed questions that were designed to elucidate information about the experiences of poetry among students and teachers. All of the questions in each questionnaire were analysed but given the volume of the data recorded it was decided that for the purposes of reporting, the results of the selected closed questions only would be presented for analysis in tabular format. Since this research is practitioner based and aimed specifically at teachers and those involved in curriculum development, the presentation of the statistical data in visual format presents the best opportunity for a clear, cohesive and uncomplicated illustration of the findings. All of the data was manually coded, matched and correlated.

With regard to answering the research questions and interpreting the results, quantitative and qualitative data carried the same weight when interpreting and drawing conclusions from this study. Corroboration of numerical and textual data was achieved by matching quantitative and qualitative codes when reporting and interpreting the data. For example, the descriptive data is used to report on dimensions of the quantitative statistics. The findings are reported according to their stated frequencies, as overall percentage attitude towards particular areas. Correlation analysis was used to describe the strength of the relationship between identified and emerging variables, such as to explore the relationship between respondents' attitude to the study of poetry and how it was taught to them in class. Responses to open ended questions were thematically organised and analysed, but owing to the large volume of quantitative statistics are not presented separately but used as descriptive data to highlight or challenge emerging themes or patterns.

4.7 Ethical considerations

There are a number of ethical issues which required consideration when conducting this study. The protection of anonymity and confidentially of all respondents and participants was guaranteed, and all information arising from the questionnaires and observations was securely stored, appropriately coded and used for the study aims only. All participants were invited to participate in the study on a voluntary basis, and teachers participating in the year long poetry workshops were reassured that they had the right to withdraw from participating in the research aspect of the course at any time, to ask further questions about any aspect of the study and to obtain a summary of the findings at the end of the study.

4.8 Triangulation

Some researchers have defined triangulation as two or more methods or the use of multiple methods of collecting data.[792] There are many advantages in the use of triangulation particularly where multiple methods result in the replication of findings. It also overcomes the type of research Smith[793] identified as being too narrow because of the researcher's preference for, or familiarity with, a limited selection of research methods. Creswell[794] identifies triangulation as a standard device for ensuring strength of evidence. The use of triangulation not only yields information that is unique to each of the research methods used but it also reinforces the other methods,[795] although this latter point is open to criticism by researchers like Silverman[796] because it implies that triangulation is better than an independent research methodological approach. In this study triangulation was achieved by examining the same empirical unit of study from a number of perspectives, such as the primary school teachers participation in the training workshops where data was gathered from their questionnaire responses and reflective portfolio entries, the researcher's observations of their engagement with in-class activities and tasks, and their own pupils' evaluation of these new approaches in practice. The purpose of corroboration was achieved by using the numerical data in conjunction with textual data. The findings generated by questionnaire and observational data, and teachers' reflective journals and lesson

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[792] Cohen, Louis, Manion, Lawrence & Morrison, Keith (2007) Research Methods in Education. London and New York. Routledge. p. 141.
[793] Smith, H. W. (1975) Strategies of Social Research: The Methodological Imagination. London. Prentice Hall.
[794] Creswell, J. W. (2003) Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. London. Sage Publications.
[795] Kane, E. (1993) Doing your own Research. Dublin. Marion Boyans Publications.
[796] Silverman, D. (1985) Qualitative Methodology and Sociology: Describing the Social World. Brookfield. Gower.

planning were compared with the secondary data from other studies and DES reports which provided reference points on Irish teachers' and students' experiences.

4.9 Validity

Validity is an important part of the research project and underlies the 'effectiveness of any data-gathering procedure.'[797] Cohen et al.[798] warn that it is easy to slip into invalidity and that it is essential for the researcher to take appropriate measures to avoid this happening; some of the measures they discuss include implementing an appropriate time scale, having adequate resources for the research undertaken, choosing appropriate methodology for answering the research questions, selecting an adequate sample to work with as well as formulating and using appropriate instruments[799] to find what King et al.[800] described as 'accurate, representative, relevant and comprehensive data.' In this research project great care was taken to ensure the reliability of the study, the researcher made stringent endeavours to provide data that in its reliability and validity can be used to formulate and support robust and well-founded arguments. The issue of construct validity in this study was addressed by data triangulation, collection and cross checking the data to explore and understand all relevant areas of the research questions. Multiple sources of measures (questionnaire, observation, and documents) of the same phenomenon from students at first and second level, student teachers and teachers provided a good exploration and definition of the constructs of interest. Document analysis and secondary data were also used to obtain a more complete representation of the construct. The study was not concerned with the development of propositions regarding cause-effect relationships in students' and teachers' attitudes to the study of poetry therefore the study has a low degree of internal validity in that respect. External validity refers to the extent to which research findings can be generalised beyond the immediate research sample or setting within which the study has taken place. In a single study, external validity can be difficult to attain, and thus the decision in this study was taken to administer the student questionnaires to a large number of schools, school types, and the full age ranges from infants to 6th year in an extensive regional location in the Dublin area. In addition, it was decided to replicate the exact same course on poetry specific

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[797] Best, John W. and Kahn, James V. (2006) Research In Education. Boston. Pearson Education Inc. p. 288.
[798] Cohen, Louis, Manion, Lawrence & Morrison, Keith (2007) Research Methods in Education. London and New York. Routledge.
[799] Ibid. p. 144.
[800] King, J. A., Morris, L. L., and Fitz-Gibbon, C. T. (1987) How to Assess Program Implementation. California. Sage. In Cohen, Louis, Manion, Lawrence & Morrison, Keith (2007) Research Methods in Education. London and New York. Routledge. p. 144.

teaching methods with four separate cohorts of self-selecting teachers (2004-2008). While no generalisation was attempted in regards to the attitudes of all students and teachers in Ireland to the study of poetry some inferences can be made. For example, the student data is strongly consistent across year groups and school types, and correlates positively with the teachers' questionnaire data.

4.10 Bias

In undertaking this research project, the researcher acknowledges her own bias in her appreciation of poetry, and in her experience of its intellectual, creative and educative function. Having taught poetry at second level and been involved in lecturing English methodology to both primary and secondary teachers for many years it became evident that poetry is a seriously under used educative tool and it appeared that both teachers' and pupils' attitudes towards it may need remediation if it is to be intellectually and creatively effective. In being aware of her bias, the researcher endeavoured to counter it in the objective collection of data through the use of a large scale semi-structured survey, and through accessing the opinion of as wide a range of participants as possible.

4.11 Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study. The first relates to the length of the current study which arose naturally with the adoption of a mixed methods research tradition. As a result, more time and resources were required to undertake the study than may have been the case with a mono-method study, and thus impacted on the scope of the research which did not explore all possible aspects of students' and teachers attitudes to poetry. It is important to note that the evidence of cause and effect relationships in this practitioner based study is very limited, and there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the identified relationships were causal.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter set out the original research aims and identified the subsequent development and emergence of the research design in accordance with the data provided in the baseline assessment exercise for practice at second level. This resulted in an additional focus being placed at primary school level. The chapter describes the research instruments used, and the participants in the study, and provides a justification for the large scale collection of data over a number of

years in order to create a substantial corpus of information to increase the reliability and validity of any claims made.

Since this study was conducted over a number of years and every care was taken to ensure the validity of the findings (in its collation and interpretation), the ensuing data from the second level students and the primary school teachers will be presented, analysed and discussed in chapters five and six.

Chapter Five
Results and analysis of the student questionnaires

5.1 Introduction

'To deprive children of poems is to deny them the society of clear, single voices and an irreplaceable range of feeling. We neglect poetry at our own peril.'[801]

The aim of this chapter is to evaluate and discuss the results of the data collated from the student questionnaires. The main function of the data is to provide a general picture of the students' perceptions of poetry and their experience of it as it was taught to them at both first and second level (primary and secondary school education). The data will also be used as a means of establishing comparative analysis with the findings of the teacher questionnaires, which will be presented in the following chapter, the purpose of which will be to determine correlative arguments about the difficulties of teaching and learning poetry within the current education system and as a means of assessing the basic hypothesis of this research project.

5.2.1 The type of schools and age range of participants in the study

In order to compile a broad and accurate body of data, the questionnaires were distributed to a wide range of schools, which included disadvantaged, fee paying private, state funded secondary, single sex and co-educational schools. The questionnaires were distributed to schools all over Dublin and in Sligo.

The questionnaires were distributed to students from first to sixth year (12 to 18 years of age) in order to achieve a comprehensive overview of their perception and experience of poetry at both first and second level. The analysis aims to elicit details about how much the students remember of their experience of poetry at primary school level. Their responses to the questions should enable the researcher to educe specific and concrete information such as methodological stratagems, cross-curricular applications, imaginative response learning, acquisition of literacy skills and the variety of genres used in the primary and secondary classroom. The questionnaires should provide details about the students' attitudes towards and perception of poetry and whether

[801] Benton, Michael (1978) 'Poetry for children: a neglected art'. In Fox, Geoff ED. (1999) Celebrating Children's Literature in Education. p. 116. London. Hodder & Stoughton.

these things are incidental to or are inextricably linked with a composite of factors to do with teachers' attitudes, competence and expertise in the teaching of poetry.

5.2.2 Number of questionnaires completed and returned

The total number of questionnaires completed and returned by the students was 730. Each questionnaire consisted of twenty-two questions. The data from each of these questions has been examined, collated and presented in this chapter. The total number of questions analysed for this evaluation was 16,060. Despite the fact that the questionnaires were long and contained a lot of open-ended questions, all questions have been included for analysis because they are germane to the focus of the research project. It must be noted that not all students answered every question and thus the quantitative statistics do not always tally fully to 100%.

5.2.3 Organisation of the data for analysis

The data will be presented in chronological order starting with the youngest year group, first year, and proceeding to the oldest year group, sixth year. Each class group will be analysed separately and then collectively. Once the individual class and year group analysis has been conducted, the data will be analysed comparatively year group by year group, and then collectively for a complete and thorough overview of all students' perceptions and experiences of poetry. Having investigated the students' responses in this three-pronged approach the researcher should be able to deduce specific and conclusive evidence about the value and function of poetry as it is taught in schools according to the students' perspectives.

The data has been presented in tabular format in response to the key closed questions, notably numbers 5, 6, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19 and 20. The data from the open questions where students were invited to expand on their responses will be presented in summary format with illustrative student comments to support or refute the claims being made in the quantitative data.

The researcher will engage in a process of comparison across the data emerging from the different year groups and will also identify patterns, themes and trends as the analysis proceeds. Evidence from the review of literature will be drawn in as relevant to the emerging data, to highlight, illustrate, support or challenge the findings. The data will be processed in two broad categories, years 1 – 3, forming the Junior Cycle and years 4 – 6, constituting the Senior Cycle.

The researcher will attempt to pull together the threads of the evidence from the data for each cycle, before finally considering the full data set from both cycles.

5.3 Junior Cycle: 1st – 3rd year

5.3.1 First years

This research project is based upon the premise established in chapters two and three, that poetry has been used as an educative tool throughout history; one of the objectives of the research is to establish whether poetry is currently being utilised as an educative tool within the education system, how, and what students' response to it is. In order to construe this evidence it was necessary to ask closed questions that would provide an overview of the students' experience of and frequency of exposure to poetry in the classroom.

Table 5.1

Question 5. Did you study a lot of poetry in primary school?			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 252		**78**	**172**
Total number of students who did not answer question 5 = 2			
Total Percentages		**31%**	**68%**

Table 5.2

Question 6. Did you enjoy learning poetry in primary school?			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 252		**131**	**108**
Total number of students who did not answer question 6 = 13			
Total Percentages		**52%**	**43%**

Questions five and six attempt to deal with the quantity and appeal of the poetry studied by the students when they were in primary school. In question five 68% of the first years said they did not study a lot of poetry in primary school. This percentage would imply that a number of primary school teachers are either not teaching many poems or are not studying poetry consistently from infant level through to sixth class of primary school. In question six just over half of those questioned, said they liked learning poetry in primary school but according to the student comments accompanying this question, their 'liking' of poetry is dependent upon several factors. Most students said they liked learning poetry if it was funny and enjoyable, but not if the poems were 'heavy', 'boring' or if they didn't make sense. 43% of first years said they didn't

enjoy learning poetry in primary school. Most of the students were able to articulate both interesting and informative reasons why they did not enjoy their primary school poetry, for example, 'Our teacher in primary didn't move off a poem once he started and we had to do the same for days which is very boring' (No. 10/04, Loreto School).

It is evident from additional student comments provided that the role of the teacher is crucial in determining whether a student liked or disliked poetry; in several instances it is noted that teachers did not spend much time on poetry, the poems they chose for study were reported as boring, too long, too complicated, the lessons were more like punishments than learning or fun exercises, the teacher spent too long on one poem, the lessons were repetitive or the poems were used more for comprehension exercises than aesthetic engagement with language.

Table 5.3

Question 11. **Would you say that your experience of poetry in secondary school is better than in primary school?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 252		**84**	**165**
Total number of students who did not answer question 11 = 3			
Total Percentages		**33%**	**66%**

The purpose of question eleven was to ascertain whether the students' experience of poetry in secondary school surpassed that in primary school. It is evident from the statistics that a majority of students said no. It must be stated that the questionnaires were administered to first year students in their first academic term and their exposure to poetry at second level would have been limited. The researcher is actually more interested in the 33% of students who said that their experience of poetry was better in second level because, as the comments will show, primary school poetry appears to obviate the educative value of the subject, 'In secondary school we talk more about the poem and what it means and what the person is feeling in the poem' (No. 20/04 Mount Temple, 1L), 'In my primary school they made us learn poems off by heart and say them back to the teacher. In secondary we make our own poems' (No. 10/04 St. Joseph's CBS, Fairview, 1.1), 'It is better because in primary school we just looked over poems but in secondary school I learnt about an image and the structure of a poem' (No. 04/04 King's Hospital, 1L), 'We look over the hidden meanings more and you are made think about points from different angles' (No. 15/04 St Joseph's Presentation College, Lucan, 1A3).

Table 5.4

Question 12 **How many times do you study poetry during the year?**					
		Many	**Some**	**A Few**	**Once a year**
Total questionnaires = 252		**37**	**91**	**90**	**14**
Total number of students who did not answer question 12 = 20					
Percentages		**15%**	**36%**	**36%**	**6%**

Question twelve, like question eleven, would not be expected to yield a high percentage for those who study poetry many times during the year because the first years would not have been in second level long enough to have studied a large number of poets or a wide and varied range of poetry. However, it is interesting that given the short space of time in secondary school 36% of students had studied poetry some times which suggests that it is not a restricted or neglected exercise. 36% of students had studied poetry a few times, which is again indicative that poetry appears to have a more established place in the curriculum at second level than at primary level. 6% of students said that they studied poetry only once a year. This statistic indicates that in certain schools teachers may appear to be neglecting aspects of the English curricula and syllabi. In England it is estimated that at upper primary school level some teachers spend no more than ten to twenty hours per school year teaching poetry.[802]

At both primary and secondary level poetry is not just an adjunct of the curricula but a specifically integrated aspect of student learning. The researcher has already outlined the NCCA's direction that poetry should have a special place in children's language experience at primary level.[803] The teacher is also given the responsibility of choosing a range of poetry suitable for class work and they are directed to make selections that do not undermine the 'potential of the children's response to it'.[804] At second level the NCCA stresses the importance of teaching poetry not just at a literal level but also 'at a level of ulterior meaning'.[805] If the

[802] SCOLA Scottish Committee on Language Arts in the Primary School (1983) Poetry is for Pleasure. Edinburgh. The Scottish Curriculum Development Service. p. 7.
[803] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) English Language Teacher Guidelines. Dublin. The Stationery Office. p. 69.
[804] Ibid. p. 70.
[805] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) Draft Guidelines for Teachers of English: Leaving Certificate English Syllabus. Dublin. The Department of Education and Science. p. 63.

experience of the child is to be extended 'through, and by means of language'[806] then every teacher is obligated to teach poetry regularly throughout the year otherwise the cognitive development of students through the interaction and experience of language may be undermined.

Table 5.5

Question 14. **Do you study poetry written by young people?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 252		**78**	**143**
Total number of students who did not answer question 14 = 31			
Total Percentages		**31%**	**57%**

Questions 14 and 15 are intrinsically connected. It is feasible to suppose that if students are exposed to poetry written by young people they may be more inclined to want to write their own poetry. Great importance is placed in curricula on students using poetry to explore the writing experience at both first and second level. At second level it is suggested that poetry can be used to facilitate student writing through imitation of different styles and structures. The NCCA Guidelines outline various approaches to this writing process based on the work of Kenneth Koch.[807] It is important that teachers choose poems written by young people and there is a vast array of material available in selected anthologies and to down load from internet sites. However, choosing poems written by young people is not enough, the teacher must tell the students that the poems are written by young people and where possible have important details like the age of the writer. Anthologies like *A Peace of Our Minds*,[808] *The Top Dog*[809] and *Heartsongs*[810] are good examples of poetry collections by young people, some as young as six years old, which could be used for study by teachers and students.

In question fourteen 57% of students said they did not study poetry written by young people. While 57% is a very high number, it is probable that some teachers may actually choose poems written by young people but not inform the students of this fact and they in turn have answered

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[806] SCOLA Scottish Committee on Language Arts in the Primary School (1983) Poetry is for Pleasure. Edinburgh. The Scottish Curriculum Development Service.
[807] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) Draft Guidelines for Teachers of English: Leaving Certificate English Syllabus. Dublin. The Department of Education and Science. pp. 65 – 67.
[808] McGrath, Carol ed., (1996) A Peace of Our Minds: Poems by young people on Peace in Ireland. Dublin. Mentor Press.
[809] O'Shea, Finian, chairperson, (1996) The Top Dog: McDonald's Young Writers. Dublin. The O'Brien Press.
[810] Stepanek, Mattie J.T., (2002) Heartsongs. London. Thorsons.

no to this question. However, despite this probability it is still a concern that so few students report having had an opportunity to study poems written by their own peer group. Studying poems written by young people could enhance student directed learning in the classroom and make lessons on poetry writing easier for the teacher to initiate.

Table 5.6

Question 15. **Are you encouraged to write your own poetry in class?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 252		**133**	**109**
Total number of students who did not answer question 15 = 10			
Total Percentages		**53%**	**43%**

It is clear from the results of question fifteen that students are willing to and capable of writing their own poems. In the students' additional comments, many were critical of the fact that they rarely, if ever, got to write poetry, many of them expressed a desire to write their own poems and some even said that they enjoyed the experience: 'I like it because I got to write my own poems' (No. 21/04, Moyle Park College, Clondalkin, Dublin, 1.2), 'I liked learning poetry because I wanted to know how to do poetry' (No. 15/04, St. Brendan's College, Woodbrook, Bray, 1J), 'When I did do poetry my teacher would admire it' (No. 07/04, Moyle Park College, Clondalkin, Dublin, 1.3). These comments from the students confirm that 'children need to experience the placing of words together so that they can become 'makers' for themselves'.[811]

Table 5.7

Question 17. **Do you read poetry outside of school?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 252		**61**	**180**
Total number of students who did not answer question 17 = 11			
Total Percentages		**24%**	**71%**

[811] Department of Education and Science (1987) Teaching Poetry In The Secondary School: An HMI View. London. Her Majesty's Stationery Office. p. 24.

Table 5.8

Question 18. **Have you ever bought a poetry book to read in your leisure time?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 252		**47**	**199**
Total number of students who did not answer question 18 = 6			
Total Percentages		**19%**	**79%**

Questions seventeen and eighteen are also linked together because if students read poetry outside of school, it is probable that they will have bought poetry anthologies to read in their leisure time. In fact 24% of students read poetry outside of school and 19% have bought a poetry book to read in their leisure time. These are relatively low percentages and correlate to the findings of the Assessment of Performance Unit survey carried out in 1982.[812] The APU found that '47% of students did not read poetry outside of school' while '73% indicated that they did not read poetry to any great extent'.[813] The interesting aspect of these findings is that there is some correlation between them and the findings in the Poetry Survey for the Arts Council of England carried out in 1996.[814] This survey was specifically an assessment of the state of poetry in England and formed the basis for a Green Paper on the Funding of Poetry. Some of the findings in the survey were analogous with this research project, particularly in relation to reasons why students did not read poetry outside of school.

Table 5.9

Question 19. **Which sentence best describes the way you feel about poetry? Please tick one box only.**						
		Poetry is important	**Poetry helps you to develop as a human being**	**Poetry is difficult**	**Poetry has no value**	**Poetry is boring**
Total questionnaires = 252		**42**	**83**	**24**	**14**	**61**
Total number of students who did not answer question 19 = 28						
Total percentages		**17%**	**33%**	**10%**	**6%**	**24%**

[812] Assessment of Performance Unit, APU, (1982) Language performance in schools: Secondary survey report No. 1. London. Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
[813] Ibid. In Department of Education and Science (1987) Teaching Poetry In The Secondary School: An HMI View. London. Her Majesty's Stationery Office. p. 6.
[814] McKeone, Gary and Jane O'Brien (1996) A Poetry Survey for the Arts Council of England: Key findings. London. The Arts Council of England.

Question nineteen focuses specifically on the students' perception of poetry. It is evident from the statistics that a lot of students believe poetry is important in so far as it can help you to develop as a human being and this tallies with the findings from the literature in chapters two and three. However, 24% of students believe that poetry is boring and it would not be implausible that the reason for this lies in the way it is taught; 44% of the students who answered question 20 clearly feel that this is so (see table 5.10 below). It is apparent that students' perception of poetry manifests itself throughout their school years because this is where they encounter it on a sustained basis. It is crucial that students' experience of poetry is positive otherwise their attitude towards it in later life could be antagonistic. Other research has found that the teaching of poetry in school 'has a major effect on a person's attitude to poetry'.[815] Students' contention that poetry is boring might stem from the fact that their image of literature 'is of a form of knowledge to be examined, like many others in the curriculum'.[816]

Table 5.10

Question 20. **Is your attitude towards poetry as a result of the way it is taught in class?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 252		**111**	**130**
Total number of students who did not answer question 20 = 11			
Total Percentages		**44%**	**52%**

Question twenty establishes that 44% of students are influenced by the way poetry is taught to them in class. However, it would be erroneous to assume that the 52% of students who claim that their attitude towards poetry is not influenced by the way it is taught is wholly reliable because their additional comments tend to contradict this statistic. Some students may have misconstrued the question because they may not want to make their teacher personally responsible for their dislike of poetry, and some students inferred that their dislike of poetry was because of their own academic weakness. Other reported factors that determined their attitude ranged from having learned very little poetry in class, having to rote learn verses or whole poems for homework, for example, 'I think my teacher did turn me off poetry because whenever we did a poem and I liked

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[815] McKeone, Gary and Jane O'Brien (1996) A Poetry Survey for the Arts Council of England: Key findings. London. The Arts Council of England. p. 36.
[816] Department of Education and Science (1987) Teaching Poetry In The Secondary School: An HMI View. London. Her Majesty's Stationery Office. p. 2.

it she would make us learn it off by heart and it got boring' (No. 17/05 Holy Faith Secondary School, 1.3). Having a teacher who did not encourage exploration or discussion of the poems was also regularly cited, for example: 'Sad poems are taught in the same way as happy poems' (No. 13/04 Mount Temple, Malahide Road, 1L), as was a feeling that poetry was redundant outside of school '... to be a doctor you don't need poetry' (No. 21/05 Holy Faith Secondary School, 1.3), and that poetry was only for very young children: 'I just don't like poetry. I think it's for small babies learning to talk. Most poems in adult books make no sense' (No. 19/04 St. Brendan's College, Woodbrook, Bray, 1J).

The major concern arising from the responses to questions 19 and 20 is that 24% of students find poetry boring and 6% of them think it has no value. These figures combined with the 10% who find it difficult, present a substantial number of students attitudinally at variance with one of the most versatile and adaptable educative tools, as reported in the literature. Therefore, 'For many pupils, poetry has not been a series of experiences where the young reader could find a mirror of some of his own feelings and preoccupations in a common human idiom'.[817]

5.3.2 Second years

The researcher anticipated a more definitive attitude towards poetry from second year upwards. Second to sixth year students have been exposed to the methodologies of teaching poetry at second level for a much longer period than first years. It was also expected that these students would also be more articulate about and analytical of the ways in which poetry is presented to them, and by means of deductive reasoning they should have a better understanding of the value of poetry. The NCCA has provided clear directives in the syllabi for the study of poetry at second level, and if their directives at primary level were practicable the students should in theory have little difficulty transitioning from one level of study to the other. However, the findings do not bear this out. The evidence would suggest that the NCCA guidelines about the teaching of poetry are not being replicated in the classrooms which participated in this study. In fact, the findings suggest that poetry, particularly with older students, becomes metaphorically

[817] Ibid. p. 6.

'an albatross' around their necks rather than an enriching experience. The data shows that once students become eligible for state exams, their experience of poetry becomes restrictive in so far as it is salient only to the requirements of the exam questions.

Table 5.11

Question 5. Did you study a lot of poetry in primary school?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 238		73	162
Total number of students who did not answer question 5 = 3			
Total Percentages		31%	68%

As the analysis of data proceeded, the researcher observed recurring patterns in the statistics between different year groups. 68% of second year students, the same percentage as first years, said that they did not study a lot of poetry in primary school. Given that all of these students attended a broad range of primary schools within different catchment areas it is interesting that so many of them claimed they had little exposure to poetry and by implication, that many primary teachers may be treating the study of poetry quite casually.

Table 5.12

Question 6. Did you enjoy learning poetry in primary school?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 238		109	120
Total number of students who did not answer question 6 = 9			
Total Percentages		46%	50%

In question six 50% of students said that they did not enjoy learning poetry in primary school which is a slight increase from first to second year. This increase, while not unequivocal, could be indicative of repeated weaknesses in the teaching of poetry as is evident from student comments such as, 'I didn't do very much poetry in primary school and the bit we did wasn't very interesting' (No. 06/04 St Mac Dara's Community College, 2 Ree), 'Some of the poetry was very childish and we learned all of them off by heart which was useless and turned me off it, and we never discussed it' (No. 14/05 Holy Faith Secondary School, Clontarf, 2.3), 'We did lots of poetry in 3rd class but none in 5th and 6th class' (No. 10/04 Mount Temple, Malahide Road, 2i), 'I didn't like poetry because I thought it was very boring' (No. 02/04 St Brendan's CBC, Woodbrook, 2M).

Table 5.13

Question 11. Would you say that your experience of poetry in secondary school is better than primary school?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 238		162	69
Total number of students who did not answer question 11 = 7			
Total Percentages		68%	29%

Question eleven shows a marked increase in the number of students who said that their experience of poetry in secondary school was better than primary. Unlike first years, whose exposure to poetry at second level was extremely limited and therefore impeded their perception and experience of it, second years had a lot more time to adapt to their secondary school teachers' methodologies. 68% of second years said their experience of poetry was better in secondary school compared with only 33% of first years. On the other hand, 29% of second years said that their experience of poetry was not better at second level compared to 66% of first years. The changes in these statistics may be due to many different factors, as indicated by the student comments: 'In secondary school we study poems with meanings, meanings we could use later on in life ...' (No. 04/04 St Mac Dara's Community College, 2 Ree), 'In primary school we did not study the actual meaning of poetry and we did not study the thoughts going through the poet's mind' (No. 23/05 Holy Faith Secondary School, Clontarf, 2.3), 'Because we have better teachers' (No. 19/04 10 Mount Temple, Malahide Road, 2i), 'Because when I was in primary school I didn't do poetry very much but in second year I do it most of the time' (No. 01/04 St Brendan's CBC, Woodbrook, 2M), 'Because we talk more about the poem and the emotions behind it. We discuss the theme, tone, language and imagery which helps us learn more about the poem' (No. 09/04 St Joseph's College, Lucan, 2A4). These comments are critical and insightful but should not be interpreted to mean that the teaching of poetry at second level is flawless, on the contrary, the data raises many disconcerting questions about the teaching of poetry as part of an exam subject.

Table 5.14

Question 12 How many times do you study poetry during the year?					
		Many	Some	A Few	Once a year
Total questionnaires = 238		36	73	101	18
Total number of students who did not answer question 12 = 10					
Percentages		15%	31%	42%	8%

The data in question twelve show that 42% of second years study poetry a few times in the year, while almost 31% of them study it some times, and 15% study it many times. These statistics would indicate that a significant number of students study poetry more consistently through the year at second level than at primary level with only 8% reporting that they study it just once a year.

Table 5. 15

Question 14. **Do you study poetry written by young people?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 238		**61**	**155**
Total number of students who did not answer question 14 = 22			
Total Percentages		**26%**	**65%**

Question fourteen shows an increase in the number of students from first to second year who do not study poetry written by young people. This increase may be related to the fact that by second year teachers are choosing a variety of poetry to be studied for Junior Certificate. The type of poetry generally chosen for study for exam classes tends to be from traditional and time-honored poets like William Shakespeare, William Blake, William Wordsworth, Seamus Heaney, Robert Frost, Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes and Vernon Scannell. Despite the fact that there are younger, more contemporary poets used for poetry lessons, a number of whom appear in the texts used for classroom study, only a quarter of respondents report being given the opportunity to study poetry written by their own age group for the Junior Cert exam.

Table 5.16

Question 15. **Are you encouraged to write your own poetry in class?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 238		**114**	**117**
Total number of students who did not answer question 15 = 7			
Total Percentages		**48%**	**49%**

While question fifteen shows that 48% of second year students are encouraged to write their own poetry in class, 49% are not. This situation contravenes the specifications of the Junior Certificate Syllabus which stipulates that students should be 'encouraged to explore, order, express and symbolize a wide range of intellectual, imaginative, affective and sensuous

experience'[818] and be given frequent opportunities 'to speak and write about his/her experience in a variety of forms'[819] including poetic form. If students are not encouraged to write poetry in class then it could be argued that teachers are choosing to ignore, for whatever reasons, particular and important aspects of cultural literacy[820] as stipulated by the Junior Certificate Syllabus. The drop in the number of students from first to second year who are encouraged to write poetry in class signifies, even at this early stage, that as students progress through second level their exposure to poetry as a mode of language experimentation diminishes. This finding is again contrary to the syllabus objectives where the students' personal 'proficiency in the arts and skills of language'[821] are based on the 'dynamically interrelated elements' of 'personal literacy, social literacy and cultural literacy'.[822]

Table 5.17

Question 17. Do you read poetry outside of school?			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 238		**44**	**180**
Total number of students who did not answer question 17 = 14			
Total Percentages		**19%**	**76%**

Question seventeen shows that 76% of students said they did not read poetry outside of school. There is a clear correlation here between the results of first and second year students because neither group shows a strong inclination to read poetry for its own sake. In fact, there is an increase in the number of students from first to second year who do not read poetry outside of school. There may be a number of reasons for this increase but from the researcher's experience and from anecdotal evidence, it appears that the intensification of the workload for examination classes not only marginalises poetry but can also make it a subordinate part of the English curriculum within the classroom.

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[818] The Department of Education and Science. The Junior Certificate English Syllabus. Dublin. The Stationery Office. p. 2.
[819] Ibid.
[820] Ibid. p. 3. Cultural literacy
[821] Ibid. p. 1.
[822] Ibid.

Table 5.18

Question 18. Have you ever bought a poetry book to read in your leisure time?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 238		46	186
Total number of students who did not answer question 18 = 6			
Total Percentages		19%	78%

Given that 76% of second years do not read poetry outside of school it is hardly surprising that 78% of them have never bought a poetry anthology to read in their leisure time. These results are analogous to each other and are comparable with the first year findings also. These results would indicate that students become increasingly dissociated from poetry as they move through the education system. It also suggests that it is only those who are pre-disposed themselves towards poetry who derive the benefit from interacting in a sustained manner with poetry as demonstrated in the literature. For the others, it is unfortunately left to chance, as the evidence suggests that the mainstream educational system is not actively fostering or nurturing an appreciation of poetry in young people, despite the fact that 31% of the second years recognise the potential value and importance of poetry in the development of people's lives. It appears this empathy towards poetry is not being utilised, and the data thus far points to a number of possible reasons for this: teacher attitudes, teaching and learning strategies in use, resources and poetry selections employed. These issues will be discussed later in the chapter.

Table 5.19

Question 19. Which sentence best describes the way you feel about poetry? Please tick one box only.						
		Poetry is important	Poetry helps you to develop as a human being	Poetry is difficult	Poetry has no value	Poetry is boring
Total questionnaires = 238		34	73	32	21	51
Total number of students who did not answer question 19 = 27						
Total percentages		14%	31%	13%	9%	21%

In question nineteen 31% of second year students said that poetry helps you to develop as a human being, and 14% of them believe that poetry is important. However, 21% believe that poetry is boring and 9% believe that it has no value. It is probable that some of the 13% of students who said that poetry is difficult could in fact also believe that it is important or that it

helps you to develop as a human being. On the other hand, it is reasonable to suggest that the 13% of students who find it difficult also think that it is boring, making one aspect of their experience a corollary of the other. It should be noted that from anecdotal evidence gathered through conversations with teachers, informal classroom observations and informal discussion with students, the perceived difficulty of poetry actually makes it adversarial.

Table 5.20

Question 20. **Is your attitude towards poetry as a result of the way it is taught in class?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 238		**89**	**134**
Total number of students who did not answer question 20 = 15			
Total Percentages		**37%**	**56%**

Question twenty establishes that 37% of the second years questioned are influenced by the way poetry is taught to them in class. This finding shows a decrease in the number of students from first to second year who say that their attitude to poetry is influenced by the way it is taught in class. Despite this decrease, it would be unsound to assume that as students progress through second level their perception of poetry is less influenced by the way it is taught to them in class, which is aptly illustrated by their comments. The comments of those students who stated that their attitude is influenced by the way poetry is taught indicate that there are serious shortcomings in the way teachers approach the teaching of poetry. Students commented that if the teacher is passionate about poetry and does a lot of it then their enthusiasm influences the students, 'I think if your teacher shows you a certain way to look at poetry it generally sticks with you' (No. 21/04 St Louis High School, Rathmines, 2u), 'It is all the way your teacher feels about it. If the teacher loves poetry and you do a lot in class it usually rubs off' (No. 12/05 Holy Faith Secondary School, Clontarf, 2.3), 'But I would be more interested in poetry if my teacher had more activities related to poetry, e.g. videos, tapes, music, etc., (No. 01/04 Fingal Community College, Swords, 2B1), 'It influences the way I think about it because it's like they make it boring on purpose' (No. 18/04 Fingal Community College, Swords, 2B1), 'Because our teacher made us read the poem over and over again and again' (No. 07/04 St Mary's Holy Faith, Haddington Road, 2M), 'It's just a brutal way of teaching it' (No. 12/04 Mount Temple, Malahide Road, 2B),

Having analysed all the comments made by those students who answered no, it is improbable that 56% is a true reflection of the number of second year students whose attitude was not influenced by the way it was taught in class. Some of those who answered no indicated in their comments that their choice was based on a misunderstanding of the question 'I just picked no because I don't know what the question means' (No. 13/04 St Louis High School, Rathmines, 2i), others answered no because they seemed unable to differentiate between how a teacher influenced their attitude to poetry and the functionality of poetry outside of school, 'I enjoy poetry but I don't see what value it has on life' (No. 23/04 St Mac Dara's Community School 2 Derg). Some students answered no but stipulated that in spite of poor teaching skills they liked poetry 'I like poetry but I don't like the way it is taught in class. I like writing poetry' (No. 20/04 Fingal Community College, Swords, 2B1). Some students answered no because their memory of poetry in primary school was so negative that they projected that negativity onto their experience of it at second level, 'In primary, teachers made us all in a group recite it and the people who didn't get it right stayed standing while everyone else sat down' (No. 19/04 Mount Temple, Malahide Road, 2B).

5.3.3 Third years

The statistics for the third years is based on one group only which is a consequence not of deliberate manipulation but of the random assignment of classes to the teachers in each school where the questionnaires were distributed. It is also important to point out that third year second level students sit a state examination, the Junior Certificate and that there is a requirement to answer both an unseen and studied poetry question for this exam. Even though the statistics for third years is based on one group, there is validity in the data collated because it can be supported with anecdotal evidence gathered from informal conversations with teachers and from the researcher's personal experience of teaching this particular age group for more than twenty years.

Table 5.21

Question 5. **Did you study a lot of poetry in primary school?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 18		5	13
Total number of students who did not answer question 5 = 0			
Percentages		**28%**	**72%**

72% of the third year sample said that they did not study a lot of poetry in primary school, which shows a slight increase in the number of students from first to third year who answered no to this question. 28% of third years said they studied a lot of poetry, which shows a slight decrease between first and third years who answered yes to this question. These small statistical variances suggest a strong degree of uniformity among respondents from first to third year, that they generally did not study a lot of poetry in primary school. The validity of this argument is evident in the student comments, particularly in response to question six.

Table 5.22

Question 6. **Did you enjoy learning poetry in primary school?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 18		10	8
Total number of students who did not answer question 6 = 0			
Percentages		**56%**	**44%**

In question six 56% of third year students said that they enjoyed learning poetry in primary school while 44% said that they did not. These findings show an increase between first and third year and from second to third year students who enjoyed learning poetry in primary school. There is a small increase in the number from first to third year students who said that they did not enjoy poetry in primary school and a decrease in the number from second to third year students who said they did not enjoy poetry in primary school. These increases while not irrelevant should not be interpreted as definitively representational since they are calculated from a disproportionate number of third years to first and second year students questioned in the survey and in consequence the conclusion that can be drawn from these statistics is that there is only a slight variance in the number of first, second and third year students who enjoyed learning poetry in primary school. As noted previously for the data sets for first and second years, the students' actual comments in many instances contradicted their reporting that they enjoyed poetry at primary school level, thus raising questions about the validity of the data recorded in

question six. Comments from students who are a composite of the 56% who enjoyed poetry did so because it was treated like a 'novelty' class and not as a part of the core curriculum of English, 'I only learned poems in 5th and 6th class so it was new and fun and I was able to be creative' (No. 03/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K), 'In primary school we did not focus on poetry but the little bit that we did study, yes I did enjoy it' (No. 05/04 St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K), 'I enjoyed poetry but we did very little' (No. 15/04 St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K), 'We did about two or three poems in primary school but when we did poems we did good poems like the Daffodils and The Lake Isle of Inisfree' (No. 17/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K). These comments might suggest that the increase in the number of third years who enjoyed poetry was based on its infrequent use in the classroom and as a means of deviating from what one student described as '... a change from the usual boring classes' (No. 07/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K). The student comments further highlight some worrying trends in primary schools, most particularly a potentially haphazard approach to the teaching of poetry. The data reveals that a significant number of students get very little exposure to poetry; some teachers tend to teach it only to older students, or only sporadically throughout the year, while others teach it only as a respite from other parts of the English curriculum. The comments from the third year students who did not enjoy learning poetry show equally disturbing trends, 'I don't see the point in learning poetry because you don't really need it in further life' (No. 01/04). This comment is indicative of a lack of an integrated approach to the teaching of poetry in the classroom; it suggests that some teachers may be marginalising poetry and failing to utilise its educative, cross-curricular functionality, not only in the classroom, but also in the everyday life of the students.

Table 5.23

Question 11. **Would you say that your experience of poetry in secondary school is better than primary school?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 18		16	2
Total number of students who did not answer question 11 = 0			
Percentages		**89%**	**11%**

Question eleven shows that a sizeable majority of the third year students believe their experience of poetry at second level is better than in primary school. There are several possible reasons why so many of the students answered yes to this question, and it is possible to see a correlation

between the results of question eleven and question six. Based on the analysis of the students' comments in question six it would be reasonable to argue that because of the reasons cited in relation to not enjoying learning poetry in primary school, they would be likely to find their experience at second level more enjoyable. This argument is corroborated by the students' comments in question eleven where they state that more consistent exposure to poems and more structured analysis of poetry enables them to appreciate and understand it more clearly. The students stated that they studied poetry more frequently, that poems were explained in more detail, that the quality of the poetry studied was more select and intellectually demanding. These reasons indicate that students can discern for themselves the value and function of poetry within the curriculum at second level and that they can distinguish teachers' attitudes towards poetry at both levels: 'I would think this because in primary school the teachers focused more on grammar and comprehensions but in secondary it is part of the curriculum' (No. 05.04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K), 'The poems are a lot better as they are not just aimed at the younger age groups. I can also understand them a lot better' (No. 07/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K), 'In poetry in secondary school we learn the 'ins and outs' of the poem, the background to poems' (No. 08/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K), 'When I did poetry in primary school I didn't quite understand what it was about but now when I read a poem I understand it' (No. 11/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K), 'You read more advanced poems, primary poems are childish and annoying' (No. 15/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K), 'You do more and you have a better understanding of it and it is explained better' (No. 18/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K).

Table 5.24

Question 14. Do you study poetry written by young people?			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 18		1	14
Total number of students who did not answer question 14 = 3			
Percentages		**6%**	**78%**

Question fourteen shows that 78% of third year students do not study poetry written by young people; while this statistic is representative of only one group of third years it cannot be dismissed as invalid because 57% of first year and 65% of second year students said that they did not study poetry written by young people. Since there is an increase from first to second year students who do not study poetry written by young people it would not be improbable to expect

that this number would continue to increase as the students move through the senior cycle English programme. One of the key reasons why this increase would be expected is because of the demands of the examinations, particularly preparation for the kind of poetry questions that are asked at Leaving Certificate level. An Ofsted[823] report on the practice of poetry in schools found that many English departments at second level used poems which had been popular in primary schools so that pupil exposure to a broad and varied range of poetry by different writers would be impossible. The report also established that the impact of the national tests and the prescriptive nature of the poetry for study at GCSE level limited the range of poetry and writers studied.[824]

Table 5.25

Question 17. Do you read poetry outside of school?			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 18		4	14
Total number of students who did not answer question 17 = 0			
Percentages		**22%**	**78%**

Question seventeen shows that 78% of third years do not read poetry outside of school and there is a strong correlation between this statistic and the 71% of first years and 76% of second years who also answered no to this question. There are many reasons why pupils do not read poetry outside of school. According to Jonathan Douglas, director of the National Literacy Trust, since 'fewer primary teachers appreciate verse, the diversity of the form is not being taught, so demand for new books has dwindled.'[825] The corollary effect of teachers who do not promote the reading of poetry in primary schools is that it never becomes an accepted practice at second level. As far as the free market is concerned if schools can't or won't inculcate a culture of reading poetry from a very young age then why should publishers promote or publish children's poetry for such a narrow profit share. Douglas believes that the decline in the children's poetry market should not be ignored and that teachers and booksellers should do more to promote and 'demystify' poetry, [826] 'If children are not turned on to poetry, they will lose the opportunity to engage with literacy in a way that enriches them, and in the long term there is a danger for the entire poetry

[823] Ofsted (2007) Poetry in Schools: A Survey of Practice, 2006/2007. London. www.ofsted.gov.uk. p. 14.
[824] Ibid.
[825] Ward, Helen (2008) Poetry in decline, says leader of literacy trust. The TES, 17 October, 2008. http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6003855 Accessed 06/05/2009. p. 1.
[826] Ibid.

infrastructure because we are not growing a new generation who like poetry and who want to read and write poems.'[827]

In an attempt to deal with students' and teachers' attitudes towards poetry UKLA (UK Literacy Association) ran a two-year project to boost reading for pleasure in schools, the results of which were published in May 2009.[828] In an initial survey of 1,200 teachers it was found that 'most primary teachers could not name more than three poets for children, while more than a fifth failed to name one.'[829] These results are alarming and the researcher has found similar trends among Irish teachers. Having lectured both primary and secondary teachers for several years it is evident that at both levels there is a serious lack of knowledge about children's poetry and resources available for creative and stimulating interaction with poetry both inside and outside of the classroom. According to Horner and Ryf[830] the reading of poetry is particularly important for children in the early and primary years. Adults reading or reciting rhymes and poems is the earliest form of initiation for children into the world of poetry and 'Shared recitations of poems and rhymes can be a wonderfully social and collegiate activity. It accentuates the importance of a community in the class and a growing sharing of commonality.'[831] Once children are old enough to read poems by themselves it is important to give them space to do so and if this is inculcated in children at primary level it is more likely that they will continue the practice through second level. Since this is not the current practice in all schools it is not surprising to learn, according to recent research, that only 9% of those under 17 years constitute the main volume of poetry readers and that the same percentage constitutes the main volume of poetry readers aged between 17 and 24.[832]

The Arts Council research found that among the many early influences on the reading of poetry 'a bad experience could put someone off or certainly make it less likely that they would be open to the enjoyment of poetry later on.'[833] This is certainly evident in the respondents' experiences of poetry at school. Some of the negative experiences of the respondents was due to the

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[827] Ibid.
[828] Ibid.
[829] Ibid. pp. 1, 2.
[830] Horner, Chris and Ryf, Vicki (2007) Creative Teaching: English In The Early Years And Primary Classroom. London. Routledge.
[831] Ibid. p. 207.
[832] Bridgwood, Ann & Hampson, John (2000) Rhyme and reason: developing contempory poetry. A study carried out by BML and BMRB on behalf of the Arts Council of England. London. Arts Council of England. p. 82.
[833] Ibid. p. 95.

'prescriptive' way in which it was taught, while others complained about the 'type' of poetry they had to study and that it was formal, traditional, too serious and too analytical.[834] The data in this study revealed similar findings.

From an academic perspective Furniss and Bath's[835] arguments about poetic closure may also shed some light on why pupils are not inclined to read poetry outside of the classroom. In their chapter on 'Closure, Pluralism and Undecidability'[836] they discuss Barbara Herrnstein Smith's[837] work on poetic closure, Gestalt theory[838] and Wolfgang Iser's[839] Reader Response Theory which all illustrate the inherent complexity of the poetic format and how the human mind tries to deal with it. The disputation among academics about literary texts is whether they offer the reader 'closure' or resolution of conflicts or dilemmas at the end of the novel, story, play or poem. While most texts do, including certain poetic works, resolution of issues raised in poetry is more often than not antithetical to its function and effect. The difficulty for students in relation to reading poetry independently of teachers and school lies in its conflicting nature. Jean-Paul Sarte's question, for whom do we write? is the central paradox of poetry because if a poet writes fundamentally for him/herself then closure or resolution for the reader may not be the concern of the poet or the purpose of writing it. In his 2002 Nobel Lecture Imre Kertész,[840] having considered Sarte's question states that ultimately the writer 'writes for himself'[841]. In his discussion about 'Fateless' Kertész writes that while he relived the memories of Auschwitz and Buchenwald he realised that he was not 'the least bit interested in whom I was writing for and why'.[842] Notwithstanding the fact that Kertész is a novelist his comments are applicable to a lot of the modern poets, particularly poets prescribed for study at examination level. Having taught six poets on the higher level Leaving Certificate course for examination in June 2009, the researcher proposes that no amount of critical theory about Elizabeth Bishop, John Keats,

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[834] Ibid. pp. 96, 97, 98, 99.
[835] Furniss, Tom and Bath, Michael (1996) Reading Poetry: An Introduction. England. Longman.
[836] Ibid. pp. 381 – 408.
[837] Smith, Barbara Herrnstein (1968) Poetic Closure: A Study of how poems end. Chicago. University of Chicago Press.
[838] As referred to in Iser, Wolfgang (1978) The Act of Reading: A theory of aesthetic response. Baltimore. Johns Hopkins University Press.
[839] Iser, Wolfgang (1978) The Act of Reading: A theory of aesthetic response. Baltimore. Johns Hopkins University Press.
[840] Kertész, Imre (2002) Eureka! The 2002 Nobel Lecture. World LiteratureToday. Vol. 77, No. 1. (April – June 2003). University of Oklahoma.
[841] Ibid. p. 5.
[842] Ibid. pp. 6, 7.

Michael Longley, John Montague, Adrienne Rich or Derek Mahon could resolve their dilemmas or give closure to their readers. While some of the students engaged with some of the poems, their lack of life experience, the linearity of focus imposed by the demands of exam questions and the rapidity of the manner in which the poems were studied may have a detrimental effect on the students' attitude towards reading poetry beyond the Leaving Certificate exam.

Table 5.26

Question 18. **Have you ever bought a poetry book to read in your leisure time?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 18		1	17
Total number of students who did not answer question 18 = 0			
Percentages		**6%**	**94%**

As has been stated previously for the first and second years, there is an obvious link between question seventeen and eighteen because if 78% of third years don't read poetry outside of school then it is more than likely that they will not buy poetry anthologies to read in their leisure time. 94% is a substantial proportion of fifteen year olds who do not buy poetry books but perhaps if students were induced to read poetry from the earliest age then they would be more likely to buy anthologies to read as they move through the different stages of school. There is also the possibility that if students were introduced to poets who write specifically for young people then they may be more likely to want to read poetry that was relevant to their age and life experience outside of school. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that students listen to music everyday and they learn song lyrics by heart yet they do not associate this with poetic experience. Students might be encouraged to read poetry outside of school if they understood that lyrics constitute a form of poetry and if they studied the lyrics of their favourite bands and solo artists in the classroom.

In concurrence with Jonathan Douglas' comments about the publication of children's poetry books, the Arts Council's[843] study found that from 1997 to 2000 'between two thirds and three quarters of books were bought by people aged 45 or over, with those aged 65 and over responsible for about a third of purchases.'[844] The total volume of poetry books bought by those

[843] Bridgwood, Ann & Hampson, John (2000) Rhyme and reason: developing contempory poetry. A study carried out by BML and BMRB on behalf of the Arts Council of England. London. Arts Council of England.
[844] Ibid. p. 65.

under the age of 16 was 1% while the total volume of books bought by those aged between 16 and 24 was only 4%.[845] The publishers and booksellers questioned in the research identified that the core audience for poetry readers were those aged between '40 and 60, predominantly female, and typically members of reading groups.'[846] One bookseller believes that there are two distinct markets for poetry, 'school pupils and older adults (the 'dedicated' poetry market), with 18 – 40 year olds largely missing.'[847] The data presented thus far in this study would suggest a similar prospect for the Irish market.

Table 5.27

Question 19. **Which sentence best describes the way you feel about poetry? Please tick one box only.**				
Poetry is important	**Poetry helps you to develop as a human being**	**Poetry is difficult**	**Poetry has no value**	**Poetry is boring**
3	7	3	3	2
Total questionnaires = 18				
Total number of students who did not answer question 19 = 0				
Percentages				
16.67%	**39%**	**17%**	**17%**	**11%**

In question nineteen 39% of third years said that poetry helps you to develop as a human being. This shows a small variance in the number of students from first to third year and from second to third year who believe that poetry helps you to develop as a human being. There is also a very low variance in the number of first to third year students who believe that poetry is important. 17% of third years find poetry difficult which shows a slight differentiation in the number of first to third year and from second to third year who find poetry difficult. It is interesting that 17% of third years believe that poetry has no value, while 11% believe that it is boring. These statistics constitute a substantial number of students in one class group who dismiss the value of poetry as a learning tool both in and out of the classroom.

[845] Ibid. p. 70.
[846] Ibid.
[847] Ibid.

From the findings it is evident that a substantial number of students from first to third year believe that poetry is boring and has no value. This reveals a significant underlying problem not only in the attitude of the students at Junior Cycle but also potentially about the attitude of teachers towards poetry, and more importantly about the ways in which it is taught to students. The researcher is in agreement with Dana Gioia's[848] assertion that 'In a better world, poetry would need no justification beyond the sheer splendor of its existence ...[849], but the evidence of this project suggests that teachers and third level teacher education colleges face a significant challenge to redress the skepticism of students about the value of poetry.

Table 5.28

Question 20. Is your attitude towards poetry as a result of the way it is taught in class?			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 18		6	12
Total number of students who did not answer question 20 = 0			
Percentages		**33%**	**67%**

Question twenty yields some very interesting information about pupils' attitudes towards poetry. On examination, it would appear that the attitude of the majority of students is not as a result of the way it is taught in class. However, a close examination of the students' comments reveals a more complex paradigm. Some pupils ticked no but their comments indicated that in fact their attitude towards poetry was as a direct result of the way it was taught to them. Therefore, 33% may not be fully accurate. Some of the comments of the 33% who answered yes indicated that teacher influence was an important factor in determining student attitudes towards poetry, for example, 'I think that if you have a friendly teacher and the atmosphere in the class is right, that yes I would agree' (No. 05/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K), 'The teacher points out everything in the poem and usually I haven't noticed everything' (No. 15/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K), 'My attitude towards poetry in secondary is a boring one, in primary it was a lot better hence the teacher' (No. 16/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K), 'We are told

[848] Poetry-making and policy-making: C. Overtures of Beauty.
http://www.laetusinpraesens.org/docs/poetry/poetpolc.php
Accessed 14/03/2006.
[849] Ibid. p. 2.

we must learn a lot of poetry for the Junior Cert and just hearing this makes you think poetry will be hard' (No. 17/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K). These comments indicate that students are more likely to experience positive engagement with poetry if the teacher's attitude is positive. It is also evident that poetry lessons tend to be teacher rather than student led because students 15 and 17 reported above seem to be totally dependent on the teacher's analysis and interpretation of the poetry, particularly when it is for examination. Data indicates that the presentation of poetry to this group is didactic and prescriptive, which implies that students may be being told what to think and given the exam requirements in relation to theme, imagery, style and structure. There is also an element of rote learning identified in responses and it is certainly contrary to the methods discussed in John Alcock's 'Students' questions and teacher's questions'.[850] When students say that the 'teacher points out everything in the poem' it is clear that 'it is the teacher who finally controls what counts as valid knowledge.'[851] According to Barnes[852] this kind of teacher led learning could inadvertently 'brush away pupils'[853] valid contributions'. Students' comments provided as part of this research suggests that such an approach seriously hampers the students' enjoyment and critical interpretation of poetry and creates an inflexible and repetitive methodological approach. Student 5 purports an interesting and reasonable supposition which is also reflected in Barnes' argument that some teachers 'are able to draw pupils more actively into the formulating of knowledge, so that what is accepted as valid in that classroom is the result of negotiation between teacher and pupil.'[854] Based on this hypothesis Alcock initiated a small study to examine what happened when students raised their own questions for discussion of poetry.[855] The study was based on three poems of increasing difficulty with a group of five top stream, mixed gender, fourteen and fifteen year old, fourth year students.[856] Alcock was interested in finding out the kinds of questions raised, how they were used and the role of the teacher.[857] The study yields information that is both significant and germane to this research project particularly in relation to ways of exploring poems, the 'modality scale'[858] of questions, accommodating group discussions and ensuring 'exploration

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[850] Torbe, Mike and Protherough, Robert eds., (1976) Classroom Encounters: Language and English Teaching. London. Ward Lock Educational.
[851] Ibid. p. 57.
[852] Ibid. Citing Douglas Barnes (1971) writing in the Educational Supplement on Bernstein in the classroom'.
[853] Ibid.
[854] Ibid.
[855] Ibid. p. 58.
[856] Ibid.
[857] Ibid.
[858] Ibid.

and cooperation rather than confrontation'.[859] Alcock found that the role of the teacher in the poetry class was essential because apart from supplying supplementary questions and using students' questions in discussion, the teacher's 'summaries of answers are most valuable in clarifying discussion and in giving a new 'take-off point' when discussion becomes repetitive and so non-progressive.'[860] It is evident that teacher impact is extremely important even among the students who answered no to question twenty. Student 3 commented that 'We just learn poems in class. I learn to appreciate them from people I admire who are usually very creative' (No. 03/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K), this suggests that the way in which the poems are taught is not 'creative' and that the student depends on outside influences to enhance her appreciation of poetry. Student 6 commented that 'I enjoy poetry; reading it on my own at my own pace makes it more enjoyable rather than it being read to me' (No. 06/04, St Brendan's, Woodbrook Bray, 3K), this again indicates that the student tries to surmount the teacher-centered approach of her poetry lessons by reading it on her own and at her own pace. On closer examination, the comments of students 3 and 6 are analogous to the list of necessary technical skills attributed to the English teacher by David Self.[861] Self's list of technical skills specifies the importance of the teacher's ability to 'read poetry' effectively, to 'be able to speak coherently'[862] and that 'his voice and speech should be clear and lively'[863] and that he should 'possess accurate and first-hand knowledge of books, poetry, television programmes, films and records that interest his classes.'[864] His list shares some common characteristics with Alcock's theories about providing 'an environment that is conductive to, and which stimulates, good talk.'[865] The teacher should be able to ask questions 'not to show up a pupil's ignorance but to help conversation or discussion'[866] and that he 'must be able to ask questions that make the pupil think more deeply and precisely.'[867]

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[859] Ibid. p. 60.
[860] Ibid. p. 75.
[861] Self, David (1976) Talk: A practical guide to oral work in the secondary school. London. Ward Lock Educational.
[862] Ibid. p. 29.
[863] Ibid.
[864] Ibid. p. 30.
[865] Ibid. p. 29.
[866] Ibid. p. 30.
[867] Ibid.

5.4 Senior Cycle: 4th – 6th year

5.4.1 Fourth year

Table 5.29

Question 5. Did you study a lot of poetry in primary school?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 119		34	82
Total number of students who did not answer question 5 = 3			
Percentages		29%	69%

Table 5.30

Question 6. Did you enjoy learning poetry in primary school?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 119		55	56
Total number of students who did not answer question 6 = 8			
Percentages		46%	47%

Questions five and six show that there is a clear pattern emerging in the experience and attitude of junior and senior cycle students towards poetry. In question five 69% of students did not learn a lot of poetry, while 47% said that they did not enjoy learning poetry in primary school. At this stage in the data analysis these results are not surprising. There is significant evidence from other researchers that demonstrates the deficiencies in the teaching of poetry at primary level which can be used to explicate these results. In 1988 Colin Walter[868] drew attention to what he called the widespread view 'that things often go sadly wrong when children, poems, and teachers, meet in the classroom.'[869] He refers to several critical works including a Ministry of Education Pamphlet (1954),[870] Edmonds (1966),[871] Scannell (1966),[872] the Plowden Report (1967),[873] Paffard (1978),[874] all of which discuss the dimunition of poetry in the classroom because of the way it is taught. Walter also draws on the research of Fox and Benton[875] to show the difficulty that teachers have with the teaching of poetry; he was particularly interested in their reference to

[868] Walter, Colin (1988) Inhabiting Poetry: A Formal Contribution to the Debate on Teaching Poetry. Educational Studies Monograph Series No. 5. Goldsmith's College University of London.
[869] Ibid. p. 4.
[870] Minstry of Education pamphlet, No. 26 H.M.I. Language. London. H.M.S.O. 1954.
[871] Edmonds, A. (1966) 'Poetry and the Child in the Secondary School'. In T. Blackburn Handbook for English Teachers: Presenting Poetry. London. Methuen.
[872] Scannell, Vernon (1966) 'Art and Fantasy: Some notes on the teaching of poetry in schools'. In T. Blackburn Handbook for English Teachers: Presenting Poetry. London. Methuen.
[873] The Plowden Report (1967) Children and their Primary Schools. London. H.M.S.O.
[874] Paffard, M. (1978) Thinking about English. London. Ward Lock.
[875] Fox, G. and M. Benton (1985) Teaching Literature Nine to Fourteen. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

the 'uncertainty'[876] and 'guilt'[877] felt by teachers and argued that these terms indicated a predilection among teachers to value the teaching of poetry but a serious 'absence of a tradition of succeeding in doing it.'[878]

It is of concern that this research project, written twenty-one years after Walter's, should be raising similar fundamental questions about the teaching of poetry which results in high percentages of students who do not study or enjoy poetry particularly at primary level.

Current research emphasises the importance of initiating positive engagement with poetry particularly at primary level, otherwise the students' perception of poetry in later life will be seriously impeded. The significance of this argument is illustrated in the launch of Denis Carter's[879] Clwyd Poetry Project in 1992 which was an attempt to protect the 'future of poetry and, more importantly, the future development of children's sensibilities'[880] towards poetry. Carter is critical of the Department of Education's apparent lack of rationale for the 'place and value of poetry in children's education'[881], a point that is interestingly reflected in earlier critical works about school systems outside of Britain, for example, Chukovsky's [882]criticism of the treatment of poetry in Russian schools. Carter believes that poetry is treated as a 'fringe activity' in the National Curriculum for English and particularly in the National Literacy Strategy despite the fact that the 'poetic voice in action may be more important for the future of society than most kinds of prose.'[883] Based on the analysis of the data presented thus far, it is evident that for many respondents poetry is also treated as a 'fringe activity' in Irish primary schools.

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[876] Ibid. In Walter, Colin (1988) Inhabiting Poetry: A Formal Contribution to the Debate on Teaching Poetry. Educational Studies Monograph Series No. 5. Goldsmith's College University of London. p. 5.
[877] Ibid.
[878] Walter, Colin (1988) Inhabiting Poetry: A Formal Contribution to the Debate on Teaching Poetry. Educational Studies Monograph Series No. 5. Goldsmith's College University of London. p. 5.
[879] Carter, Dennis (1998) Teaching Poetry in the Primary School: Perspectives for a New Generation. London. David Fulton Publishers.
[880] Ibid. p. 1.
[881] Ibid.
[882] Chukovsky, K (1963) From Two to Five. America. University of California Press. Originally published in Moscow, 1925.
[883] Carter, Dennis (1998) Teaching Poetry in the Primary School: Perspectives for a New Generation. London. David Fulton Publishers. p. 3.

Table 5.31

Question 11. Would you say that your experience of poetry in secondary school is better than primary school?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 119		91	21
Total number of students who did not answer question 11 = 7			
Percentages		77%	18%

In question eleven 77% of fourth years questioned said that their experience of poetry was better in secondary school than in primary school. Based on the evidence of other research studies these findings are comparable and realistic, and critics like Walter and Carter would encourage change in pedagogical planning at the policy making level to enable teachers to move away from approaches driven purely 'by programmed functions.'[884] In order to redress the high percentage of students who do not read or enjoy poetry at primary level Carter believes that 'the wise teacher will introduce plenty of poetry into the process, regularly involving the children in hearing it, reading it, writing it, speaking it and engaging with it in other ways.'[885] In order to foster a love of poetry in schools, the Clwyd Poetry Project[886] provides a framework wherein teachers can enhance the children's encounter with poetry in the classroom. This very useful framework consists of eight modes through which the children can encounter poetry and ranges from 'listening, speaking, reading, memorizing, creatively conversing, expressively engaging, composing or making poems for performing/exhibiting/publishing'[887] the children's poetry. In a report entitled *Literature Belongs to Everyone* commissioned by the Literature Panel of the Arts Council published in 1991,[888] the poet Norman MacCaig[889] said when he visited schools and spoke to the students he could always tell if they had a good teacher who was enthusiastic about poetry.[890] He argued that 'Good teaching is absolutely fundamental'[891] if students are to develop an appreciation of poetry and an ability to write it. MacCaig's argument is very well supported in the comments made by the students participating in this research project: 'I feel the teachers had a more positive attitude towards poetry. They encourage you to write your own poetry and give you interesting poetry to study – I think it's down to the teacher' (No. 10/04, Loreto Dalkey,

[884] Ibid. p. 2.
[885] Ibid. p. 3.
[886] Ibid.
[887] Ibid.
[888] Hughes, Violet M., (1991) Literature Belongs To Everyone: A Report on widening access to literature. London. Arts Council of Great Britain.
[889] Ibid. pp. 84, 85, 86.
[890] Ibid. p. 85.
[891] Ibid. p. 85.

4D). One student's comments about her experience in primary school is corroborative of the 'programmed function' approach so much abhorred by Dennis Carter[892] in the National Literacy Strategy, 'Because you learn much more about the poetry in primary school; the teachers were concerned with the children being able to read the poem but now we learn about imagery etc. the mechanics of poetry' (No. 08/04, Loreto Dalkey, 4D). It is apparent from her statement that this student may have had a teacher who taught poetry perfunctorily and primarily as a device for teaching students to read.

Table 5.32

Question 12 **How many times do you study poetry during the year?**					
		Many	**Some**	**A Few**	**Once a year**
Total questionnaires = 119		**40**	**42**	**30**	**1**
Total number of students who did not answer question 12 = 6					
Percentages		**34%**	**35%**	**25%**	**0.8%**

In question twelve it is evident that fourth year students are taught poetry in a disparate manner. Based on anecdotal evidence gathered over many years from informal conversations with teachers at various seminars including ATE inservice workshops, (Association of Teachers of English), some schools teach a very structured English programme which incorporates a specific poetry module in fourth year, while other schools have a more ad hoc approach. From the researcher's personal experience the key factors that inhibit the teaching of poetry include the structure of the fourth year timetable when students are out of class doing workshops, attending lectures, doing drama rehearsals, going on cultural trips or doing projects. There is also a precedent in some schools to introduce poets for study that will be on the Leaving Certificate course and in this way the teaching of poetry during fourth year may not only be prescriptive but it can perpetuate repetitive, didactic and uninspiring teaching methodologies. In the latter case the study of poetry may become a mere extension of the exam driven formula of the Junior Certificate but with more emphasis on the extended essay format prescribed for Leaving Certificate. In a small scale study of teachers' experiences of teaching poetry in 2004, fifty questionnaires were distributed to teachers attending the Association of English Teachers

[892] Carter, Dennis (1998) Teaching Poetry in the Primary School: Perspectives for a New Generation. London. David Fulton Publishers.

summer school.[893] These teachers taught in a wide range of schools and had many years of experience teaching English at second level. Of the fifty questionnaires distributed nine were completed and returned. Only three of the nine teachers taught transition year English, one of whom taught the students twice a year while the other two taught the students more often. Six of the nine teachers did not teach transition year English despite the fact that some of them had more than twenty years teaching experience. In contrast, Wesley College in Dublin, for example, plan for poetry lessons in their transition year English programme. In modular 2 of their English programme they use a poetry collection based on the Real Cool anthology from which the students are encouraged to read 'a poem a day from the beginning of the year.'[894]

In The Transition Year document published by the ASTI in 1993[895] there are no specific guidelines given for the amount of time to be spent on individual subjects except a specification that 'not more than 40% of the school week'[896] is to be spent on mainstream Leaving Certificate course content.[897] It is stated, however, that in transition year two-thirds of the week is devoted to general studies, for example, Irish, English, Maths, Religious Education, a European Language, Physical Education and Art.[898] The ASTI merely reiterates the rationale for, aims and objectives of the transition year as laid down in Department of Education guidelines but little if anything is said about teaching methods.

Table 5.33

Question 14. **Do you study poetry written by young people?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 119		**23**	**86**
Total number of students who did not answer question 14 = 10			
Total Percentages		**19%**	**72%**

[893] This was a small scale survey I undertook to determine how qualified and experienced English teachers perceived the teaching of poetry in second level schools. The questionnaire consisted of 28 questions and asked teachers about the methodologies they used, the difficulties they encountered, the need for inservice in poetry, Department of Education material about the teaching of poetry and their own experiences of poetry when they were in school. The questionnaires were distributed with the permission of the ATE seminar Co-ordinators and stamped addressed envelopes were included for posting the replies back to me. I distributed fifty questionnaires to the teachers present and nine were answered and returned.

[894] Wesley College English Department 2004-2005 The Year's Plan. p. 2.This programme was given to me by senior English teacher Niall MacMonagle.

[895] ASTI (1993) The Transition Year. Dublin. Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland.

[896] Ibid. p. 12.

[897] Ibid.

[898] Ibid.

Table 5.34

Question 15. Are you encouraged to write your own poetry in class?			
School	**Year**	**Yes**	**No**
Total questionnaires = 119		**51**	**62**
Total number of students who did not answer question 15 = 6			
Total Percentages		**43%**	**52%**

In questions fourteen and fifteen it is evident from the results that a majority of students are not encouraged to write their own poems. 72% said that they did not read poetry written by young people and this is consistent with the pattern from first to fourth year. It seems unusual that so little poetry written by young people is incorporated into the experience for transition years, considering that there is such a broad range of material and no prescriptive syllabus constraints on teachers. The researcher is not arguing that only poetry written by young people should be studied in transition year but it could be used if only as a means of reinforcing to students that young people can write poems that relate to their own lives. The ASTI guidelines[899] recommend that in transition year creative writing should be encouraged, 'students should write their own plays, poetry, the first chapter of their autobiographies.'[900] They suggest that the students' best creative writing be kept in a class journal for display at the end of the year.[901] However, across the entire curriculum there is very little mention of how poetry could be used as a learning tool, for example, in their Irish studies students are not encouraged to read or write poetry although debates, plays, traditional music, folklore, myths and legends are proposed for study.[902] There is no mention of the importance of studying poetry in history even though poems like those from the children held in Terezín may form an extremely important part of learning about childhood experiences during World War II. It is evident then that this practice conflicts with advice offered in the earlier literature chapters.

The National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, (NACCCE),[903] established as imperative that education provide opportunities for students to 'express their own

[899] ASTI (1993) The Transition Year. Dublin. Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland.

[900] Ibid. p. 14.
[901] Ibid.
[902] Ibid. p. 15.
[903] National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999) All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education. Suffolk. Department for Education and Employment.

ideas, values and feelings.'[904] They argued that writing poetry was one of the many ways in which schools could enable students to discuss and express their feelings and emotions given that this process 'is not simply one of discharging feelings – though it may involve that – but of giving them form and meaning.'[905] The importance of reading and writing poetry in the classroom is further evinced by the NACCCE's belief that creative achievement is not dependent on a single individual act but is correlated to the 'ideas and achievements of other people.'[906] Based on these precepts reading and writing poetry could be used in the classroom as a means of enhancing students' understanding of their problem solving skills and redirect them away from academic performance based purely on 'propositional knowledge and linear forms of reasoning.'[907]

The value of students writing poetry is evident in specific projects like the one carried out by Green Candle Dance Company in Newham. Their work with a year 6 class on improvised dance about the River Thames led to the students writing poems about the river which were used in the dance, 'One of the poems was chosen as the stimulus for creating duets, which were performed simultaneously by the whole class to the accompaniment of their teacher speaking the poem.' In this instance the students far exceeded the dance company's expectations and their creative intelligence led to 'the cross-fertilisation of ideas between artforms and the way both forms, in this case poetry and dance, can be enhanced by the process and, in addition, produce visible learning in other subjects such as English and Geography.' Based on the evidence provided from respondents in this study, such valuable experiences are not being provided to them.

Table 5.35

Question 17. Do you read poetry outside of school?			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 119		**29**	**84**
Total number of students who did not answer question 17 = 6			
Total Percentages		**24%**	**71%**

[904] Ibid. p. 33.
[905] Ibid.
[906] Ibid. p. 38.
[907] Ibid. p. 35.

Table 5.36

Question 18. Have you ever bought a poetry book to read in your leisure time?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 119		22	93
Total number of students who did not answer question 18 = 4			
Total Percentages		19%	78%

The results above follow the pattern established at Junior Cycle where the percentage of students from first to third year who do not read poetry outside of school or buy poetry books to read in their leisure time is over seventy percent. In 1986 the Arts Council in Britain published *A Policy Statement For Literature*[908] which stated that literature cannot exist in splendid isolation,[909] that in fact, it needed 'the engagement of an informed readership if it is to have any life,'[910] and of course the development of this readership is an 'educational task.'[911] The results of the Arts Councils project and of those discussed in the Ofsted *Poetry in Schools Survey* 2007[912] show that poetry as it is taught in schools, particularly at second level, is not about exploring a 'climate of thought and knowledge'[913] but of passing exams. Violet M. Hughes[914] suggests that the educational emphasis placed on literature is actually seen as being opposed to 'enjoyment, pleasure or leisure'[915] and perhaps this is why students don't want to engage with poetry outside of school, as also reflected in the data from this study.

Table 5.37

Question 19. Which sentence best describes the way you feel about poetry? Please tick one box only.						
		Poetry is important	Poetry helps you to develop as a human being	Poetry is difficult	Poetry has no value	Poetry is boring
Total questionnaires = 119		23	41	17	5	13
Total number of students who did not answer question 19 = 20						
Percentages		19%	35%	14%	4%	11%

[908] Arts Council (1986) A Consultative Document: A Policy Statement For Literature. London. Arts Council of Great Britain.
[909] Ibid. p. 10. Appendix A.
[910] Ibid.
[911] Ibid.
[912] Ofsted (2007) Poetry in Schools: A Survey of Practice, 2006/07. London. www.ofsted.gov.uk
[913] Arts Council (1986) A Consultative Document: A Policy Statement For Literature. London. Arts Council of Great Britain. p. 10. Appendix A.
[914] Hughes, Violet M. (1991) Literature Belongs To Everyone: A report on widening access to literature. London. Arts Council of Great Britain.
[915] Ibid. p. 93.

There is obvious contention in the results of question nineteen between what students believe is the intrinsic value of poetry and how that value manifests itself beyond the classroom and into their everyday lives.

Table 5.38

Question 20. **Is your attitude towards poetry as a result of the way it is taught in class?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 119		**57**	**53**
Total number of students who did not answer question 20 = 9			
Total Percentages		**48%**	**45%**

48% of transition years say that their attitude towards poetry is derived from the way it is taught in class. From reading the comments of those who said no, it is obvious that students' attitudes towards poetry are influenced by a number of factors including the way it is read by the teacher, being forced to learn it for exams, having to learn a specific interpretation rather than their own opinion, 'I like to think about it and use my imagination and give my own views in my head. I hate the set views because poetry isn't about that' (No. 06/04 The Kings Hospital 4K), 'When I have to learn a poem for an exam I really try my hardest but if we're just looking at a poem for no reason I find it quite time consuming and boring' (No. 08/04 The Kings Hospital 4K). The students' reasons as cited in their comments for not liking poetry appear valid, and they include, rote learning, line by line dissection of the poem looking for elusive meanings and monotone readings, 'For most teachers (and for all too many students) the poem has become a sideshow item, a species of literary anomaly that one walks hurriedly past with eyes half turned away.'[916] Zavatsky[917] suggests that rather than having poetry force-fed to them students should be allowed to 'discover' a poem and perhaps in that way they will come to appreciate its value 'instead of facing the poem as a living document of human experience ... the "symbols" of the poem are served up for memorization and regurgitation – for the final exam.'[918] This corresponds to the data provided by not just fourth year students but also Junior Cycle students.

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[916] Zavatsky, Bill (1976, 1999) Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Poetry. The Academy of American Poets. p. 1. http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/16062
Accessed 02/12/2005

[917] Ibid.

[918] Ibid. p. 5.

Based on the statistical results of question twenty and on students' comments, it is reasonable to suggest that poetry will not be pursued recreationally, therapeutically or even academically after they have left school and as has been argued in the review of literature, they will be missing out on a subject that can offer them so much.

5.4.2 Fifth year

Table 5.39

Question 5. Did you study a lot of poetry in primary school?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 72		18	53
Total number of students who did not answer question 5 = 1			
Percentages		25%	74%

The trend established for all previous year groups continues and appears at odds with Benton's[919] 1986 survey of 175 teachers in first and second level schools, which found that 47% of those questioned said that reading and discussing poetry was very important. However the findings from this research show that in a lot of Irish schools teachers are not reading or discussing a lot of poetry with students at primary level. Academics from all over Europe who attended the Durham Poetry Symposium in 1992 were concerned that poetry is a frequently neglected aspect of the language curriculum.[920] Willem de Moor[921] felt that teachers and students in the Netherlands and Britain were more interested in reading fiction than poetry,[922] which, based on the results of this research, could similarly apply.

Table 5.40

Question 6. Did you enjoy learning poetry in primary school?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 72		38	30
Total number of students who did not answer question 6 = 4			
Percentages		53%	42%

[919] Benton, P (1986) Pupil, Teacher, Poem. London. Hodder and Stoughton.
[920] Thompson, Linda ed. (1996) The Teaching of Poetry: European Perspectives. London. Cassell. p. xi.
[921] De Moor, Willem (1992) Teaching of Poetry in the Netherlands since 1968. pp. 63 – 76. In Thompson, Linda ed. (1996) The Teaching of Poetry: European Perspectives. London. Cassell.
[922] Ibid. p. 64.

The trend established at Junior Cert continues, but it is necessary to take into account that the 53% of students who said that they did enjoy learning poetry in primary school may not be wholly representative of a sustained programme of poetry study but merely reflect the study of poems as a deviation away from main stream English lessons, as the comments would suggest, for example, 'Yes, I did enjoy it because they would be light-hearted and fun. It was always just the poem not the ins and outs of it' (No. 06/05 Holy Faith Secondary School, Clontarf, 5.3), 'We didn't do a lot of poetry but I really enjoyed the few that we did because we weren't studying them in great detail' (No. 14/05 Holy Faith Secondary School, Clontarf, 5.3), 'In primary school English always meant quite a bit of writing, however, when we did poetry it was a chance to get a break from this and relax' (No. 10/04 Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, 5C), 'Because we didn't do a lot of poetry, when we did do it we were keen' (No. 04/04 Sligo Grammar School), 'It was hard work but fun I always was really happy with myself when I could recite my poems fully' (No. 02/04 St Andrew's College, Blackrock), 'I can't remember doing a lot of poetry in primary school, we didn't study it a lot, but I enjoyed writing it' (No. 03/04 St Andrew's College, Blackrock), 'I found it different than the normal essay writing and comprehensions' (No. 06/04 St Andrew's College, Blackrock), 'We didn't learn a lot but I really enjoyed the poems that we did learn' (No. 04/04 St Joseph's College, Lucan 5A).

O'Neill[923] said she realised in the 1990s through her association with the New Zealand Association of Teachers of English, the Speech Communication Association and the Society of Teachers of Speech and Drama in the UK that there had been a shift in New Zealand's pedagogy from poetry being 'preferred as part of the English programme to poetry becoming peripheral.'[924] From the evidence of this research it is possible to claim that O'Neill's findings are comparable with the state of poetry teaching in Irish schools today and this is clearly evident in the students' comments above which attest to the fact that poetry as they experienced it in primary school was not central to the English syllabus. From analysing many published documents and research studies on the study of poetry and comparing students' reported experiences of poetry at primary level, it appears that there may be an issue with the way literature is dealt with in teacher education programmes. The teacher questionnaires which will

[923] O'Neill, Helen Josephine (2006) PhD thesis Once Preferred, Now Peripheral: the Place of Poetry in the Teaching of English in the New Zealand Curriculum for year 9, 10 and 11 students. The University of Canterbury Christchurch, New Zealand.
[924] Ibid. p. 17.

be discussed in the next chapter reveal that very little time is spent on preparing or equipping teachers to teach poetry, and apart from the Primary School Curriculum in English and the English Teacher Guidelines there is no other current Department material available on the teaching of poetry, and teachers are not cognisant of current research about children's acuity of poetic form or genre which could, if they were made aware of it, arguably enable them to teach poetry more effectively,

'Most English department documents have little to say about the teaching of poetry. It is recognized in many as being a good thing ... but the resources and methods for that encouragement are not detailed. Some schools see the teaching of poetry as an apparently straightforward task of escorting pupils through a formidable barrier of technical terms – 'In this year metaphor, simile, onomatopoeia, assonance, alliteration, synecdoche and oxymoron will be taught' – and in one school there they were, defined, copied out, learnt for tests, with not a single reference to a complete poem.'[925]

Table 5.41

Question 11. **Would you say that your experience of poetry in secondary school is better than primary school?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 72		**60**	**12**
Total number of students who did not answer question 11 = 0			
Percentages		**83%**	**17%**

The findings here are in line with those for second, third and transition year students, but there is a significant margin between the 83% of fifth years and the 33% of first years who said that their experience of poetry at second level is better than primary school. However, the differentiation may be explained by the short period of time that the first years were attending secondary school when they filled in the questionnaire. Fifth years report that their experience of poetry is better at second level for a number of reasons, for example, because it is an exam subject they think it has more validity: 'Because poetry is studied in English for exams so the learning of poems is more vital in secondary' (No. 04/05 Holy Faith Secondary School, 5.3). Students also believe that poetry is taken more seriously, is explained in more detail, is more complex and therefore lends itself more easily to debate, is deeper and more varied. Some students felt that teachers cared more about poetry at second level and that this enhanced their enjoyment of it 'Better facilities

[925] Department of Education and Science (1987) Teaching Poetry in the Secondary School An HMI View. London. Her Majesty's Stationery Office. p. 5.

and teachers care more' (No. 03/04 Old Bawn Community School, 5C); the analysis of poetry also featured as almost an imperative aspect of its study and their understanding of it 'Because we break the poems up and understand them' (No. 16/04 Old Bawn Community School, 5C). These comments appear consistently throughout the full data set. It is not unusual that students would equate their enjoyment of poetry with its analysis, after all, that is the methodology they have been exposed to since their Junior Certificate. Thompson's[926] research, however tentatively construed, shows that children as young as 6 years of age are able 'to demonstrate an intuitive knowledge of poetic genre and to distinguish between texts that are poems and those which are not.'[927] She argues that children by the age of 10 are able 'to demonstrate the ability to talk about poetic genre and to display a more developed construct of the genre.'[928] Perhaps this sophisticated thinking constitutes part of the difficulty that teachers experience at primary level to make poetry interesting, challenging and relevant to their students, they are simply not equipped with an adequate pedagogy in this regard.

Table 5.42

Question 12 **How many times do you study poetry during the year?**					
		Many	**Some**	**A Few**	**Once a year**
Total questionnaires = 72		**38**	**15**	**17**	**2**
Total number of students who did not answer question 12 = 0					
Percentages		**53%**	**21%**	**24%**	**3%**

Question twelve shows that the majority of fifth years study poetry many times during the year. From the researcher's experience this is credible since there are eight poets prescribed for the Leaving Certificate exam at higher level and given the number of poems per poet and the length of some of the poems it is necessary to study poetry as many times as possible during the year. It is possible that some teachers may do blocks of work with their students so the 3% who study poetry once a year may actually study particular poems over a specific number of days or weeks. By the time students get to fifth year poetry is a mandatory part of the English course, they have to learn it because at higher level it constitutes 70 marks which is 35% of the total marks available on Paper II and 17.5% of the total marks available for the entire exam.

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[926] Thompson, Linda (1996) Threes and Stuff: Young Children's Constructs of Poetry. pp. 1 – 11. In Thompson, Linda ed. (1996) The Teaching of Poetry: European Perspectives. London. Cassell.
[927] Ibid. p. 10.
[928] Ibid.

Table 5.43

Question 14. Do you study poetry written by young people?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 72		12	60
Total number of students who did not answer question 14 = 0			
Total Percentages		17%	83%

Table 5.44

Question 15. Are you encouraged to write your own poetry in class?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 72		18	53
Total number of students who did not answer question 15 = 1			
Total Percentages		25%	74%

Questions fourteen and fifteen show that very high percentages of students do not read poetry written by young people nor are they encouraged to write their own poetry in class. Given the fixed nature of the Leaving Certificate literature paper, for example, at higher level students must study a Shakespeare play, they must study comparative texts and they are prescribed eight poets, it is highly unlikely that there would be tolerance on the students behalf to experiment with young writers or to write their own poems. From the researcher's experience by the time the five categories of language, comprehending, composing, Shakespeare, the three components of the comparative study, prescribed poetry, past exam questions and sample answers are explored there is barely enough time to cover all the requirements of the exam never mind the chance to write poetry or investigate young contemporary poets. The only place where such exploration might be slotted in is the unseen poetry section but since this is worth only 20 marks and can be studied from the past exam papers there is little incentive to do more than what is absolutely essential. In light of these issues it appears that exam focused study of literature is counterproductive to teaching for creativity as recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education.[929] This report specified that teaching 'has to promote the skills and attitudes appropriate to the encouragement of lifelong learning'[930] but by neglecting or ousting the reading and writing of poetry from the curriculum how can students possibly achieve autonomy in their learning or the flexibility to challenge 'the assumptions and

[929] National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999) All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education. Suffolk. Department for Education and Employment.
[930] Ibid. p. 93.

preconceptions of the self.'[931] The 1987 report on the teaching of poetry in secondary school[932] highlighted its concern that in some schools the study of language and literature was misleading for students since it suggested that literature is a select activity practiced by a few established writers but not really linked with the uses of language made by students in their ordinary everyday situations.[933] If this pervasive practice is not dealt with then students will not 'see literature as part of the universal uses of language'[934] and that 'in the shaping and making of their insights to be communicated, it is important that pupils perceive that whenever they write they are sharing the medium with those whom they may regard as writers.'[935]

Table 5.45

Question 17. **Do you read poetry outside of school?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 72		**14**	**58**
Total number of students who did not answer question 17 = 0			
Total Percentages		**19%**	**81%**

Table 5.46

Question 18. **Have you ever bought a poetry book to read in your leisure time?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 72		**17**	**55**
Total number of students who did not answer question 18 = 0			
Total Percentages		**24%**	**76%**

The data here is in line with the findings for first, second, third and transition year students. The fact that students don't read poetry outside of school is not necessarily reflective of their inability to comprehend or access it. Kaye Webb's anthology entitled *I Like This Poem* was a collection of 'best-loved poems chosen by children for other children.' The anthology was divided according to the age of the children making the selections, their comments about the poems show a sophisticated level of articulation, insight, cognitive understanding and emotional sensibility. The selections chosen by the older students range from John Keats, Wilfred Owen, Robert

[931] Ibid. p. 92.
[932] Department of Education and Science (1987) Teaching Poetry in the Secondary School An HMI View. London. Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
[933] Ibid. p. 2.
[934] Ibid. p. 3.
[935] Ibid.

Browning, the Good News Bible, Percy Bysshe Shelly, Okamoto Jun and William Blake. Several comments about the poems show a level of engagement that is hard to believe exists in adolescents, for example, Ballgobin Rehoutee's reasons for selecting William Blake's *Reeds of Innocence*,

'When I first read it, I at once thought of my childhood. I remembered how we played (i.e. my sister and brother). At that time, we were innocent children as we did not even know one problem that existed. Today, when you think of these days, it is really sad. All that we did is not to be found in a dream nowadays.'[936]

Rehoutee captures the essence of Blake's poem especially the contention that exists between the natural state of childhood, which is happiness and innocence, and the world of experience, which is depicted as one of sorrow and suffering; these opposing states are identified by Blake scholars as 'contrary states.'[937] Rehoutee picks up on this instinctively by contrasting his memories of innocent childhood experiences with his more experienced adolescent perspective of the world, which is obviously more complicated. Penelope Howard selected John Keats' *To Autumn* and her articulation of the reasons for her choice is similarly very impressive,

'... it sums up all the best things about my favourite time of the year. As I read I can almost feel in my eyes the warmth of the weakening, 'maturing sun' and my mouth begins to water as I think of the honey from bees.
The poem also gives me a sense of nostalgia, as it evokes memories of growing up in the country. I remember the haze of warm, chaff-moted air, turbulent in the wake of a combine harvester. I feel a heaviness in my head when I think of the still, burdening air lining streams, as Autumn keeps 'steady thy laden head across a brook', especially in evenings, when 'in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn Among the river sallows ...' I hear my mother calling at the back of my mind, for me to come in for bedtime.'[938]

Both Howard and Rehoutee show that those in senior cycle can recommend poetry to other students and discuss its effect on their emotional and intellectual development.

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[936] Webb, Kaye ed. (1979) I Like This Poem: A collection of best-loved poems chosen by children for other children. London. Puffin Books. p. 181.
[937] Abrams, M. H. (1979) The Norton Anthology of English Literature. Fourth Edition. Vol. II. New York and London. W. W. Norton & Company Inc. p. 31.
[938] Webb, Kaye ed. (1979) I Like This Poem: A collection of best-loved poems chosen by children for other children. London. Puffin Books. p. 175.

Table 5.47

Question 19. Which sentence best describes the way you feel about poetry? Please tick one box only.						
		Poetry is important	Poetry helps you to develop as a human being	Poetry is difficult	Poetry has no value	Poetry is boring
Total questionnaires = 72		8	26	19	6	7
Total number of students who did not answer question 19 = 6						
Percentages		11%	36%	26%	8%	10%

Question nineteen shows that while 36% of fifth years think poetry helps you to develop as a human being, only 11% think it is important and 8% believe that it has no value. There is a marginal decrease in the number of fifth years in comparison with the number of first years who think that poetry is important and an increase in the numbers from first to fifth year who believe that poetry has no value. It is evident from the results that the decrease in the number of fifth years who think that poetry is important is significant because it falls from 14% in second year, 17% in third year and 19% in transition year. The most significant fall occurs in the space of one academic year between transition year and fifth year so it appears that poetry loses its importance for students most markedly when they enter the Leaving Certificate cycle. It is conceivable to argue that if the percentage of senior cycle students who think that poetry is important continues to dwindle, the number of young adults who will continue to read it outside of school or regard as it as having any place in their lives will reduce further. If this is true then the rich and complex diversity of human culture and perception could be seriously affected,

'How we see events is deeply affected by the ideas and values we bring to them. History is marked by the often profound changes in consciousness, in ways of seeing the world, which came about through the constant interaction of ideas and events: between science, religion, morality, politics and the arts, and between tradition and innovation.'[939]

The data across all year groups consistently presents a favourable response to students' perception of the value of poetry in human development. However, it also paints a rather negative picture of the extent and nature of students' engagement with poetry, particularly at primary level. While at second level, there appears to be considerable attention on exploring the

[939] National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999) All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture & Education. Suffolk. Department for Education and Employment. p. 52.

detail of a poem, albeit often within a teacher-led discussion; the approaches at primary school level reflect a somewhat glib and superficial engagement, which by default rests on the experience as being more 'fun' than meaningful. In contrast, in his discussion about imagination in *Myth and Education* Ted Hughes[940] talked about the importance of the 'inner world'[941] and it is the contention of this thesis that poetry should be taught from a very early age as a means of giving the 'inner world' of students viability because 'Our real selves lie down there. Down there, mixed up among all the madness, is everything that once made life worth living. All the lost awareness and powers and allegiances of our biological and spiritual being.'[942] However, the data would suggest that very little of such engagement with poetry is evident in the experiences of respondents.

Table 5.48

Question 20. **Is your attitude towards poetry as a result of the way it is taught in class?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 72		**36**	**33**
Total number of students who did not answer question 20 = 3			
Total Percentages		**50%**	**46%**

50% of fifth years said that their attitude towards poetry was as a result of the way it was taught to them in class and it is obvious that the impact of poor teaching has left a lasting impression on these students as revealed in their comments. For example, 'I didn't like poetry before because my teacher for Junior Cert didn't explain poetry very well but I think it is a bit better because my teacher explains' (No. 04/04 St Joseph's College, Lucan, 5A), 'In other schools they almost force you to enjoy poetry, you are not allowed to dislike it so by now I am used to seeing and appreciating the good in each poem' (No. 06/04 St Andrew's College, Blackrock), 'We get little desire or drive to truly delve into the area of poetry, a different way has to be made to spark interest' (No. 15/04 Sligo Grammar School), 'As we all listen to the teachers' opinions and views' (No. 07/04 Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, 5C), 'As I said, a poem is always followed by a bunch of questions most of which are all difficult, badly structured and very hard to understand' (No. 10/04 Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, 5C), 'The way we are taught

[940] Hughes, Ted (1976) Myth and Education. pp. 3 – 18. In Fox, Geoff (1995) Celebrating Children's Literature in Education. London. Hodder & Stoughton.
[941] Ibid. p. 10.
[942] Ibid. p. 15.

in class would have an affect on the way you view poetry and the sort of poetry you read' (No. 01/05 Holy Faith Secondary School, Clontarf 5.3), 'I think I would prefer if the teachers explained the poems more so I would understand it and like it' (No. 03/05 Holy Faith Secondary School, Clontarf 5.3), 'Because you go over the poem so much it looses its meaning' (No. 07/05 Holy Faith Secondary School, Clontarf 5.3), 'I never felt the class was involved enough, the teacher would analyse the poem and then the students would answer some questions for homework' (No. 10/05 Holy Faith Secondary School, Clontarf 5.3).

As with the findings for the other year groups, there is evidence in the students' comments who said that their attitude towards poetry was not as a result of the way it was taught to them in class, which actually shows definite attitudinal influences based on the teaching they received. This is evident in the following comments, 'Poetry as taught in the classroom is boring and of no value to me whatsoever' (No. 05/04 St Joseph's College, Lucan, 5A), 'I feel poetry is taught the same in every school as you need the best points for your Leaving Cert' (No. 01/04 St Andrew's College, Blackrock), 'In class we need the poems we study we mightn't always enjoy them' (No. 01/04 Sligo Grammar School), 'Because in the class it's taught as we need it, not to enjoy it and understand it' (No. 02/04 Sligo Grammar School). These comments show a similar connection to pedagogy, and that its value is measurable only in so far as it is needed for examination purposes. According to the Resource Materials for Teaching Language[943] comprehending 'is a dialogic act, not an act of receiving a pre-packaged meaning,'[944] it could be argued from the evidence of the students' comments that teachers do not make provision for this in their methods of teaching poetry. The findings of this research show that students' perceptions of poetry, in almost all cases, is the product of the way in which it is taught to them; even when students say that they are indifferent to poetry they are reflecting the effects of an inadequate pedagogy. Student 13/05's (Holy Faith Secondary School) comment 'If the teacher drags a poem out and tells all her meanings for each line it can make poetry very boring', is relevant to what the poet, Paula Meehan, argues when she says that we are 'in danger of elevating meaning to a fetishistic level at the expense of the real experience of poetry, a very physical experience.'[945]

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[943] Mullins, Tom ed. (1999) Resource Materials for Teaching Language: Leaving Certificate English Syllabus. Dublin. Department of Education and Science.
[944] Ibid. p. 9.
[945] Slitting the Songbird's Throat to See What Makes It Sing. Mullins, Tom ed. (1999) Resource Materials for Teaching Language: Leaving Certificate English Syllabus. Dublin. Department of Education and Science. p. 176.

5.4.3 Sixth year

Table 5.49

Question 5. Did you study a lot of poetry in primary school?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 33		6	26
Total number of students who did not answer question 5 = 1			
Percentages		18%	79%

The comparability of these findings with the results of first, second, third, transition years and fifth years is evident; in each year group an average of 68% of students did not study a lot of poetry in primary school. The significance of these surprising findings relate to substantial evidence in the literature that points to the importance of studying poetry at a young age with enthusiastic and skillful teachers. In 1972 Marie Peel[946] stated that when poetry is discovered at school it is almost always due to an individual teacher's love of it[947] and according to recent research like the Ofsted Report 2007,[948] this still seems to be the case. The report noted that 'Where inspectors judged provision for poetry to be outstanding, it nearly always reflected very good leadership,'[949] and called for 'good quality subject leaders in primary schools, where many non-specialists lack confidence in and knowledge of poetry.'[950] Effective leadership in the teaching of poetry at primary level is identified as showing dedication, innovation and passion for poetry in the individual teacher and a desire to help other teachers in the school to develop these qualities. Similarly, many of the comments provided in this study, attribute enjoyment and interest in poetry to the influence of a passionate teacher, however, the findings reveal that the vast majority of references by respondents to passionate and effective teachers relate to second level teachers rather than those in the primary school sector. This poses a challenge to policy makers and those in teacher education in Ireland to begin examining the problems at primary rather than secondary level.

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[946] Peel, Marie (1972) Seeing To The Heart: English and Imagination in the Junior School. London. Chatto & Windus.
[947] Ibid. p. 28.
[948] Ofsted (2007) Poetry in Schools: A survey of practice. London. www.ofsted.gov.uk
[949] Ibid. p.16.
[950] Ibid.

Table 5.50

Question 6. Did you enjoy learning poetry in primary school?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 33		12	16
Total number of students who did not answer question 6 = 5			
Percentages		36%	49%

Compared with the other year groups sixth years recorded the lowest percentage of students who enjoyed poetry in primary school. This could be explained by the fact that they are further removed from the experience than the other respondents, or also by the claim that they have been inducted into the approach at second level which contrasts starkly with that at first level, as the evidence in this study would suggest. It could have been expected that final year students may look back more nostalgically and romantically at their experiences at primary school level when poetry is reported by other respondents as having been 'fun' and light-weight, but in contrast, they rate it lowest and this might suggest a degree of dissatisfaction with the approaches adopted to teaching it, and a greater degree of satisfaction with the teaching methods experienced at second level. Again, some of the reasons cited by respondents for enjoying poetry are not related to good teaching practice but rather to the use of poetry as a deviation from normal English lessons, for example, 'The poems were funny and they rhymed so they were easy to remember' (No. 01/04 Grammar School Sligo), 'They were really all small poems e.g. Macavity the Mystery Cat, but we used to have a competition at the end of the week for little prizes – that's what made it fun' (No. 08/04 Grammar School Sligo), 'I cannot remember many poems from primary school' (No. 02/04 Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, 6A), 'Some of the poems were funny but I remember I had to write the longest poem out for punishment work' (No. 05/04 Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, 6A), 'We read short, simple, rhyming poetry and didn't look for the 'hidden meaning' we just enjoyed the poem' (No. 07/04 Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, 6A). These comments show that the students who report that they did enjoy poetry actually had very little exposure to it and answering yes to the question when very little can be remembered by the students is certainly not a satisfactory recommendation of primary school poetry. The most worrying comment showed that poetry was actually used as a punishment exercise for one student which completely dissipates its educative value and possibly points to the teacher's lack of informed understanding about the function of poetry.

The comments of those who said they did not enjoy learning poetry in primary school shows that there are repeated patterns of devaluing it as a learning tool by rote learning, infrequent use, inadequate exploration and lack of creative strategies, for example, 'Because we had to learn 'The Listeners' word for word' (No. 05/04 Sligo Grammar School, Sligo), 'The teacher made us learn poems off by heart and they were very long and boring' (No. 06/04 Sligo Grammar School, Sligo), 'We didn't do much poetry in primary school' (No. 14/04 Sligo Grammar School, Sligo), 'I was at a young age and had little interest in such things as poetry' (No. 03/04 Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, 6A), 'We didn't study much, but when we did it wasn't very enjoyable' No. 06/04 Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, 6A). Student 03/04 who commented that they were at a young age and had little interest in poetry is indicative of a potentially failed English programme and is contrary to the specifications of the 'pleasure principle' in the Teacher Guidelines[951] and the English curriculum[952] which stipulates in the strand unit reading: developing concepts of language and print that the child in the junior class should be enabled to,

- Listen to, enjoy and respond to stories, nursery rhymes, poems and songs
- Play with language to develop an awareness of sounds – language games, phoneme and morpheme sound relationships, nursery rhymes, chants, singing games, action songs and poems, a wide variety of rhythms
- Develop a sense of rhythm and rhyme – songs, nursery rhymes, jingles, clapping and dancing to syllabic rhythms.[953]

As previously mentioned in chapter three, if teachers are unsure of strategies or methodologies they could use to make poetry interesting for students, there are many resources available. However, the data presented in this study would suggest little evidence of the use of such resources, or of a range of teaching methods, particularly at primary school, but also at second level, where a dominance of teacher-led input appears to be equated with good practice according to the students' perspectives, as it prepares them for the exams. The lack of mention of any other teaching approaches than rote learning or the teacher telling students what the poem is about is worrying.

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[951] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) Primary School Curriculum: English Language Teacher Guidelines. Dublin. The Stationery Office. p. 69.
[952] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) Primary School Curriculum: English Language. Dublin. The Stationery Office.
[953] Ibid. p. 16.

Table 5.51

Question 11. Would you say that your experience of poetry in secondary school is better than primary school?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 33		25	8
Total number of students who did not answer question 11 = 0			
Percentages		76%	24%

In light of the findings for questions five and six it is not surprising that 76% of sixth years said that their experience of poetry in secondary school was better than in primary school. The reasons why they answered yes to this question appear to be as a consequence of several factors, most notably because they study more poetry at second level, they study it in more detail, they understand it better and they don't have to learn it off by heart. By sixth year it is evident from the students' comments that they have developed a more subtle appreciation of poetry which is reflective of their intellectual and emotional maturity, for example, 'I'm more mature and have a wider mind' (No. 03/04 Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, 6A), 'Poems are more detailed and over the years I have developed an appreciation for well written poems' (No. 04/04 Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, 6A), 'It's a lot of hard work but now I notice a lot of things in a different light' (No. 05/04 Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, 6A), 'You learn it at a deeper level and it's about people's life and personal experiences. You learn how someone's mind works' (No. 09/04 Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, 6A). Their comments would suggest that these sixth years have come to realise like Hayhoe[954] that poetry is not 'a fanciful, trivial activity'[955] because it is an 'invitation to explore and celebrate every aspect of existence by going beyond objectivity.'[956] The researcher is not suggesting that every Leaving Cert student appreciates the contentious issues or ethically driven dilemmas in the poetry of Michael Longley, Sylvia Plath or Gerard Manley Hopkins. However, there are times in class during general discussions when students realise that poets write about things that effect everyone, for example, issues relating to women, marriage, love, children, infidelity, depression, cruelty, death, disappointment, politics and so on. Eavan Boland[957] said that she 'found Yeats'[958] when she was

[954] Hayhoe, Mike (1988) Words large as apples. Great Britain. Cambridge University Press.
[955] Ibid. p. 4.
[956] Ibid.
[957] Finding Yeats. Irish Independent supplement W. B. Yeats a poet for everyone in conjunction with the National Library of Ireland. Wednesday 22 November 2007. p. 3.
[958] Ibid.

fifteen, in boarding school, 'disorientated and placeless'[959] because she had returned from New York; reading the Collected Poems of Yeats helped her to discover 'that a poem can be a place, as well as lines on a page. That it can actually make a home for a reader.'[960] Boland believes that what readers of poetry find 'is always a volatile mixture of knowledge and self-knowledge'[961] and from their comments it would appear in a tentative way, the sixth years who enjoy poetry are beginning to grapple with this volatile mixture.

The 24% of students who did not enjoy their experience of poetry at second level outline a variety of reasons which replicate some of the findings of the other year groups; the depth of analysis required for Leaving Cert poetry is off putting, disinterest in the themes of the poems, too many poems to be learnt for the exam. It is obvious from some of the comments that students are not necessarily able, willing or comfortable exploring content that deals with the emotions of the poet, perhaps because they don't want to feel exposed in front of their peer group or be forced to confront the darker aspects of their own psyche, 'In secondary school you can't just read a poem and enjoy it, you have to examine the feelings, emotions of the poet and look for hidden meanings ...' (No. 07/04 Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, 6A). Students' dislike of poetry could also be related to their inability to get beyond a literal definition of the content, a point highlighted in the Teacher Guidelines[962] and which they suggest can only be remedied by reading a poem many times, 'it is only by re-reading that the poem's more subtle patterns of language and therefore of meaning and experience are disclosed and assimilated.'[963] Based on the evidence, it is worth speculating whether a more varied approach to the teaching of poetry would elicit a more positive response.

Table 5.52

Question 12 **How many times do you study poetry during the year?**					
		Many	**Some**	**A Few**	**Once a year**
Total questionnaires = 33		**9**	**8**	**14**	**0**
Total number of students who did not answer question 12 = 2					
Percentages		**27%**	**24%**	**42%**	**0%**

[959] Ibid.
[960] Ibid.
[961] Ibid.
[962] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) Draft Guidelines for Teachers of English: Leaving Certificate English Syllabus. Dublin. Department of Education and Science.
[963] Ibid. p. 63.

The data provided here is in keeping with the nature of the Leaving Cert English Syllabus where poetry has a more focused study and very demanding aims,

'Students at Higher Level will be required to study a representative selection from the work of eight poets: a representative selection would seek to reflect the range of a poet's themes and interests and exhibit his/her characteristic style and viewpoint. Normally the study of at least six poems by each poet would be expected.'[964]

Typically the prescribed poets for study at Leaving Cert begins in fifth year because the quantity, complexity and length of some of the poems take considerable time to teach. Thus, the 42% of students who report that they study poetry only a few times a year may actually study all six poems by one poet at the same time, the amount of work accomplished in fifth year will also determine the number of times poetry is studied in sixth year.

Table 5.53

Question 14. **Do you study poetry written by young people?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 33		**0**	**32**
Total number of students who did not answer question 14 = 1			
Total Percentages		**0%**	**97%**

Table 5.54

Question 15. **Are you encouraged to write your own poetry in class?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 33		**6**	**26**
Total number of students who did not answer question 15 = 1			
Total Percentages		**18%**	**79%**

The results of question fourteen show that unless sixth years studied poetry written by young people in their leisure time, their opportunity to study it in class is highly unlikely given the prescriptive nature of the studied poetry section. It is possible that some teachers may use a variety of poetry written by poets of all ages for the unseen poetry section but there is no evidence to substantiate this, except anecdotally. In question fifteen 79% of sixth years said that they are not encouraged to write their own poetry in class and again this statistic is not unusual

[964] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) The Leaving Certificate English Syllabus (Higher Level and Ordinary Level). Dublin. The Stationery Office. p. 16.

given that writing their own poetry is not a prerequisite of the Leaving Certificate exam. In England the Ofsted Report[965] found that the poetry curriculum for eleven to fourteen year olds was rather haphazard because the national tests for this age group did not require students to read, respond to, or write their own poetry and teachers tended to side line poetry in favour of other areas more likely to appear on the exam paper.[966] By the time students get to GSCE and A level, like Leaving Certificate students, they are expected to deal with poems analytically and critically but are not given many opportunities to write poetry; teachers commented that 'The poetry element is overwhelming; there's too much poetry. Pupils groan, "Is this another poem?" It is difficult for us to present poetry in a positive light. The syllabus is putting pupils off,'[967] 'GCSE sucks a lot of the fun out of poetry,'[968] 'It's death by poetry. It becomes a treadmill up until Easter in Year 11.'[969] Just as Leaving Certificate students have little or no opportunity to read poems written by young writers or to write their own poetry, exam students in England face the same predicament and inspectors say the exam focus for teaching poetry 'has meant a sacrifice of real enjoyment and of writing poetry creatively.'[970] Notwithstanding all of the obstacles that militate against students having opportunities to read poems written by young people and to compose their own original verse, there are ways to circumvent them; for example, students could be encouraged to participate in poetry competitions like the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award, The Féile Filíochta International Poetry Competition, The National Poetry Competition of the Poetry Society UK which is open to non UK applicants or the Oxfam Poetry Competition. In some second level schools in England a pupil Poet Laureate has been established. The function of the Poet Laureate was to raise the profile of poetry in the school,

> 'She saw her role as not just to write poetry but to make a definite and positive contribution to the lives of other pupils. For instance, she wrote a poem about moving from primary to secondary school, aiming to show how pupils' anxieties are often resolved happily once they arrive at their secondary school. She has worked in a range of forms and styles to record and comment on school events such as the retirement of a long-standing teacher and parents' evenings. The poems she writes are displayed in the school and in the school newsletter. She also performs the poems in front of large audiences of pupils and parents.'[971]

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[965] Ofsted (2007) Poetry in Schools: A Survey of Practice, 2006/07. London. www.ofsted.gov.uk
[966] Ibid. p. 14.
[967] Ibid. p. 15.
[968] Ibid.
[969] Ibid.
[970] Ibid.
[971] Ibid.

Other schools have established lunchtime poetry sessions, organised Writer of the Month and invited writers in to work with students, set up poetry clubs, produced poetry anthologies, participated in the writer-in-school project or initiated the use of poetry in cross-curricular programmes. It is noteworthy that in the extensive additional comments provided by more than 700 students, there is no reference to any such activities or projects, and that apart from references to 'fun' poems at primary school level, the commentary is overwhelmingly negative in relation to their exploration and experiences of approaches to poetry, and extremely exam focused.

Table 5.55

Question 17. **Do you read poetry outside of school?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 33		**8**	**25**
Total number of students who did not answer question 17 = 0			
Total Percentages		**24%**	**76%**

Table 5.56

Question 18. **Have you ever bought a poetry book to read in your leisure time?**			
		Yes	**No**
Total questionnaires = 33		**2**	**31**
Total number of students who did not answer question 18 = 0			
Total Percentages		**6%**	**94%**

Questions seventeen and eighteen show that a very low percentage of sixth years read poetry outside of school or buy poetry books to read in their leisure time, and overall, these findings are convincing in that students from first to sixth year are not interested in exploring poetry for recreational purposes. Both third and sixth years, the exam classes, record the lowest percentage of students, just 6% respectively, who buy poetry books for leisure reading. These statistics constitute a very small proportion of the poetry market but as the evidence from publishers illustrates, young people of school going age do not tend to buy many, if any, poetry books. While sales of poetry books may be boosted by exposure in the media, for example, in films like *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Il Postino*, *Sylvia* or in documentaries like *Seamus Heaney: Out of the Marvellous* it is unlikely that the boost in sales is related to first or second level students. It is arguable that if teachers studied segments of these films with their students they might be more inclined to want to find out more about the poets and explore them on the internet, download

readings of their poetry or actually buy volumes of their work. In an interview in 2006 John Devitt[972] said that if teachers 'submit', completely surrender to the exam system it can do a lot of harm but if they aim higher the exams needn't kill the soul.[973] This very astute comment would appear to challenge teachers if they are to encourage their students to see that poetry is an entity in itself, not just an appendage of the exam system. The evidence would suggest that they must cultivate an environment where reading poetry for aesthetic pleasure, therapeutic value, meditative value, recreation and fun becomes the norm not the exception. Jude Collins,[974] course Director of the Post Graduate Certificate in Education in the University of Ulster believes that teachers must love literature and have an interest in reading and writing. However, Collins has noticed that some of the students on the course while not lacking enthusiasm for English are actually not as good in reading and writing as they should be, 'Some of them have all the qualities to become really good teachers – magnetism, energy, a passion for what they are doing – but their handling of the language is not as good as I would like it to be.'[975] Collins' response to Tory politician, David Cameron's policy proposal to introduce compulsory reading tests for six year olds, states that reading must be taught in such a way as to make it something that youngsters will want to continue doing for the rest of their lives

'... you need to surround pupils with reading materials they'll be interested in exploring. You also need to surround pupils with adults – parents as well as teachers – who indicate in all sorts of unspoken ways that this reading thing is a wonderful treat, a sure-fire way to escape from boring or unattractive surroundings, a great escape-tunnel. They'll indicate in a thousand ways that reading works in the other direction too: it provides a miraculous route not just out of life but into it as well. You discover through reading what being alive is all about, and what makes you the way you are, and how you are like and at the same time unlike other people and how complex and exhilarating other human beings and you yourself are.'[976]

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[972] In Memory of John Devitt excerpts from Dialogue originally broadcast on RTE, 2006. Teaching English Magazine. Co. Meath.Second Level Support Service. Spring 2008. pp. 3-4.
[973] Ibid. p. 3.
[974] Jude Collins interview with Kevin McDermott. Teaching English Magazine. 2008. pp.11 – 17.
[975] Ibid. p. 11.
[976] Reading Right article by Jude Collins reprinted from the Belfast Telegraph. Teaching English Magazine. Spring 2008. p. 19.

Table 5.57

Question 19. Which sentence best describes the way you feel about poetry? Please tick one box only.						
		Poetry is important	Poetry helps you to develop as a human being	Poetry is difficult	Poetry has no value	Poetry is boring
Total questionnaires = 33		3	9	2	7	7
Total number of students who did not answer question 19 = 5						
Percentages		9%	27%	6%	21%	21%

It is noteworthy that there is a significant decrease in the percentage of students at sixth year who believe poetry is important, with the biggest differentiation occurring between transition year and sixth year. This is a disappointing result and indicates that sixth years as young adults about to venture into the adult world appear to have very little understanding of the function of poetry in its own right, apart from its compulsory aspect in the exams and its potential to increase their points if they answer it well. There is also a decrease in the percentage of students who think that poetry helps you to develop as a human being, which is contrary to the results in the other year groups where the numbers did not fall below 30%. It is interesting that in third year, where students may be equally stressed about poetry as an exam question, 39% of them reported that poetry helped you to develop as a human being and 17% believed that it was important. There is an increase from first to sixth year in the number of students who believe that poetry has no value; and an obvious increase from fifth to sixth year in the number of students who think poetry has no value. The question to be asked here is what happens in the teaching of poetry from first to sixth year to disillusion students in this manner, and how can a divergence occur in the space of one year in the number of students who believe that poetry has no value? On the other hand only 6% of sixth years said that poetry was difficult which is a decrease in the number from fifth to sixth year. It is possible that the drop in the number of students who find poetry difficult in sixth year is due to the amount of prepared notes that some teachers give their students to help them study Leaving Cert poetry. This practice is essentially where students learn off points about each poet's work which is contrary to the value and function of poetry as discussed in chapters two and three, and constitutes, ironically, that element of rote learning decried by so many students in this study as one of the main reasons why they find poetry boring.

Table 5.58

Question 20. Is your attitude towards poetry as a result of the way it is taught in class?			
		Yes	No
Total questionnaires = 33		7	25
Total number of students who did not answer question 20 = 1			
Total Percentages		21%	76%

Question twenty, as in the results of the other year groups, presents certain inconsistencies in relation to the findings in other questions, which suggest that students' attitudes towards poetry are a result of the way it is taught to them in class. 76% of sixth years said that their attitude towards poetry is not a result of the way it is taught to them in class. Students' comments, however, reveal that although some of them answered no to this question their attitude may in fact be shaped by the way it is taught to them. Comments like, 'it's too hard', 'I don't understand it', 'it's not interesting', 'I see no value in it', 'I like it for my own reasons', 'I like it no matter what', reveal that students' attitudes are influenced by their experience of poetry in the classroom. The following statements indicate that these students despite answering no to question twenty are influenced by their experience of poetry in school, 'I don't think so, I just don't see the need to learn 50 poems for the sake of 1 exam' (No. 08/04 Sligo Grammar School), 'Poetry will not make an impact in my life now or later so I feel it is a waste of time' (No. 11/04 Sligo Grammar School), 'I just think it's too long and boring' (No. 12/04 Sligo Grammar School), 'I generally don't enjoy poetry' (No. 14/04Sligo Grammar School). Student 08/04 felt over burdened by the amount of poetry to be learnt for Leaving Certificate and this may reflect weaknesses in the NCCA's restructuring of the English Syllabus, but it could also indicate inadequate class discussion time on the poems, a lack of self directed research on the poems and a lack of ingenuity in the approach to teaching the material. Student 11/04 who stated that poetry will not make an impact either now or later in their life, is unlikely to have had positive encounters with poetry in the classroom. This comment could be interpreted as a poor reflection of almost twelve years of poetry teaching which this student has experienced from primary and second level, and this experience bears little or no relation to the aims and objectives for poetry teaching in the revised syllabi which have been presented in this thesis. Such comments also dissipate the almost eulogistic way in which academics ascribe merit in learning poetry, because it is evident that something has gone array between the intellectual arguments about the benefit of studying poetry and actual classroom practice. The results presented thus far in this thesis this

thesis would suggest that teacher education departments and colleges are not graduating teachers who can adequately teach poetry. The issue may be that the theoretical interface between student teachers and lecturers about strategies and methodological approaches are not assimilated for practical, and creative implementation. It could be argued that teachers must understand that 'Poetry is a vocation and a perception of value.'[977] They need to be good readers of poetry so that even heavily burdened exam students find value in reading poems, 'I am sure that poetry is one of the filters by which we can hear clearly the noises broadcast from other lives.'[978] Eavan Boland[979] believes that poetry is a superb, powerful and effective way to experience an experience, from her point of view as a poet, she writes not to express an experience but to experience it further[980] and in a way the reader is in the same position. Boland's point is further extended in Brendan Kennelly's article *What Poetry Does*.[981] He talks about giving expression to all kinds of voices, his own and the voices out of history and mythology because attentive listening to voices within us and outside of ourselves is a revealing experience, 'Listening to voices deepens and extends the self; it makes life rich and challenging; and it means that a poet's work is not limited by his or her mere ego.'[982]

5.5 Overview of combined results from first to sixth year

Having presented and discussed the results of the questionnaires year group by year group, the data will now be presented as a cohesive body so that an accurate overall picture may be formed of the attitude and perception of poetry among a randomly selected cohort of students in second level schools. In order to achieve this, cumulative totals for each question will be presented below. As has been noted earlier, there were no notable differences between age, gender, school type or geographical location of the schools across the full data set, apart from clear emphases emerging on preparation for the state examinations in third and sixth years.

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[977] Thomas McCarthy: Why I Write. Resource Materials for Teaching Language: Leaving Certificate English Syllabus published by National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 1999. p. 178.
[978] Ibid.
[979] Eavan Boland Why I am a Poet. Resource Materials for Teaching Language: Leaving Certificate English Syllabus published by National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 1999. pp. 180 – 183.
[980] Ibid. p. 180.
[981] Brendan Kennelly What Poetry Does. Resource Materials for Teaching Language: Leaving Certificate English Syllabus published by National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 1999. pp. 184 – 186.
[982] Ibid. p. 184.

- 70% of respondents in this study, across the entire second level system, indicated that they did not study a lot of poetry in primary school. This result is in keeping with the patterns emerging in each year group where a figure of at least 68% is recorded for each year group. This finding is of concern in view of the reports in the literature which testify to the value of positive experiences at primary school level as a key determinant in forming a productive and nurturing relationship with poetry for life. This emphasis from the literature is reflected in the Irish primary school syllabus in relation to the study of poetry at this level, but in these respondents' experiences, a majority did not report having such experiences. It is noteworthy in view of the fact that all of the respondents would have been in primary school when the revised primary school curriculum had been implemented (1999). These data are in keeping with the DES reports, and would call for a further review of the implementation of the guidelines in terms of content and teaching and learning approaches being employed. A contents analysis of almost 430 individual additional comments provided by respondents, who reported not enjoying poetry at primary school level, indicated a predominance of strictly limited teaching approaches involving notably rote learning and rote recitation of poetry, and extremely limited discussion about the poems.

- 46% of first to sixth years did not enjoy learning poetry in primary school. This is in keeping with the trend established in each year group. This finding is of concern in light of the reports in the literature which testify to the importance of positive engagement with poetry in the nurturing of the holistic development of children from a young age.

- 60% of respondents said that their experience of poetry was better in secondary school than in primary. This overall statistic is an accurate reflection of the findings in each year group (with the exception of first year at 33%) where the majority of students from second year to sixth year recorded 68%, 89%, 77%, 83% and 76% respectively who answered yes to this question. This finding is in keeping with the data from the two earlier questions, and would suggest that attitudes to poetry are reported more positively by students at second level, owing to a number of issues. Poetry is a regular timetabled aspect of their English studies, and the clear curriculum guidelines provide a degree of support, direction and structure to its study at second level. This, and the pedagogic

emphasis on exploring and discussing poetry is reported on by a majority of respondents, and could account for a more enjoyable interaction with poems, where their opinions are sought and they are more actively involved in the engagement. This is strongly reported in the literature in chapter 3 as being of key significance in fostering a positive relationship with poetry. While the general direction of consensus reported by students is positive, their individual comments reveal a striking lack of diversity in pedagogic approaches, with many teachers appearing not yet to engage in eliciting students' responses but favouring a more teacher-centered and didactic approach.

- 35% of students said that they were taught poetry a few times in the year, while 33% said that they were taught poetry sometimes during the year. Only 22% of students were taught poetry many times during the year and 5% were taught it only once during the year. This could be explained by the fact that teachers may devote specific periods of the academic year to studying poetry and thus there could be substantial periods of time when it is not being explored. It highlights a potential issue regarding the segmentation of the English syllabus and the lack of integration of text type and genres, and a lack of cross-fertilisation of ideas as mentioned positively in the literature, where poetry can provide valuable and relevant insights and challenges to the study of other text types and experiences. The potential of isolation and fragmentation of the various aspects of the English syllabus is problematic and could account for the failure of many student respondents in this survey to see the value of poetry in their lives, either within or beyond school, as valuable opportunities for enriching cross-fertilisation do not appear to be used.

- 67% of respondents do not study poetry written by young people across the second level system of education. This is a surprisingly high figure in view of the consistent recommendation in the literature pertaining to the value of studying poetry written by one's peers. The literature shows the potential relevance that poems may have to students' own lives, and also as a vehicle for allowing young people to express their own ideas and insights, challenges and issues. Creative self-expression is identified in the primary school and secondary school curricular documents, both for the study of English and as overall aims of the education system, as fundamental aspects of a holistic

education and as an entitlement of all young people in schools. The data in this study would appear to suggest that not all available pedagogic avenues are being fully exploited, nor does it seem, that available and valuable teaching and learning resources, such as the use of other young peoples' poetry, is being used as much as it could be.

- 46% of respondents reported that they are encouraged to write their own poetry in class. There are consistent recommendations in the literature and in the syllabi at both primary and second level pertaining to the importance of students writing their own poetry. Students encouraged from an early age to write their own poems in class and to read poems written by their peers would offer them the potential to de-mystify poetry as an obscure and difficult genre. A more hands on approach pedagogically is advocated almost unanimously in the literature in relation to the efficacy of teaching and learning strategies. From the data provided by students in this survey, over a number of years, there is room for improvement.

- 74% of students do not read poetry outside of school. This very high statistic reflects a disconnection from poetry among most students who see it only as a school based subject. This potentially removes them from the pleasure and value of engaging with poetry as a life long pursuit as reported in the literature earlier. It could also be indicative of a less than positive attitude to poetry as a personally rewarding experience, or a failure to recognize the presence of poetry in many aspects of their every day lives, such as music lyrics or advertising campaigns or as quotes in politicians and others' public speeches to exemplify or illustrate a point. Again, this finding could point towards a lack of exposure in the classroom to poetry and its application or role in society, where musical lyrics and other pedagogical approaches such as film and media may not be receiving the attention that they could potentially play in classrooms. The data provided by students' additional comments on this and other related questions was overwhelmingly silent on different approaches such as those cited in chapter 3 of this thesis, and reported a consistently limited diet of rote learning and teacher-informed and teacher-led discussions.

- 80% of students have never bought a poetry book to read in their leisure time and this statistic is not an unexpected outcome considering the previous finding. Only 19% of students questioned said that they had bought a poetry book to read in their leisure time and while this could be interpreted as being a reasonable number in view of the fact that students are generally reading less in this more visual and digitized age, it does reveal a disconnection among the majority of students with poetry outside of mandatory school time. In view of the sustaining and valuable educational role that is attributed to poetry in both chapters 2 and 3, the data would imply that this message is not being effectively communicated to, or experienced by students. If the case for its role has been sufficiently made in the literature, the challenge then is to explore how to encourage a more meaningful, active and enjoyable engagement with poetry, which could begin to improve some of the results in this study in a systematic and sequential manner. The issue of the content of poems, the teaching and learning methods employed, and the use of resources, which have been cited by respondents in their additional comments, may have a role to play here as well.

- 16% of students think that poetry is important, 33% think that it helps you to develop as a human being, 13% think that it is difficult, 8% think it has no value and 19% think that poetry is boring. These results indicate that a small majority of students think that poetry helps you to develop as a human being. There is, however, a differentiation between the number of students who think that poetry helps you to develop as a human being and those who think that poetry is important; the results also reveal that more students think that poetry is boring, than that poetry is important. The 13% of students who think that poetry is difficult is not an unexpected outcome considering that the technical aspects of poetry may present difficulties for some students. It is, however, a relatively low percentage considering that there are a higher percentage of students who think that poetry is boring, and could indicate that the more systematic approach adopted at second level assists in equipping students with the technical expertise to analyse and discuss poetry as is required quite often in exam situations. However, based on the data, it could also account for the negative perception of poetry being boring and of little value in their lives. This interpretation can be substantiated in the data through the content analysis of the additional comments, which alluded to the words boring, unimportant and of no value

in my life. These revealed an emphasis on teacher-centered methods, and may suggest a lack of balance between teaching approaches to foster technical awareness and competence and aesthetic appreciation, engagement and enjoyment in the classrooms of those surveyed. This would have implications for the development of policy and practice in this area, as the curricular guidelines are clear in the achievement of a balanced approach to the teaching of poetry but surprisingly silent on how to achieve this.

- 42% of students said that their attitude towards poetry was as a result of the way it is taught to them in class; 53% of students said that their attitude towards poetry was not as a result of the way it is taught to them in class. These statistics can only be analysed in conjunction with the students' additional written comments about their attitudes to poetry. Taken in isolation the statistics seem to suggest that a small majority of students' attitudes towards poetry is not as a result of the way it is taught to them in class, but having analysed their comments it is clear that this statistic is not an accurate reflection of how their attitudes appear to have been shaped. In fact, students' comments suggested that in most cases where classroom strategies failed or in spite of ineffective teaching, they tried to read and enjoy poetry on their own. It is noteworthy that many students are accepting of the exam focused approach in schools, and their comments reveal an appetite or desire for teacher-informed and teacher-led strategies in their study of poetry in order to be adequately prepared for state examinations. This becomes increasingly pertinent as students edge closer to senior cycle and sixth year. This appears to be a reflection of the education system in which students exist, and cannot be interpreted critically. Similarly, despite the evidence pointing towards a limited use of teaching and learning methods by teachers, it is understandable in the context of a strongly exam driven education system that teachers may be influenced by such demands. The issue of concern from the data is that a sizeable number of students who do not comment on the pressures of exams in relation to the study of poetry, are openly critical of their study and engagement with poetry, and do not appear to be being best served by an imbalanced pedagogical approach which empahsises technical expertise over aesthetic appreciation and creative, personally meaningful and challenging discursive approaches. Although the data is not explicit in this regard, a case could be made to suggest that the current

approaches may be adequate for exam oriented only students but not for other learners who report 'being turned off' and bored by poetry in their classrooms.

5.6 Concluding comments

The picture revealed about second level students' attitudes to and experience of the study of poetry is less than positive. There are possible disadvantages to society overall if its young members are not deriving the potential enjoyment and learning from the experience which the literature has demonstrated can accrue from the study of poetry, and which has sustained generations of human beings throughout the world for millennia. The particular areas of difficulty arising from the students' data appear to be:

- A lack of a sustained or organised programme of study at primary school level.
- A lack of appropriate teaching methods to inspire, challenge and engage young learners through the study of poetry, including little emphasis on reading and writing poetry effectively and for their own enjoyment and education.

As this study is centrally concerned with the role and value of poetry in education, as perceived by students and teachers, the next chapter will present and discuss the findings of a primary school teachers' survey aimed to elicit the nature and extent of their preparation in teacher education colleges to teach poetry, and also their attitudes to poetry in the classroom and in life.

Chapter Six
Results and analysis of the teacher surveys

6.1 Introduction

'What a teacher must never do is apologise for poetry or attempt to engage the sympathies and interest of the children by offering them inferior but instantly 'accessible' verse on the grounds that the third-rate can be used as stepping stones towards the excellent.'[983]

As mentioned in chapter 4, the initial research plan was to explore the attitudes and experiences of second level students and teachers but the baseline assessment data indicated that respondents held strong views about the study of poetry from their experiences at primary school level. It was intended to offer a series of intensive workshops to second level teachers in order to explore whether, and to what extent, such targeted interventions predominantly focused on exploring different teaching and learning methods and resources would impact upon their teaching of poetry and its subsequent effect, if any, on their students in schools. Having identified early on in the research from the raw analysis of the second level students' survey, that the root of the problem existed at primary school, it was decided to focus instead on devising and implementing a creative strategies course for primary school teachers in order to assess whether exposure to a wide range of poetry resources and teaching and learning strategies, could impact positively on the participating teachers and their pupils in schools.

The aim of this chapter is to evaluate and discuss the results of the data collated from the primary school teachers' surveys. The main function of the data is to provide a general picture of the teachers' attitudes towards poetry and their experience of teaching it to primary level pupils.

This data has been collated from four different groups of recently qualified primary school teachers over a four year period from 2004 to 2008. The use of a longitudinal element in the research design was included in order to be able to identify any patterns or trends in a reliable and consistent manner. The use of a four year research period facilitated a valuable opportunity to gather data from practitioners on an annual basis and eliminate any individual biases or differences that may occur in one cohort. The teachers represent a disparate group of educators

[983] Scannell, Vernon (1987) Poetry For Children. Children's Literature in Education No. 67. In Fox, Geoff (1995) Celebrating Children's Liertature in Education. London. Hodder & Stoughton. p. 95.

from all over the country with a range of experience of teaching poetry in a variety of schools and to a diverse range of students. The teacher questionnaires therefore provide a reasonably representative sample.

Since the questionnaires were very long and contained a lot of open-ended questions to elicit the widest possible range of comments from participants, it was necessary to select the most important and germane questions for analysis here. The data is presented in tabular format in response to the key closed questions, notably questions 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 26, 27, 30, 33, 34. These questions were specifically chosen for analysis because they are pertinent to the premise of this thesis. The questions selected are in no way representative of any personal bias of the researcher nor were they chosen in an attempt to predict, pre-empt or manipulate the findings of the data. As well as the selection of specific questions presented for analysis, comments were also selected to illustrate teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of poetry. The teachers' comments cited are transcribed exactly as they were written and no attempt has been made to alter them or to infer any meaning other than the meaning specified by the teachers themselves. The teachers' comments explicate in greater detail the statistical data. To protect the anonymity of the teachers involved in the study their comments have been coded.

The main function of the data is to provide an overview of the teachers' perceptions of poetry, their pre-service training in this area, and how it is currently taught in schools. The data for all four surveys will be presented collectively for ease of reading, and will be illustrated by reference to participants' written comments provided in support of their responses. The statistics do not differ significantly from one cohort to the next, thus indicating a strong degree of consistency of response and correlation among groups of recently qualified primary school teachers to questions about poetry. This trend was also evident in the responses of second level students, largely irrespective of whether they were in first, second or sixth year.

6.2 Data analysis

Table 6.1

Question 5 **Did you receive specific teaching methods for the teaching of poetry during your B. Ed course?**		
Overall Statistics		
Year	**Yes**	**No**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	17	2
2005/06 (25 respondents)	18	6
2006/07 (24 respondents)	18	6
2007/08 (24 respondents)	20	3
Total questionnaires = 92	73	17
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 5 = 2		
Total Percentages	**79%**	**18%**

From the data it appears that there is a dichotomy between the provision of specific methodological strategies for the teaching of poetry and general English methods in the teacher education colleges. 79% of teachers said that they received specific strategies for poetry, but their comments are often contradictory and reveal a limited and repetitive range of methods experienced.

The teachers' comments reveal consistently a difficulty in discussing and identifying specific resources and approaches used in poetry lessons. Some of the comments were very general, for example, teacher 08/04 stated that 'It was taught with reading'; and it was typically associated with the use of drama, role play and group/pair work. Teachers also stated that poetry methods were closely linked with the requirements of the curriculum and were used to enhance spelling, phonological awareness, writing, comprehension skills and forms/genre of poetry. It is interesting to note that several teachers did not list any specific teaching methods for poetry that they are aware of, for example, in 2005 of the 25 teachers questioned, 8 left their comment space blank. This would suggest that 8 teachers in the group either did not know or could not differentiate specific poetry methods from general English methods lectures. In 2006 of the 24 teachers questioned, 9 did not specify any poetry methods explored or mentioned in college. This illustrates quite a worrying trend across the data set in terms of recently qualified teachers' ability to identify teaching methods for poetry. It is possible that these numbers could be explained by a lack of interest or motivation by the teachers to fill in the details required by question 5, but it is still a potentially disturbing outcome and may suggest a less than enthusiastic attitude of some of the teachers coming out of the education colleges to the teaching of poetry.

Table 6.2

Question 7 **Are you aware of any Department of Education publications on the teaching of poetry in primary schools?**		
Overall Statistics		
Year	**Yes**	**No**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	3	16
2005/06 (25 respondents)	0	25
2006/07 (24 respondents)	1	23
2007/08 (24 respondents)	0	23
Total questionnaires = 92	4	87
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 7 = 1		
Total percentages	**4%**	**95%**

Question 7 asked the teachers if they were aware of any Department of Education publications on the teaching of poetry. However, only 4% were able to identify the English Curriculum documents and the Teacher Guidelines and in two cohorts of respondents, 2005/06 and 2007/08, not one teacher was able to identify a single DES publication or guideline on the teaching of poetry. It is interesting, however, that in contrast to these findings, 11% of teachers who answered question 8 (which asked them if they were aware of poets working in schools) responded positively. From the data provided by these primary school teachers, it would appear that they have less knowledge of the more functional and prescriptive aspects of the English curriculum, than the unstructured aspects such as visits of poets to schools. This would concur with the data provided by the second level students, who reported that their experience of poetry at primary level was much less structured and organized than at second level.

Table 6.3

Question 9 **In your opinion how difficult is it to teach poetry to pupils?**			
Overall Statistics			
Year	**Very difficult**	**Fairly difficult**	**Not difficult**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	3	11	2
2005/06 (25 respondents)	0	14	10
2006/07 (24 respondents)	0	15	9
2007/08 (24 respondents)	0	17	6
Total questionnaires = 92	3	57	27
Total number of teacher who did not answer question 9 = 5			
Total Percentages	**3%**	**62%**	**29%**

The majority of teachers who responded find the teaching of poetry difficult. Despite the considerations that determine the level of difficulty involved in teaching a subject such as the age and ability of the pupils, it is significant that 62% of teachers think it is fairly difficult to teach

poetry. The teachers' extensive written comments highlighted many reasons why teachers find it difficult to teach, for example, 'Firstly, to find a poem which is suitable and of interest to all children in the class; and to find a balance between 'touching' on the poem and 'killing it'' (no.12/04), 'I think many teachers' backgrounds in poetry may be vague or negative' (no. 02/05), 'I usually always tend to teach poems that rhyme. Find it hard to teach airy fairy kind of poetry – sometimes may be unsure myself' (no. 03/06), 'for me it's lack of knowledge on the resources out there. It's hard to find suitable poems' (no. 12/07).

An interesting aspect of the cited difficulties involved for teachers is a consistent reference to the pupils' disinterest or dislike of poetry, the lack of resources and the inability to go beyond reading, reciting, and answering questions on the poem, 'it's fine to read the poems to the children, discuss them but I don't know where to go from there' (no. 19/07). The reference made by teacher no. 03/06 above about the difficulty of teaching the 'airy fairy kind of poetry' infers that abstract poems which involve a serious level of cognitive maturity is prohibitive not only for some pupils but may also be for some teachers. The trend identified in the contents analysis of the teachers' comments, corresponds closely to the data from the students' survey reported in chapter 5. Key terms such as 'reciting poetry in class', using 'fun rhyming and thematic verse' appear regularly and reflect the experiences that many second level students report as unsatisfactory or lacking in challenge. The degree of consistency of reporting between students and teachers confers a validity on the approach to teaching and learning poetry at primary school level.

Table 6.4

Question 10 **Which of these statements best describes the difficulty of teaching poetry?** **Please number 1-4 with 1 being the greatest difficulty.**				
The following figures represent statements numbered 1 that best describe the difficulty of teaching poetry.				
Overall Statistics				
Year	**Too many technical terms to be learned**	**Too many poetic styles to be learned?**	**No adequate poetry resources available for teachers to use**	**Too little time to do indepth analysis**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	3	0	9	6
2005/06 (25 respondents)	3	3	11	5
2006/07 (24 respondents)	6	1	11	6
2007/08 (24 respondents)	2	2	10	8
Total questionnaires = 92	14	6	41	25
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 10 = 6				
Total Percentages	**15%**	**7%**	**45%**	**27%**

In question 10 the teachers were asked to number 1 – 4 the statements that best described the difficulty of teaching poetry, with number 1 representing the greatest difficulty. The results show that 45% of teachers consider the lack of adequate resources to be the most prohibitive aspect of teaching poetry while other important things like technical terminology, poetic styles and time constraints are considered less restrictive. There is an obvious correlation between the findings in questions 9 and 10 since many teachers refer to the lack of resources as a source of difficulty in teaching poetry. This concern seems to be somewhat at variance with the 79% of teachers who stated in question 5 that they had received specific teaching methods for the teaching of poetry during their Bachelor of Education course. If, as the findings show, 79% of teachers attended specific lectures on poetry methods it would seem unlikely that the lecturers would not have given details of the many poetry web sites, poetry anthologies and poets who write specifically for the primary or elementary levels. And yet the evidence points to two potentially serious issues that need to be dealt with if the educative value of poetry is to be addressed. The first issue being the quality and nature of the materials given to teachers during their initial teacher education programmes and the second issue being a proclivity by teachers themselves to direct their own search for resources and to be confident enough to adapt materials to suit their needs in the classroom.

Table 6.5

Question 12 **Which of these statements best describes the attitude of pupils towards poetry? Please number 1-4, with 1 being the closest description of the pupils' attitude.**				
The following figures represent statements numbered 1 that best describes the attitude of pupils towards poetry.				
Overall Statistics				
Year	**Students love poetry**	**Students find poetry difficult to understand**	**Students think poetry is boring**	**Students hate poetry**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	10	6	1	0
2005/06 (25 respondents)	10	12	2	0
2006/07 (24 respondents)	15	4	4	0
2007/08 (24 respondents)	9	8	6	0
Total questionnaires = 92	**44**	**30**	**13**	**0**
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 12 = 5				
Total Percentages	**48%**	**33%**	**14%**	**0%**

The findings of question 12 when compared with statements by teachers in other questions appear to be contradictory. It is not surprising to the researcher that 48% of teachers believe

students love poetry because their experience with very young pupils is based on nursery rhymes and action poems which are entertaining, fun and creative. However, 33% of teachers believe that pupils find it difficult while 14% find it boring. When the statistics from the teachers' first to fourth preference statements are examined, it emerges that a majority of students find poetry difficult and boring. In the examination of data from other questions it is evident that in older classes the attitude of pupils is predominantly negative, particularly when the poems become less concrete and more abstract, and when the stylistic considerations become central to the analysis of the content. It is noteworthy that many of the second level students reported an enjoyment of more abstract poetry which demands a more challenging and discursive approach, particularly after their first year at second level when they have settled in to the more formally organised approach to teaching poetry which emphasises technical aspects of the language and genre. This could be associated with second level teachers' greater confidence in dealing with poetry from a more stylistic and critically analytical perspective, owing to them having an English degree and the emphasis on such poetic features in the second level syllabus. The attitude of the senior primary school pupils as reported here could be adversely affected by their teachers' reticence and lack of confidence in terms of handling the poetic genre, and thus it would appear from the data that while the balance may be skewed towards analysis and technical features at second level, it may be skewed in the opposite direction at primary level. Balancing the approach in favour of both an aesthetic and cognitive engagement with poetry at all levels of the education system may be a challenge that must be addressed if the experience of studying poetry is to be an enriching, stimulating and challenging one.

Table 6.6

Question 13 **How important is the teaching of poetry in schools?**			
Overall Statistics			
Year	**Very important**	**Fairly important**	**Not important**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	12	7	0
2005/06 (25 respondents)	13	11	1
2006/07 (24 respondents)	14	9	1
2007/08 (24 respondents)	19	4	0
Total questionnaires = 92	58	31	2
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 13 = 1			
Total Percentages	**63%**	**34%**	**2%**

Question 13 offers a very interesting insight into the teachers' perception of the importance of poetry and their understanding of it as an educative tool. While 97% is an extremely high percentage of teachers who think it is very or fairly important to teach poetry in primary schools, it is of concern many are still not exploiting the full educative potential of poetry in practice. Chapters two and three highlighted the educational importance of poetry in society, both inside and outside of the classroom. Leaving aside possible prejudicial factors such as teachers' personal dislike of poetry because of negative experiences when they were in school or their disposition, there are other reasons for concern relating to teachers' response to this question. From the statements made by some of the teachers, the importance given to poetry in the training colleges is determined only by the interest of the lecturer. The respondents' comments reveal a considerable disparity in the time devoted to poetry methods in some of the education colleges, and very few lectures or poetry programmes are singled out by respondents for mention owing to their creativity, provision of adequate strategies to teach poetry, or their emphasis on the importance of poetry in the context of cognitive and emotional development in the classroom. Therefore, despite respondents' recognition of the importance of teaching poetry, very few were able to cite specific details relating to its value in their additional comments.

Table 6.7

Question 15 **Do you think that the study of poetry contributes to the personal and emotional as well as the intellectual development of the pupils?**		
Overall Statistics		
Year	**Yes**	**No**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	19	0
2005/06 (25 respondents)	24	1
2006/07 (24 respondents)	22	0
2007/08 (24 respondents)	24	0
Total questionnaires =92	89	1
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 15 = 2		
Total Percentages	**97%**	**1%**

In keeping with the positive response to question 13, 97% of teachers believe that poetry contributes to the personal, emotional and intellectual development of the pupils. It is clear from the written comments provided, that the teachers questioned believe that poetry is integral to the intellectual and emotional development of the pupils, for example, 'I think children can be very touched by a poem. It helps them open up during discussion of the poem, hence helping their personal and emotional development' (no. 12/04), 'Poetry helps children to examine their moral values and gives them something to identify with emotionally' (no. 13/04), '...On an intellectual

basis, reading poetry improves your understanding of language' (no. 15/05), 'poetry can be an excellent medium through which to develop empathy' (no. 24/06), 'There are messages and lessons to be learned from poetry. Children can see that others have felt as they do and know they are not alone. It can help them to make sense of the world around them' (no. 20/07). These statistics correlate positively with those from the students' survey, who also report a high opinion of the role and value of poetry in people's lives. It would suggest that the case for the importance of poetry has been convincingly made in the formal educational system, for both students and teachers, but its translation into practice is still problematic, and could account for such high numbers of students reporting its study as difficult or boring, and teachers reporting similar issues.

There is an overlap between the findings in questions 15 and 16 (which asked teachers if it would be beneficial for pupils to write and study their own poetry in class). It is reasonable to argue that if poetry is important to the intellectual and emotional development of the pupils, then writing their own poetry is just as important. Writing poetry can be a therapeutic exercise and it can be a means of dealing with emotional conflict and upset, as has been discussed in the literature. The act of writing can heighten pupils' understanding of a situation or event as well as teach them how to use language effectively. 72% of teachers who answered question 16 argued that pupils writing poetry was very beneficial because it enabled them to be 'creative and expressive' (no.01/04), it enabled them '...to edit, take constructive criticism, be open to new ideas/opinions' (no. 05/04), 'Self reflection and evaluation is a key life skill which can be addressed in a lighter more enjoyable way through poetry' (no. 04/07). The comments also emphasise that writing poetry 'enhances vocabulary and writing skills' (no. 21/05). It is noteworthy that the same positive emphasis on writing poetry is not evident at second level, where less than half of respondents are encouraged to write their own poetry. This trend is in keeping with a possible imbalance suggested earlier where the emphasis at primary level seems unstructured and fluid, possibly to the detriment of engaging with poetry at a more cognitively challenging level, and the opposite appears to be occurring at second level.

Table 6.8

Question 17 **How well do you think poetry could be used in cross-curricular studies?**				
Overall Statistics				
Year	**Very well**	**Fairly well**	**Not very well**	**Not at all**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	11	8	0	0
2005/06 (25 respondents)	16	7	1	0
2006/07 (24 respondents)	16	7	1	0
2007/08 (24 respondents)	18	6	0	0
Total questionnaires = 92	61	28	2	0
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 17 = 1				
Total Percentages	**66%**	**30%**	**2%**	**0**

Almost all of the teachers questioned think that poetry can be used very or fairly effectively in cross-curricular studies. This statistic is not surprising since teachers have already alluded to the cross-curricular application of poetry in response to and elaboration of previous questions. However, it is noteworthy that teachers provided quite a narrow and repetitious range of subjects for use in cross-curricular studies. The subjects suggested were predominantly drama, S.P.H.E., S.E.S.E, music and art; however, a minority of teachers also included Irish, maths, geography and history. While it is commendable that curricular integration occurs in the education system, particularly at primary level, it could imply a service subject attitude to the study of poetry which could result in it being used in a fun, illustrative and thematic way only, and possibly resulting in sacrificing its study as an entity and art form in its own right in the education system, such emphasis is evident in the data from the second level students' experiences of poetry at primary level, and could possibly contribute to the pedagogic imbalance proposed earlier.

Table 6.9

Question 18 **How important is it to teach poetry using multi-sensory as well as cognitive methodologies?**				
Overall Statistics				
Year	**Very important**	**Fairly important**	**Not important**	**Don't know**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	15	4	0	0
2005/06 (25 respondents)	13	7	0	3
2006/07 (24 respondents)	17	2	0	5
2007/08 (24 respondents)	15	7	0	2
Total questionnaires = 92	60	20	0	10
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 18 = 2				
Total Percentages	**65%**	**28%**	**0**	**11%**

The results of this question were interesting and are perhaps not truly representative. The aim of the question was to elicit the extent to which teachers used a range of teaching approaches that involved the full embodied experience of their pupils, using all of their senses to explore and investigate poetry. It appears from the findings that 65% represents a substantial number of teachers who use multi sensory approaches in the teaching of poetry. Yet, it is apparent from the comments made by the teachers that very few of them had a sound understanding of the term multi sensory. A lot of the teachers made vague statements about the benefits of multi sensory approaches but their language and the content of their statements highlights an indistinct understanding of its meaning and a lack of concrete examples as requested.

Table 6.10

Question 19 **Has your teaching of poetry been affected by the way you, as a pupil, were taught in school?**		
Overall Statistics		
Year	**Yes**	**No**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	12	7
2005/06 (25 respondents)	12	12
2006/07 (24 respondents)	10	14
2007/08 (24 respondents)	18	6
Total questionnaires = 92	52	39
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 19 = 1		
Total Percentages	**57%**	**42%**

Question 19 provides important information because it attempts to elicit from the teachers if their teaching methods and attitude towards poetry has been influenced by the way they were taught poetry in school. The results are quite close but deserve further attention. Some of the written supporting comments provided by those who answered no, show that teachers want to avoid replicating boring poetry lessons and rote learning which they encountered in their own school experience of poetry, which would suggest that they were affected by how they were taught themselves. While there are conflicting responses to this question, the literature reveals quite convincingly that the ability of the English teacher is fundamental to the impact of poetry on the pupils. The comments show that some teachers had positive experiences of poetry in primary school while others enjoyed it more at second level, for example, 'In 6th year I had a genius poetry teacher, he changed my outlook on poetry as he was able to make everything (even poems I'd previously hated) interesting, he was able to take poetry to a whole new level' (no. 09/04), 'My teacher in secondary school was fantastic, always encouraging our personal response/opinion…' (no. 04/05).

A very small number of teachers only reported that they developed an appreciation of poetry because of the way it was taught in college, for example, 'It has been affected more from our college course as I was not exposed to a vast amount of poems until near the end of secondary school. I feel it is essential for poetry to be taught well from as young an age as possible' (no. 11/05). An even more disturbing aspect of the findings shows that some of the teachers have little, if any, memories of learning poetry when they were in primary school, for example, 'I didn't do much poetry in primary school' (no. 08/04), '...I don't remember being taught poetry in primary school and if I was I had to learn the poem off' (no. 13/04), 'I don't have a very clear memory of learning/studying poetry in school, particularly primary school' (no. 01/05), 'I feel I was not exposed to much poetry as a child...' (no. 02/05), 'I can't really remember my poetry lessons in school ...' (no.19/06), 'I can't remember learning poetry at all at primary level – I don't think it was utilised enough. I use it a lot with my kids and think it's an important learning tool' (no. 03/07).

These findings correspond closely to the data from the second level students, strongly indicating a problem with the way that poetry is being taught and experienced at primary school level. This is all the more compelling when one considers that despite the primary school teachers complaining about the lack of exposure to poetry during their own school days, and commending their experiences at second level, which mirror almost exactly the experiences reported by the second level students, they seem unaware that they may be in danger of perpetuating the same mistakes, and that as primary school teachers, the responsibility rests with them to address these concerns. The issue of the degree to which their period of initial teacher education can and does prepare them to teach poetry satisfactorily raises its head. The comments reveal that poetry is not used effectively as a learning tool and raises serious questions about how the required elements of the English curriculum are being implemented. The teaching of poetry is a prerequisite of both the primary and secondary curricula, and at primary level the English Language Teacher Guidelines[984] state that poetry should have 'a special place in children's language experience' (see pages 69-75). The Guidelines stipulate that at primary level poetry can be used to foster a sense of beauty and enjoyment of language and aesthetic response in the

[984] National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) Primary School Curriculum: English Language Teacher Guidelines. Dublin. The Stationery Office.

pupils. But this is contradicted by the 51% of teachers who described their experience of poetry in question 20 as rote learning without understanding, a response that was also mirrored in the students' survey.

Table 6.11

Question 20 **Which of these statements best describes your own experience of poetry as a pupil?** **Please number 1 – 4, with 1 being the closest description of your experience.**				
The following figures represent statements numbered 1 – 4 that best describes the teachers' experience of poetry as a pupil.				
Overall Statistics				
Year	**My experience of poetry in school was imaginative and creative**	**My teacher instilled in me a love for poetry**	**The way I was taught poetry destroyed my interest in it**	**Poetry meant rote learning without understanding**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	1	6	2	8
2005/06 (25 respondents)	7	3	2	12
2006/07 (24 respondents)	2	4	2	15
2007/08 (24 respondents)	3	1	5	12
Total questionnaires = 92	13	14	11	47
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 20 = 7				
Total Percentages	**14%**	**15%**	**12%**	**51%**

Looking at the table of results for question 20 it is evident that poetry was predominantly taught using rote learning, with a significant 63% of teachers experiencing this methodology according to those surveyed in 2006/07. For some of the teacher respondents, the use of rote learning as a methodology was a punishment and a source of embarrassment in front of the class, as demonstrated by the following comments, 'Poetry in national school was rote learning, memory test next day' (no. 02/05), 'we were made learn a poem by heart and stand up and say it on our own in front of the class. Very intimidating…' (no. 04/06), 'in primary school poetry meant being given 4 lines a night to learn off by heart and be made say it in front of the class the next day'(no. 17/06).

The most notable statistic in the table is the decrease in the number of those surveyed who stated that their teacher had instilled in them a love of poetry. The dramatic drop between 2004 and 2008 is contrary to expectations given that more resources are available and are more readily accessible through the use of technology. It is also apparent that in 2008 a higher percentage of teachers feel their interest in poetry was destroyed because of the way it was taught to them. The

basis for these shifts are again attributed by the respondents to how poetry is taught in primary schools and the attitude of individual teachers towards the subject, as is illustrated by the following comments, 'The way some of my teachers taught poetry put me off ...' (no.16/04), 'Primary was not a bad experience however, the range of poetry was limited. Secondary can only be described as verging on horrific, particularly the in depth, painstaking and enjoyment-removing analysis of it' (no. 14/04), 'it destroyed my interest as poetry seemed boring to me yet now I want to become interested so that the children in my primary class don't experience poetry in the same way as I did' (no. 20/06), 'In class rote learning was the key teaching method used' (no. 12/07), 'In primary school it was dreadful because we just learned poems for the sake of it but my teachers were excellent at second level and brought a new meaning to poetry' (no. 17/07). Without further evidence in relation to any substantial changes in staffing or resources during their period of initial teacher education, or of any additional subjects or programmes being introduced into the school curriculum, it is difficult to account for the changes identified above. However, it is a worrying trend and one that calls for urgent attention.

Table 6.12

Question 24 **How often do you read poetry?**					
Overall Statistics					
Year	**Every day**	**Very often**	**Sometimes**	**Once in a while**	**Hardly ever**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	0	6	2	4	7
2005/06 (25 respondents)	0	1	8	4	11
2006/07 (24 respondents)	0	3	3	10	7
2007/08 (24 respondents)	0	3	6	4	11
Total questionnaires = 92	0	13	19	22	36
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 24 = 2					
Total Percentages	**0%**	**14%**	**21%**	**24%**	**39%**

Table 6.13

Question 26 **At what age do you think children should be introduced to poetry?**				
Overall Statistics				
Year	**Pre-school**	**Primary school**	**Secondary school**	**University**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	18	0	0	0
2005/06 (25 respondents)	22	3	0	0
2006/07 (24 respondents)	18	6	0	0
2007/08 (24 respondents)	20	3	0	0
Total questionnaires = 92	78	12	0	0
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 26 = 2				
Total Percentages	**85%**	**13%**	**0%**	**0%**

Table 6.14

Question 27 **Do you think it is beneficial for children to read poetry?**		
Overall Statistics		
Year	**Yes**	**No**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	19	0
2005/06 (25 respondents)	25	0
2006/07 (24 respondents)	24	0
2007/08 (24 respondents)	24	0
Total questionnaires = 92	92	0
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 27 = 0		
Total Percentages	**100%**	**0%**

Questions 24, 26 and 27 are very closely linked and reveal interesting inconsistencies in the teachers' attitudes towards poetry. It is not unreasonable to propose that in order to teach poetry proficiently teachers should read a wide range of poetic works on a regular basis themselves. Yet the results of question 24 show that 39% of those surveyed hardly ever read it and only 14% read it very often. If only 14% of teachers read poetry very often, it seems surprising, if not a little incongruous that in question 27, 100% of teachers stated that it is beneficial for children to read it. The 39% of teachers who hardly ever read poetry also comprise part of the 97% in question 15 who stated that poetry contributes to the personal, emotional and intellectual development of pupils, but one must query upon what premise they are basing their answer if they don't read poetry themselves.

63% of teachers stated in question 13 that the teaching of poetry is very important in school and yet if 39% of respondents hardly ever read it, then it is probable to conclude their range and scope for the study of it in the classroom is likely to be narrow, and may result in a dependence upon those poems chosen by publishers in the school texts with little or no recourse to the specific needs and interests of the pupils in their classes. There are potential difficulties in offering a generic diet of pre-selected poems to students including the subsequent problems of engaging them intellectually, emotionally, socially and personally from a young age and nurturing in them an intellectual curiosity and aesthetic appreciation of all that poetry might have to offer throughout their school years and in to their adult lives. In question 26 the teachers reinforced the importance of poetry, with 85% of them stating that children should be introduced to it in pre-school, and yet the evidence again suggests that a substantial proportion of this 85% must hardly ever read it themselves. In light of these findings the researcher is drawn to propose that at least 39% of teachers are disengaged from poetry outside of the classroom, and this in turn

could make the teaching of it extremely difficult. This finding might also shed some light on why 62% of teachers stated in question 9 that it is fairly difficult to teach poetry to pupils. It must be argued that if 39% of teachers hardly ever read poetry then it is not surprising that 45% of them find the lack of adequate poetry resources their greatest difficulty in teaching it. Perhaps the greatest challenge apparent in these results is that 82% of teachers stated in question 14 that pupils should be exposed to all kinds of poetry, but this could present considerable difficulty if 39% of those responsible for teaching poetry hardly ever read it themselves.

Table 6.15

Question 29 **Which of these statements best describes the importance of poetry to society? Please number 1 – 6, with 1 being the closest description of the importance of poetry to society.**						
The following figures represent statements numbered 1 that best describes the importance of poetry to society.						
Overall Statistics						
Year	**Poetry is important in so far as it is a good record of our literary past**	**Poetry is fundamental to the intellectual and emotional needs of every society**	**Poetry teaches us how to become better human beings**	**Poetry is both psychologically and spiritually therapeutic for the reader**	**Poetry provides a platform for critical commentary of the world around us**	**Poetry is entertainment and should not be taken seriously**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	1	9	0	6	1	1
2005/06 (25 respondents)	2	4	1	10	7	1
2006/07 (24 respondents)	1	10	0	5	3	2
2007/08 (24 respondents)	0	6	0	14	1	0
Total questionnaires = 92	4	29	1	35	12	4
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 29 = 7						
Total Percentages	**4%**	**32%**	**1%**	**38%**	**13%**	**4%**

The results of question 29 show that teachers believe poetry has a very important role to play in the holistic development of pupils and goes beyond the academic constraints of school life. It is clear from the results that teachers believe poetry is intrinsic to the needs of society and that it offers individuals intellectual, emotional and spiritual sustenance, which was identified in the literature at the outset of this thesis. 38% of teachers surveyed believe that poetry is both psychologically and spiritually therapeutic for the reader, and 32% believe that poetry is

fundamental to the intellectual and emotional needs of every society. These percentages establish that irrespective of whatever difficulties there may be, if any, with the teaching of poetry, it is still viewed as an integral part of human development. It is also interesting to note that 14 of the 24 teachers questioned in 2008 believe that poetry is both psychologically and spiritually therapeutic for the reader. This shows a significant increase from 2004 and 2007.

Table 6.16

Question 30 **Do you write poetry?**		
Overall Statistics		
Year	**Yes**	**No**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	4	15
2005/06 (25 respondents)	6	18
2006/07 (24 respondents)	2	22
2007/08 (24 respondents)	6	17
Total questionnaires = 92	18	72
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 30 = 2		
Total Percentages	**20%**	**78%**

Table 6.17

Question 33 **Do you think it is important for pupils to write poetry?**		
Overall Statistics		
Year	**Yes**	**No**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	19	0
2005/06 (25 respondents)	20	1
2006/07 (24 respondents)	23	0
2007/08 (24 respondents)	24	0
Total questionnaires = 92	86	1
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 33 = 5		
Total Percentages	93%	1%

Questions 30 and 33 show that while the overwhelming majority of teachers think it is important for pupils to write poetry, only 20% of them actually write poetry themselves. It would be naïve to suppose that every teacher writes poetry outside of the classroom but the literature supports the argument for them to be able and willing to do so as part of the poetry writing process with their pupils. It is apparent that none of the teachers surveyed appeared to be aware of any potential conflict or difficulty in the fact that they do not necessarily engage in the writing process themselves but recommend it to their students. This is the same attitude as revealed in question 24 about teachers' own reading habits. This may suggest that the arguments from the literature are not made available to student teachers during their period of pre-service preparation, and that a limited repertoire of practical strategies presented within a tightly

structured and possibly over loaded English syllabus in teacher education colleges, may not be able to sustain teachers in their exploration and engagement of poetry with their pupils throughout their subsequent careers. The teachers themselves pointed to the lack of available resources (or at least their knowledge of how and where to access such resources), and the issue of limited and possible inadequate teaching and learning approaches emerged as an issue consistently across all of the second level students' questionnaires. The evidence from the data gathered in this study may suggest a place in the initial teacher education programmes for both primary and secondary level teachers, for a considered review of the literature which strongly advocates for the importance of a meaningful and sustained study and engagement with poetry throughout a student's education. Building upon a sound theoretical basis, the introduction of a wide range of already available teaching and learning approaches may help to bridge the perceived gap as identified by the teachers surveyed (and many of the pupils), in their recognition of the value and role of poetry in their lives, and how to achieve that engagement in practice.

Table 6.18

Question 34 **Do you think that poetry is adequately taught in primary schools?**		
Overall Statistics		
Year	**Yes**	**No**
2004/05 (19 respondents)	2	13
2005/06 (25 respondents)	3	15
2006/07 (24 respondents)	2	19
2007/08 (24 respondents)	0	23
Total questionnaires = 92	7	70
Total number of teachers who did not answer question 34 = 15		
Total Percentages	**8%**	**76%**

This research project has from the outset proposed that a vacuity in sustained research on the value and role of poetry for students could suggest that teachers have limited access to specific methodologies and programmes which may help them to teach it more effectively. This is evident in the following teachers' comments, '... we as teachers in training college are not taught enough about teaching poetry. Should be given more training' (no. 06/04), 'The colleges of education throw in a bit of poetry at the end of certain English lessons. It should be taught solely as a lecture' (no. 16/07), 'I've done three years in college and still am not completely confident with teaching poetry' (no. 20/07).

Support for this hypothesis is evident in the results of question 34 where 76% of teachers who answered the question stated that poetry is not adequately taught in primary schools. The statistics show a marked increase between 2004 and 2008 in the number of teachers who feel that poetry is not adequately taught. The comments made by teachers in questions 20 and 34 are fundamental to providing a rationale for this worrying situation. Apart from the limitations of the methods referred to in question 20, the teachers' comments in question 34 provide very worrying insights into the reality of poetry teaching in primary classrooms in the sample surveyed here, and this is evident in the following representative teachers' comments, 'I don't think teachers know what to do with poetry' (no. 01/04), 'I think it is often forgotten and left to the side at the moment' (no. 03/04), 'Most of the time poetry is simply used as a comprehension exercise' (no. 10.04), 'Teachers are unsure' (no. 11/04), 'I think it requires more effort and planning than a simple comprehension lesson and so it's easy to shy away from it. I think many teachers are literally afraid of teaching poetry' (no. 07/05), 'An under used and under valued learning tool. Needs to be more approachable – teachers need to be educated' (no. 01/06), 'It is not taught enough. Also it is just taught as a poem pops up in a textbook. It is then transcribed into a copy or ...learned off' (no. 08/06), '... many teachers don't know how to teach it effectively' (no. 17/06), '... the majority of teachers will teach poetry from their memory of how they were taught in national school' (no. 22/06), 'I think many teachers find it daunting and so avoid it' (no. 04/07), 'A lot of the teachers don't teach it and don't discuss them at all. Some just learn and recite' (no. 08/07), Many teachers do not feel confident in teaching poetry' (no. 14/07). The consistent trend emerging from the data, both from the teachers' surveys and the students' surveys reveals a concern about the teaching methods being used in the exploration of poetry. Despite the increased provision of opportunities for continuous professional development in schools, the data would suggest that the situation is deteriorating.

The comments provided by respondents to questions 20 and 34 elucidate the reasons why it is necessary to formulate, implement and evaluate a radical and new approach to the teaching of poetry at primary rather than at secondary level, in the first instance. If the difficulties of teaching poetry at primary level are addressed, the pupils, from the earliest stage of their development, will experience the interlinking and progressive formulation of the significance of poetry as an educational and cross curricular tool. It could facilitate a greater balance between

the aesthetic, creative and cognitive aspects of exploring poetry in classrooms. This could have positive effects for both teachers and students.

6.3.1 Responding to the survey data: devising and implementing a practical approach

Arising from the initial analysis of the data provided by both second level pupils and primary school teachers in 2004, it became clear that a majority of respondents' attitudes towards the value of poetry in their lives had been shaped by their experiences of it at primary school level, and the data further revealed that these experiences were substantially unsatisfactory. Problems were reported by both cohorts of respondents in the areas of poor resources to support the teaching of poetry at primary school level, limited repertoire of teaching and learning methods, a narrow range of poems explored, and limited exposure to the study of poetry apart from ad hoc usage of humorous rhymes and verses designed to entertain. Respondents consistently reported that it was only in second level that they began to experience the study of poetry in a sustained and serious manner, but the data also revealed that quite negative attitudes to the value of poetry had been formed in many instances by then, a feature which could influence people for the rest of their lives.

As discussed earlier, the original intention of the study had been to devise ways of working creatively and effectively with poetry for second level teachers, however, the data was compelling in suggesting that the greatest need was at primary school level, and thus a year long module entitled: Poetry in the Primary Classroom was devised as a response to the initial survey data in 2004. This course has been running every year since then and aims to provide newly qualified primary school teachers with the knowledge, skills and experience to successfully teach poetry in a sustained, creative and interactive manner which engages and motivates young learners and prompts meaningful social, personal, emotional and intellectual responses from the children.

6.3.2 'Poetry in the Primary Classroom' seminars

The first approach in dealing with the findings of the surveys was the implementation of 'Poetry in the Primary Classroom' seminars for recently qualified primary school teachers. These classes were run for 2 hours on a weekly basis throughout the academic year and took place in Trinity College Dublin as part of its fourth Honor Year programme. These seminars were specifically

designed to discuss, inform, challenge and change teachers' perceptions about the value of teaching poetry in the primary classroom. The classes began in 2004/05 and continued until 2007/08. Approximately 25 teachers chose to participate each year, and the programme was designed as part of this research project to assess whether specifically targeted teaching methods in the area of poetry at primary school level could change newly qualified teachers' attitudes towards poetry in the classroom and provide them with skills, knowledge and resources required to implement and enjoy delivering effective and creative poetry classes in their schools.

Drawing from the literature in the field as cited in chapter three, a diverse range of teaching and learning approaches which had proved effective in other studies were adapted and trialled with four consecutive groups of practicing primary school teachers (2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07, 2007/08). The teachers were surveyed at the outset of each programme and the findings of this survey were reported in the previous section (6.2). The series of seminars were devised to deal with the importance of teaching poetry, provide resources and information about children's poets, poetry anthologies, website resources, creative lesson planning and cross curricular applications of poetry at primary school level. The seminars began by outlining the benefits of teaching poetry in the primary classroom. Teachers discovered that poetry is not the exclusive privilege of older students and that it should be introduced at the earliest stage of pupils' primary education and given the same respect and time as other mainstream subjects. The benefits of introducing poetry at the earliest stage of pupils' primary education as drawn from the literature were outlined as follows.

- Young children have no preconceived ideas about poetry.
- They can accept it without prejudice unlike older children.
- They are willing to enter wholeheartedly into the study and play of poetry.
- They can enter into the 'world' created in the poem(s).
- They are willing to 'make-believe' using props, costumes for dressing-up, space, objects.
- They can take on a particular 'role' and develop the ability to play in role in the poems.
- They can enter into different time frames which enables them to see how past, present and future are linked and how they influence each other.
- They become aware of group dynamics and learn co-operation, communication, contribution, helping, sharing.
- They become aware of dilemmas which lead to tension in the actions of the poem.

- They develop the ability to problem solve dilemmas which arise in the poem.
- They develop the ability to reflect on issues arising in the poem as well as to speculate about issues.
- Young pupils can learn to share their feelings about particular events described in the poem(s) by imagining themselves in the same situation.

These early years attributes form the basis for more sophisticated intellectual and creative engagement with poetry as the pupils move through the different stages of primary school. Once the initial seminars established the educative value of teaching poetry and its application across the curriculum, as well as its emotional and imaginative benefits for children, teachers were introduced to a variety of methodologies and strategies that would enable them to teach poetry for effective attainment of these learning outcomes. Given that teachers face considerable challenges with over crowded curricula, or working in schools that are designated disadvantaged, or because they teach classes where English is not the first language of a majority of pupils, the strategies were designed to be adaptable to individual teachers' needs and to be implemented at little or no financial cost. The following strategies and approaches were reported in teachers' evaluative questionnaires as being particularly useful.

- The most important and perhaps the easiest way to nurture pupils' appreciation of poetry as demonstrated during this project, was to create a space for it in the classroom.
- Creating a poetry corner, a real and physical space where poetry is displayed, proved to be an effective way of making poetry an integral part of everyday life in the classroom.
- A wide range of anthologies as well as poems written by the students, reviews of poetry anthologies, pupils' illustrations of poems, quotations taken from the pupils' favourite poems were displayed in the poetry corner.
- Creative teachers who had artistic flare created imaginative and beautiful poetry spaces in their classrooms by using different coloured and textured materials that clearly defined the space from other areas and by displaying posters, illustrated poems, pop-up books, poetry projects and poetry pictures.

Following an intensive programme of study involving seminars and practical workshops, the participants were surveyed at the end of the year long course and asked to respond to the following questions,

1) Did the 'Poetry in the classroom' seminars change your attitude towards the function of poetry as an educative tool in your classroom?
2) In what way(s) has your teaching of poetry been affected by the 'Poetry in the classroom seminars'?
3) Will you continue to use the methodologies you have learned in the seminars with others classes in the future?

The results of each cohort reveal that 100% of participating teachers felt confident and comfortable in exploring a poetry enriched curriculum with their pupils. They reported that overall the poetry seminars were instructive, useful, stimulating, enjoyable and enabled them to identify the educative value of poetry for their students 'The intervention this year into my teaching of poetry has really improved how I teach poetry … children need to feel that poetry is enjoyable, that it can be a social or individual activity' (Teacher 04/07). Teachers commented that the interventions helped them to be more innovative in planning poetry lessons, 'This intervention to my teaching of poetry has been great and I have tried to teach poetry in a way I would never have dreamt of and I am always on the lookout now for new and exciting ways to bring poetry into the classroom' (Teacher No. 01/08). Teachers reported that they felt competent and more willing to integrate poetry across the curriculum and commented on the benefits of using poetry to teach spelling, phonics, maths and science, 'When I evaluated the poetry especially with regards to maths and science, I found that the activities encouraged the children to ask questions, predict and observe' (Teacher No. 23/08). Apart from the academic benefits of teaching poetry teachers also reported a significant change in the attitude of their students towards poetry; they found that students who had initially shown no interest in poetry or had indicated that poetry was boring were now enjoying it and wanting to read it for themselves, 'One little girl in my class brought in a Spike Milligan book from the public library for me to see, and told me she had asked her mum to bring her to join the library especially to get one of Milligan's poetry books … Another episode that made me feel that I had achieved something was when the book club came to the school, a book called 'A funny poem for every day of the year' was on sale and five of the children in my class bought it' (Teacher No. 02/05). Teacher 15/05 reported that the seminars alerted her to the amount of work that could be done with a simple poem and proved to her 'that poetry can encourage listening, speaking, reading and … writing skills … I feel responsible now to open the children's minds up to the world of poetry.'

The teachers also completed a written assignment as part of the module which required them to:

a.) consider the role and value of teaching poetry at primary school level;

b.) devise a scheme of work and associated lessons to explore poetry with their class;

c.) critically evaluate the effectiveness of these plans in practice, and audit the responses of their pupils, as appropriate to their age and stage of development, to the poetry workshops devised in (b) above.

The assessment of the teachers' assignments reveals that all participants in the project received a 2i (60%) grade or above, with almost 50% receiving a high 2i (65%) grade or higher. Internal and external examiners' reports commented favourably on the quality of engagement of the teachers with the material and ideas presented on the poetry course.

The teachers' lesson plans revealed substantial evidence that specifically targeted workshops made a significant difference in remedying the reported deficit in primary teachers' knowledge and skill base with regard to teaching poetry as found in this study. A significant number of lesson plans assessed reflected the use of an integrated approach to teaching poetry. In these lessons the teachers devised activities in each subject based on specific themes using either one poem or a selection of poems, for example, teachers of junior classes (junior infants to first class) chose themes like aliens, monsters, under the sea, or based their lessons on humorous poems like the 'Revolting Rhymes.' Other devises used by teachers as a direct result of the seminars included creating a space for poetry in the their classrooms. In this way poetry is perceived as an important part of the students' learning environment and it provides students with instant access to poetry on a daily basis. Teacher No. 10/06 created a wall space where the names of all the songs and poems were displayed and a poetry library was set up in the classroom, 'Everyday … after lunch the children got into pairs … they read a poem … and talked about whether they liked it or not.' Other approaches used as a direct result of the seminars involved teaching stand alone poetry lessons which allowed teachers to explore a lot of different styles and genres of poetry with their students. This approach is used to stimulate students' interest in poetry and to trigger their imaginative and intellectual response to poetry. Teacher No. 09/05, who taught in a designated disadvantaged school, used this approach in lesson 2 of her scheme. She chose the poem 'Bedtime Terror' as a stimulus to motivate students to write their own poems, 'We listed all the adjectives we could to describe' things that children might be afraid of at bedtime. The

students, some of whom were originally reluctant to write poetry, 'came up with amazing poems ... Even really weak children in the class made a very good effort at this exercise. They asked could they bring their finished pieces ... to show their resource teachers.' The success of the lesson is reflected in the fact that these students were previously unable to complete written assignments but had managed to write a poem 'to be able to produce a finished piece all by themselves was a huge achievement' (Teacher No. 09/05). The teacher evaluations of the interventions they tried in their poetry lessons reported positive learning experiences both for themselves and for their students. 100% of teachers reported that they felt more confident and better equipped to teach poetry and that they realised the value of using poetry as a learning tool in the classroom, 'I now realise the benefits and enjoyment poetry can bring to children ... I will continue to try out many different means of bringing poetry to the classroom as I have thoroughly enjoyed teaching this unit of work in such a different way than what I had been doing at the start of this year' (Teacher No. 11/06). 'Originally I was quite anxious about using poetry in the classroom ... However, ... I began to see the benefits and value of teaching poetry ... This in turn made me more confident and excited about the process because I could see how much the children were gaining from it (Teacher No. 15/05). Teacher No.18/07 stated that before the poetry lessons were implemented the students 'saw poetry as rhyming words which had to be learned off by heart each night and said aloud each morning' and that her own experience of learning poetry in primary school was exactly the same. However, after the implementation of the poetry lessons both the teacher's and the students' perception of poetry had changed, '... when the word poetry was mentioned or a freshly photocopied poem was placed in front of them ... they engaged themselves, almost lost themselves in each poem (Teacher No. 18/07). Teachers' recorded that students' responses to the poetry lessons were positive; students were excited and enthusiastic about studying poetry. After the intervention teachers of students with behaviour difficulties recorded 'amazing differences ... They have sat and concentrated for huge lengths of time during the poetry lessons, particularly when they were writing their own poems. I was amazed how focused and concentrated they were during this time' (Teacher No. 05/05). Teacher No. 23/08 reported that because of the poetry lessons students were able to 'put themselves in the shoes of the people in the poem and discuss their feelings and how they would react if they were put in that situation.' Student feedback also showed that their enjoyment and engagement with poetry was enhanced when they were 'given the chance to read the poem in a different way such as when they recited the poem in groups with instruments and recorded this

on tape' (Teacher No. 06/07). It is evident from the teachers' and students' comments that following a period of specially targeted education in poetry appreciation and teaching, the students' and teachers' attitudes can be altered significantly and can positively.

It is evident that following a period of specially targeted education in poetry appreciation and teaching, the students' and teachers' attitudes can be significantly altered, and the prospect for the future value of poetry in the education system and in people's lives, can be secured. From the evidence of the teachers' poetry lesson plans, their methodological approaches and their pupils' responses to the poetry lessons, it is clear that teachers can effectively and confidently deliver on the subject, and this has been shown to redress the problem (as reported in the survey earlier), as the pupils whose teachers now had training consistently noted their enjoyment and engagement with poetry lessons as a result.

6.4 Towards a new model of teaching poetry

The experience of organizing and systematically evaluating the impact and effectiveness of providing teachers with a year long programme of support for the teaching of poetry over a four year period revealed convincingly that it was an extremely successful intervention for both the teachers and also the students who experienced the new and creative approaches to poetry as a result. The extent of the shift in both participating teachers and students' attitudes towards the study of poetry was unexpected, but year on year, over the duration of the research period, revealed an enthusiasm and a respect for poetry but a lack of knowledge and consequent lack of confidence in terms of teaching it. This year long module, which focused exclusively on all aspects of a creative and critical engagement with poetry in the classroom seemed to equip teachers satisfactorily to engage with and explore poetry in an unfettered manner. The results are compelling and respond directly to the key concerns emerging from the students' and teachers' surveys, and also the DES Inspection Reports.

Arising from this research are a number of important findings which center around the key premise that if sustained and targeted training is provided for teachers, either at pre-service or in-service level, to support their engagement with poetry on both a personal and pedagogical level, then extremely positive results emerge. The data appears to suggest that the extent of education and training provided to teachers at pre-service level is unsatisfactory, and seems to get morphed

or subsumed into general English methods, approaches which do not naturally lend themselves to a positive and productive exploration of poetry. This could be perpetuating a cycle of dissatisfaction with poetry in schools, among both students and teachers, and one that will only be broken through the provision of adequate resources and specific training in the teaching of poetry to allow for the achievement of a balance between aesthetic appreciation, fun and enjoyment, and a cognitive and creative engagement with poetry in classrooms.

The particular downward trend emerging across the data set in terms of the status of poetry in schools deteriorating from 2004 to 2008 as reported in this survey, could be accounted for to some degree in the increase of emphasis in the English curriculum at pre-service level on English as an additional language (EAL), inclusive classrooms and greater emphasis on literacy. This may be resulting in a squeezing out of time for the study of poetry in its own right in the colleges of education, and an increase in its use as an add-on in the study of other subjects or topics, which results in the rote learning and little exploration of the poem itself. This approach has been negatively highlighted in both surveys.

In terms of advocating for a poetry and pedagogy module either in pre- or in-service teacher education, it is noteworthy that since the inception of this research programme, the demand has been extremely high, with this poetry in the classroom module being over subscribed every year and receiving the largest number of applications every year. It is also worth mentioning that there has been consistent demand for a re-run of this module for practicing teachers since the research period ended which would lend support to the argument that both teachers and students are generally keenly interested in poetry, and see its value, and there is a hunger and demand for support on how to explore it effectively and satisfactorily in classrooms.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to provide an overview of the data from the primary school teachers' surveys and also the results of the poetry teaching and learning intervention. When examined, a close correlation was shown to exist between the students' and teachers' attitudes towards and experiences of poetry at primary school level. Proposals were made in relation to the development of a specially designed and targeted programme for the teaching of poetry, and these will be considered further in the final chapter which will attempt to offer a summary of the

thesis as a whole, identify the major findings and limitations and propose some further areas of research for the continued development of poetry and pedagogy.

Chapter Seven
Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Summary

The main aim of this study was to examine the teaching of poetry at primary and secondary school level and more specifically to analyse students' and teachers' attitudes to poetry. In order to establish a theoretical basis for the study, the review of the literature examined the educative function of poetry from ancient to modern times. The evidence provided in chapter two shows that historically, poetry was central to the development of ancient societies and this is particularly demonstrated in relation to Irish society where poets were at one time seers, judges, genealogists and recorders of key events in history. Chapter three sought to examine the literature for any evidence of the formal educative role and value of poetry in the development of children from the 1940s onwards. This chapter demonstrated that poetry was used as a learning tool for educators, and the Irish Commissioners of National Education's directive was to teach poetry as a means of inculcating students with values and morals, a practice similarly reflected in Britain, America and New Zealand, as well as in other countries. The Commissioners published and recommended the use of poetry books in schools for its instructive powers in morality, behaviour modification, the acquisition of language skills, improving the memory and for its cultural value. Drawing from the review of literature in areas of poetry appreciation and pedagogy, a longitudinal study was designed to explore some of the precepts arising from the literature review. Chapter four discussed the research methodology used in this thesis; the research instruments used to gather, collate, analyse and elucidate the data. Chapters five and six dealt with the statistical analysis of the second level student questionnaires and of the primary level teacher questionnaires, drawing comparisons between both data sets and identifying important trends and patterns about students' and teachers' experiences of studying poetry in school. The outcome of a specially designed poetry module for teachers was discussed at the end of chapter six.

7.2 Major findings

The major findings of this research project are presented under the following headings.

7.2.1 Results of the literature survey

The results of the literature survey revealed that poetry has a long history in the development of human civilization and that poetry continues to be important in the modern world. The literature survey demonstrated both the range of practical applications and also intrinsic aesthetic enjoyment that a study of poetry can offer students at all stages in their educational life, thereby creating a strong argument in favour of retaining and supporting the study of poetry in classrooms. The review of literature identified a clear deficit in the range of teaching methods employed in the teaching and learning of poetry. It demonstrated that since the establishment of a national system of education in 1831 very little interest has been shown in arts education in Ireland. Most official documentation before the establishment of the Free State was published in Britain and undertaken by British educators and writers. The literature review showed that once the Irish Free State was established concerns in education were geared more towards a basic education of the masses, the rudiments of the three Rs, rather than on aesthetic learning. Official documentation relating to education from the 1940s until the late 1980s reveals a system that was at best aspirational towards arts education. When arts education did become the focus of official publications it still lagged behind the intensive investigation and investment it received in countries like Britain and America. The teaching of poetry in schools is easier to study from an international perspective than it is from an Irish one simply because of the scarcity of research on that topic in this country. The only recent official documentation about the teaching of poetry in Irish schools is to be found in comments from inspectors' reports or in the chief examiners reports on the English results for Junior and Leaving Certificate. This research has demonstrated that there has been no significant research undertaken on the teaching of poetry in Ireland since the setting up of the system of national education in 1831.

From the vast body of research material analysed for this thesis there is conclusive evidence that poetry is important and has had and continues to have educative value for students.

7.2.2 The results of the second level survey

The results of the second level students' survey showed that the majority of students do not value poetry or think that it has any real function in their lives. Thus, in spite of the academic research and poetry programmes cited in chapter three, a majority of students at second level were negative about their experiences of poetry. Students were critical of the type of poetry they had

to study as they progressed from primary to secondary school; they only associated enjoyment of poetry when the poem they were studying was fun and when it rhymed, which, essentially described the kind of poetry studied by very young children at primary school level. The data showed that many students lost interest in poetry when they had to analyse or critically interpret it for exams because they felt that this was repetitive and boring. They were unhappy about having to answer lots of questions after reading a poem and felt that these questions destroyed any affinity they felt for the author's point of view or for the subject matter. The student questionnaires showed that students studied a very limited range of poetry, which is surprising considering the number of poets and variety of genres available for study, and this finding included poems chosen for study in primary schools where there was significantly more freedom for teachers to choose poets who write specifically for children.

The data also showed that the range of resources used in the teaching of poetry was narrow and repetitive. Students were given photocopied pages of the printed poem or class texts in which the poems were printed. Occasionally students listened to CDs or watched film extracts as part of their poetry lesson but these were not enough to interest students or to make them life long readers of poetry. In some primary schools students read poems, discussed them, and then moved on to other work. Some classes read a poem a day without interpretation, and in other instances poems were read and dissected line by line and followed by several questions which the students had to answer either in class or for homework. Some of the most striking findings from the student questionnaires was that very few of them actually studied a lot of poetry at primary school level, and some of them could not remember studying any poetry at all; students rarely, if ever, bought poetry books or read poetry in their leisure time. The data would suggest a substantial failure to engage children and young people with poetry in the formal education system, which when considered against the evidence that supports its value in the holistic development of human beings, would suggest that children and young people are being denied proper access to the joy, stimulation, challenge and personal, social, emotional, cultural and intellectual benefits associated with a full and meaningful engagement with poetry in its many forms and guises.

7.2.3 Results of the teachers' surveys

The data from the teacher questionnaires showed that they were inadequately trained to teach poetry. It was reported that most of their poetry modules in the education colleges were short, with the longest recorded as lasting a week. Teachers were unaware of Department of Education and Science publications on poetry, except for the curriculum and teacher guideline documents, although some of the teachers did not even identify the guidelines in their responses. Teachers were unaware of official policies, publications or recent academic research in educational journals on the teaching of poetry in Ireland, Britain, America, New Zealand, Australia or elsewhere, and they showed little or no knowledge of poetry websites that offered poetry lesson plans designed and adaptable for all age ranges, particularly at primary school level. Teachers showed a lack of awareness about poets other than Roger McGough, Roald Dahl, Spike Milligan, Seamus Heaney, Robert Frost, W. B. Yeats and William Wordsworth whose poems featured again and again according to the data, as studied poetry in their classrooms. Poetry was rarely taught as a cross-curricular subject and where creative play with poetry occurred it took place infrequently. Most of the teachers who participated in the 'Poetry in the Primary Classroom' seminars in Trinity College between 2004 and 2008 revealed remarkably little confidence in their ability to teach poetry and reported their eagerness to get resources and ideas which would inspire them and improve their teaching skills in poetry.

Most teachers who liked poetry indicated that their attitude was as a result of the way it was taught to them in school, their teachers' enthusiasm for it, their memories of reciting or acting out rhythmic, rhyming, funny poems or because it was valued and shared with them by a parent or significant adult in their lives. This aspect of the findings indicates that people are deeply influenced by the attitude of their teachers towards poetry and that it must be taught in a way that gives it importance and status. An important and encouraging finding is that a substantial number of both the students and teachers surveyed recorded an awareness of the importance of poetry in people's lives. The data convincingly shows that a lack of awareness of appropriate teaching methods could be a major stumbling block towards its appreciation in the formal education system.

7.2.4 'Poetry in the Primary Classroom'

The 'Poetry in the Primary Classroom' seminars, which were devised for primary school teachers, indicated a 100% positive outcome, year on year, from the teachers who participated in the programme. The document analysis used to evaluate teachers' response to the training workshops revealed the development of skills, which were demonstrated in their ability to plan stimulating and challenging lessons for their pupils, who unanimously recorded their appreciation of the new creative approaches. The success of this teaching and learning approach bodes well for the future of poetry in classrooms indicating that when poetry was taught well and the pupils had an invigorating and dynamic experience of the art form, they responded overwhelmingly enthusiastically to it. This would create a strong argument for the creation of more programmes like this one to ensure that the long and significant history that poetry has endured throughout the ages, continues and thrives into the future.

7.3 Recommendations

Arising from the evidence of the data collected and collated in this research project the following recommendations can be made:

- that poetry should be taught at primary school level in a sustained, creative and interactive manner;
- that a broad range of resources are used to induce meaningful, cognitive and creative engagement and interaction with poetry in the primary and secondary classroom;
- that poetry be taught for its own sake and not as an adjunct of other subjects or as a digression from other more functional parts of the English curriculum;
- that a broad range of poetry should be taught in primary and secondary schools and that students should be encouraged to read poetry in class and in their leisure time;
- that writing poetry should be encouraged at both primary and secondary level;
- that primary school teachers be provided with the knowledge and skills needed to teach poetry effectively, both at pre- and in-service levels, through the provision of specially designed poetry and pedagogy modules.

7.4 Limitations of the study

There were definite limitations in this study. The geographical scope of the survey meant that participant schools were predominantly situated in the greater Dublin area. The lack of second

level teachers' opinions about the teaching of poetry was also a limiting factor although opportunity was provided to a cohort of fifty experienced teachers, the returned amount of nine completed questionnaires was not sufficient to validate reliable findings for second level teachers, and thus had to be discounted early on in the study. The large volume of the survey data meant that not all of the questions in the surveys could be included in the analysis; so only specific questions that related to the main enquiry of this thesis were selected, without bias, for analysis. The selection of these questions meant that other interesting findings had to be excluded but these will be elucidated in research papers in the future.

7.5 Areas for further research

This research project has shown that there are additional areas for further research which need to be undertaken, for example, an extensive study of second level teachers' opinions about the teaching of poetry and the supports needed to teach poetry in secondary schools. Such data could provide an interesting comparative study with the data received from primary school teachers. It would also allow for a degree of validation and verification of second level students' responses to the teaching of poetry in the classroom. There is a need for further and more indepth studies on the efficacy of new approaches to teaching poetry, particularly at second level. A follow up study of those teachers who participated in the training programme would help reveal whether the new practices and techniques acquired endured, and what, if any, were the resultant changes to their personal attitude towards poetry, and their pupils' attitudes towards poetry.

7.6 Personal reflection

This study has shown that poetry has value, and that good teaching methods and a positive attitude towards poetry are paramount in the dissemination of this idea to primary level pupils and secondary level students. Poetry is educative, therapeutic, creative and enjoyable and teachers have a responsibility to access these attributes for their pupils. Kaye Webb[985] demonstrated in *I Like This Poem* that students as young as 6 years old in primary school and as advanced as 15 years old in secondary school can find enjoyment, humour, comfort, empathy, calm, and solace in poetry. The most compelling evidence of the value of poetry is demonstrated in the children's commentaries on their favourite poems, as the following examples will show:

[985] Webb, Kaye ed. (1979) I Like This Poem: A collection of best-loved poems chosen by children for other children. London. Puffin Books.

I hoped that, with the brave ...
'I hoped that, with the brave and strong
My portioned task might lie;
To toil amid the busy throng,
With purpose pure and high'
(One verse from *Last Lines*)[986]

Vanessa Foot[987] who selected *I hoped that, with the brave ...* by Ann Brontë, said, 'When I read this short poem, it made me feel a lot better and cheered me up, so now, whenever I am feeling down I think of it and it comforts me. I often find myself repeating it, not always when I am feeling down.'[988]

Katherine Young[989] who selected *Under the Hazy, Blossom-laden Sky* by Okamoto Jun, said, ' ... because it reveals to me the horror and senselessness of war – not because that delights me but because it helps me to realise how wrong war is and how senseless and destructive. I also like it because it shows the determination of man to put all the evil of war behind him and restart the life he had been living ...'[990]

There are Four Things
'There are four things that are too
mysterious for me to understand:
An eagle flying in the sky,
A snake moving on a rock,
A ship finding its way over the sea,
And a man and a woman falling in love.'[991]

Sara Hammond[992] who selected *There are Four Things* from the Good News Bible, said, 'It's the kind of poetry that when you have read it, you want to read it again – more slowly – and understand it more clearly. When I first read it, I liked it so much that I wrote it out on a sheet of paper, drew a frame of flowers around it and put it on the wall!'[993]

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[986] Ibid. p. 177.
[987] Ibid.
[988] Ibid.
[989] Ibid. p. 180.
[990] Ibid.
[991] Ibid. p. 173.
[992] Ibid.
[993] Ibid.

Melissa Wyper[994] who selected *If* by Rudyard Kipling,[995] said, '... because it gives me a lot of encouragement and I like the way it is written. Rudyard Kipling is my favourite poet ... I think the poem gives lots of good advice, and I have learnt it off by heart. I had to pick three poems instead of just one, because each of these IS my favourite one, and I just couldn't choose between them. They are all something special to me, so I decided to send all three.'[996]

When I had read all of the comments from the children in Webb's anthology, digested the literature presented in chapters two and three and reflected on the data and feedback from document analysis of the primary level teachers' assignments on the role and value of poetry in the primary classroom, I felt that this research project was a worthwhile and imperative undertaking;

'... I think with books and poetry, it's something that you have to love, [it has] to be given to you in the right way, in order for you to appreciate it, and that is the thing.'[997]

[994] Ibid. p. 166.
[995] Ibid. pp. 165, 166.
[996] Ibid. p. 166.
[997] Bridgwood, Ann & Hampson, John ed. (2000) Rhyme and reason: developing contemporary poetry – A study carried out by BML and BMRB on behalf of the Arts Council of England.London. Arts Council of England. p. 95.

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Poetry Ireland, 120 St Stephens Green, Dublin 2. E-mail: poetry@iol.ie

IBby Ireland (International Board on Books for Young People), 20 Victoria Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6.

National Committee For Development Education (NCDE) 16-20 South Cumberland Street, Dublin 2. E-mail: info@ncde.ie

Children's Books Ireland (CBI) 17 Camden Street Lower, Dublin 2. E-mail: childrensbooksire@eircom.net

Amnesty International, 48 Fleet Street, Dublin 2. E-mail: info@amnesty.iol.ie
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Tape I

Fingal Community College, Swords. First year English, boys and girls. 9.10 – 9.47 am. 13th November 2003.

Loreto College, Saint Stephen's Green, Dublin. First year English, girls. 11.05-11.45 am. 13th November 2003.

Tape II

Saint MacDara's, Templeogue, Dublin. Second year English, boys and girls. 14th November 2003.

Tape III

Saint Mary's Holy Faith, Haddington Road, Dublin. Second year English, girls only. 8.55-9.35 am. 17th November 2003.

Saint Louis High School, Rathmines, Dublin. Second year English, girls only. 11.30-12.15 am. 17th November 2003.

Tape IV

Old Bawn Community, Tallaght, Dublin. Fourth year English, boys and girls. 9.40-10.15 am. 20th November 2003.

Tape V

Moyle Park College, Clondalkin, Dublin. First year English, boys only. 1.55-2.35 pm. 12th February 2004.

Tape VI

Saint Andrew's College, Booterstown, Dublin. First year English, boys and girls. 26th February 2004.

Tape VII

Mount Temple Comprehensive, Malahide Road, Dublin. Fourth year English, boys and girls. 27th February 2004.

Tape VIII

Saint Joseph's College, Lucan, Dublin. Second year English. 9.35-10.10 am. 4th March 2004.

Tape IX

Willow Park College, Blackrock, Dublin. First year English, boys only. 9.40-10.20 am. 5th March 2004.

Appendices

Appendix 1
Extracts from Sacred Poetry

Sacred Poetry
Adapted To The Understanding Of Children And Youth
For The Schools

Printed And Published By Direction Of The Commissioners Of National Education Ireland.
Dublin.
Browne And Nolan, Limited
1897.

Preface (pp. iii, iv)
The practice of throwing important truths and precepts into poetical form, for the purpose of being committed to memory, has prevailed in all nations that have made any advancement towards civilization or refinement. It is a practice that comes commended to us by the example of the inspired writers; for a considerable portion of the Sacred Scriptures consists of poems, embodying in them the leading events of history, and the great fundamental doctrines and precepts of religion. Poetry of this description, committed to memory, becomes a record of facts and of precepts, which a man carries constantly about with him, ready to be used for his direction when he may require it. the poetical form, also, into which Sacred truths and precepts have thus been moulded, tends to soften his manners, to refine his taste, and to give him a relish for pleasures of a higher order and of a purer kind than those to which he might otherwise be tempted to betake himself. With the view of providing for the peasantry of Ireland these benefits, the Commissioners of National Education have made the following selection of Sacred poetry, adapted to the understanding of children; and they earnestly recommend to the conductors and teachers of the Irish National Schools that their pupils may be taught to commit them to memory.

Contents

I The Advantages of Early Religion
II A General Hymn of Praise
III From Psalm XCV
IV From Psalm XC
V Praise for Mercies Spiritual and Temporal
VI Praise for Creation and Providence
VII The All-Seeing God
VIII "Our Father who art in Heaven
IX Resignation to God
X Trust in Providence
XI Evening Hymn
XII From John, III
XIII From Isaiah, LIII
XIV Hymn of Mary, The Virgin, Mother of our Blessed Lord
XV The Birth of Christ
XVI From Matthew, XI
XVII From Psalm LI
XVIII Denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts
XIX Examples of Early Piety
XX For a very Little Child
XXI Meekness of the Saviour
XXII The Example of Christ
XXIII On Prayer
XXIV From Psalm CXIX
XXV Conscience
XXVI Against Yielding to Temptation
XXVII Against the Scoffing of the World
XXVIII For a Child who has been very naughty
XXIX "Turn off mine Eyes from beholding Vanity"
XXX For a child that is Sorry for a Fault
XXXI A Morning Hymn
XXXII Another
XXXIII An Evening Hymn

XXXIV Lord's Day Morning
XXXV The Lord's Day Evening
XXXVI Filial Love
XXXVII Love and Duty to Parents
XXXVIII A Child's Lamentation for the Death of a dear Mother
XXXIX An Evening Hymn for a Little Family
XL Against Wandering Thoughts
XLI Love Between Brothers and Sisters
XLII Against Anger and Impatience
XLIII Against Quarrelling and Fighting
XLIV Against Scoffing and Calling Names
XLV Against Lying
XLVI Against Envy
XLVII Against Pride in Clothes
XLVIII Against Idleness and Mischief
XLIX For a very Little Child in Sickness
L A Hymn of Praise for Recovery
LI "In the Morning, it flourisheth, and groweth up – In the Evening, it is cut down and Withereth"
LII Evening Hymn
LIII A Minute
LIV From I Thessalonians IV
LV The Beatitudes
LVI The Sum of the Commandments
LVII The way to find out Pride
LVIII The way to cure Pride
LIX Encouragement in Striving against Pride

Examples of some of the poems in the anthology

The Advantages of Early Religion
Happy the child, whose tender years
Receive instructions well;
Who hates the Sinner's path, and fears
The road that leads to hell.

When we devote our youth to God,
'Tis pleasing in his eyes;
A flower, when offered in the bud,
Is no vain sacrifice.

'Tis easier work if we begin
To fear the Lord betimes;
While Sinners that grow old in Sin,
Are hardened in their crimes.

'Twill save us from a thousand snares,
To mind religion young;
Grace will preserve our following years,
And make our virtue strong.

To thee, Almighty God, to thee,
Our childhood we resign,
'Twill please us to look back and see
That our whole lives were thine.

The All-Seeing God
Almighty God! Thy piercing eye
Strikes thro' the shades of night;
And our most secret actions lie
All open to thy sight.

There's not a sin that we commit,
Nor wicked word we say,
But in thy dreadful book 'tis writ
Against the judgment day!
And must the sins that I have done
Be read and published there?
Be all exposed before the sun,
While men and angels hear?

Lord, at thy foot ashamed I lie,
Upward I dare not look;
Pardon my sins before I die,
And blot them from thy book.

Remember all the dying pains
That my Redeemer felt,
And let his blood wash out my stains
And answer for my guilt.

O may I now for ever fear
To indulge a single thought,
Since the great God can see and hear,
And writes down every fault.

For A Child Who Has Been Very Naughty
Lord, I confess before thy face,
How naughty I have been,
Look down from Heaven, thy dwelling-place,
And pardon this my sin.

Forgive my temper, Lord I pray,
My passion and my pride;
The wicked words I dared to say,
And wicked thoughts beside.

I cannot lay me down to rest,
In quiet on my bed,
Until with shame I have confest
The naughty things I said.

The Saviour answered not again,
Nor spoke angry word,
To all the scoffs of wicked men,
Although He was their Lord!

And who am I, a single child,
Such angry words to say!
Make me as mild as he was mild,
And take my pride away.

For Jesus' sake forgive my crime,
And change this stubborn heart
And grant me grace, another time,
To act a better part.

"Turn Off Mine Eyes From Beholding Vanity"

Lord, hear a sinful child complain,
Whose little heart is very vain,
And folly dwells within:
What is it – for thine eye can see –
That is so very dear to me,
That steals my thoughts away from thee,
And leads me into sin?

Whatever gives me most delight,
If 'tis offensive in thy sight,
I would no more pursue: -
Since nothing can be good for me,
However pleasant it may be,
That is displeasing, Lord, to thee,
May I dislike it too!

When I attempt to read or pray,
I'm often thinking of my play,
Or some such idle thing:
How happy are the saints in bliss,
Who love no sinful world like this,
But all their joy and glory is,
To praise their heavenly King!

These trifling pleasures here below –
I wonder why I love them so;
They cannot make me blest.
O that to love my God might be
The greatest happiness to me!
And may he give me grace to see
That this is not my rest!

For A Child That Is Sorry For A Fault

Lord, I have dared to disobey
My friends on earth, and thee in heaven;
O help me now to come and play,
For Jesus' sake to be forgiven.

O cannot say I did not know,
For I've been taught thy holy will;
And while my conscience told me so,
And bade me stop, I did it still.

But thou wast there to see my crime,
And write it in thy judgment book
O make me fear, another time,
A sinful thought, or word, or look.

Forgive me Lord, forgive, I pray,
This naughty thing that I have done,
And take my sinful heart away,
And make me holy, like thy son.

Appendix 2
Extracts from the Book of Poetry for Schools and Families

PREFACE.

In this "Book of Poetry for Schools and Families," the extracts are arranged in the chronological order of the poets.

Brief notes are given of the life and principal works of each writer; and it is hoped that these notes will be as useful to others as they have been to the Editor, in forming the groundwork of short lessons on Poets and Poetry.

Many of the "Gems" given at the end of the volume (or at least portions of them) are household words with all well-read people; and in giving them a place here, the Editor trusts he may be, in some degree, instrumental in familiarizing the young of both sexes, not only with these household words, but with their sources, and, in most instances, with the passages of which they form a part.

LS B-5-337

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POETICAL GEMS.*

Smooth run the waters where the brook is deep.
Shakspere's Henry VI.

An honest man's the noblest work of God.
Pope's Essay on Man.

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.
Keats's Endymion.

There was never yet philosopher
That could endure the toothache patiently.
Shakspere's Much Ado about Nothing.

It is a custom
More honoured in the breach than the observance.
Shakspere's Hamlet.

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.
Shakspere's Hamlet.

I am a man
More sinned against than sinning.
Shakspere's King Lear.

There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out.
Shakspere's Henry V.

The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones.
Shakspere's Julius Cæsar

How far that little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.
Shakspere's Merchant of Venice.

If parts allure thee, think how Bacon shined,—
The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind.
Pope's Essay on Man.

Order is Heaven's first law, and this confest,
Some are, and must be, greater than the rest.
Ibid.

* Most of these are "gems" which, in the opinion of the Editor, ought to find a place in the memory of all young people.

For forms of governments let fools contest;
Whate'er is best administered is best.
Ibid.

Who builds a church to God, and not to fame,
Will never mark the marble with his name.
Pope's Moral Essays.

Delightful task! to rear the tender thought;
To teach the young idea how to shoot.
Thomson's Seasons.

Silently, one by one, in the infinite meadows of heaven,
Blossomed the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels.
Longfellow's Evangeline.

I doubt not, through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.
Tennyson's Locksley Hall.

To thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Shakspere's Hamlet.

It is excellent
To have a giant's strength, but tyrannous
To use it like a giant.
Shakspere's Measure for Measure.

For aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth.
Shakspere's Midsummer Night's Dream.

Trifles light as air
Are, to the jealous, confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ.
Shakspere's Othello.

Glory is like a circle in the water,
Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself,
Till, by broad spreading, it disperse to nought.
Shakspere's Henry VI.

Loveliness
Needs not the foreign aid of ornament,
But is, when unadorned, adorned the most.
Thomson's Seasons.

The good die first;
And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust
Burn to the socket.

Wordsworth's Excursion.

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

Shakspere's Julius Cæsar

They say the tongues of dying men
Enforce attention like deep harmony;
Where words are scarce they're seldom spent in vain,
For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain.

Shakspere's Richard II.

A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,—
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty;
And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty
Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it.

Shakspere's Taming of the Shrew.

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

Pope's Essay on Man.

Why do those cliffs of shadowy tint appear
More sweet than all the landscape smiling near?
'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,
And robes the mountain in its azure hue.

Campbell's Pleasures of Hope.

His fall was destined to a barren strand,
A petty fortress, and a dubious hand;
He* left the name at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral and adorn a tale.

Dr. Johnson's Vanity of Human Wishes.

The good old rule
Sufficeth them; the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.

Wordsworth's Reb Roy.

* Charles XII. of Sweden.

This truth came borne by bier and pall,
I felt it when I sorrowed most,—
'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all.

Tennyson's In Memoriam.

What in me is dark,
Illumine; what is low, raise and support;
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

Milton's Paradise Lost.

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in its head.
And this our life, exempt from public haunts,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

Shakspere's As You Like It.

She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought;
And, with a green and yellow melancholy,
She sat like Patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief.

Shakspere's Twelfth Night.

Cowards die many times before their death;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I ever heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.

Shakspere's Julius Cæsar.

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased;
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow;
Raze out the written troubles of the brain;
And, with some sweet oblivious antidote,
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?

Shakspere's Macbeth.

I have lived long enough : my way of life
Is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf ;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have ; but in their stead,
Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, but dare not.

Ibid.

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven ;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

Shakspere's Midsummer Night's Dream.

Good name in man or woman
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.
Who steals my purse, steals trash ; 'tis something,—nothing ;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands ;
But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.

Shakspere's Othello.

Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed ;
The next in majesty ; in both the last.
The force of nature could no further go ;
To make a third, she joined the former two.

Dryden's Lines under Milton's Picture.

In peace, love tunes the shepherd's reed ;
In war, he mounts the warrior's steed ;
In halls, in gay attire is seen ;
In hamlets, dances on the green.
Love rules the camp, the court, the grove,
And men below, and saints above,—
For Love is Heaven, and Heaven is Love.

Scott's Lay of the Last Minstrel.

The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit shall dissolve ;

And, like the insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind ! We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

Shakspere's Tempest.

To be possessed with double pomp;
To guard a title that was rich before,
To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,
To smooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.

Shakspere's King John.

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky :
So was it when my life began ;
So is it now I am a man ;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die !
The child is father of the man,
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

Wordsworth.

This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again,
Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them. Nought shall make us rue,
If England to itself do rest but true.

Shakspere's King John.

Oh, ever thus, from childhood's hour,
I've seen my fondest hopes decay ;
I never loved a tree or flower,
But 'twas the first to fade away ;
I never nursed a dear gazelle,
To glad me with his soft black eye,
But when it came to know me well,
And love me, it was sure to die.

Moore's Lalla Rookh.

When Learning's triumph o'er her barbarous foes
First reared the stage, immortal Shakspere rose;
Each change of many-coloured life he drew,
Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new;
Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,
And panting time toiled after him in vain.
His powerful strokes presiding truth impressed,
And unresisting passion stormed the breast.

Dr. Johnson.

At thirty, man suspects himself a fool,
Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan;
At fifty, chides his infamous delay,
Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve,
In all the magnanimity of thought;
Resolves, and [illegible]-resolves, then dies the same,
And why? because he thinks himself immortal.
All men think all men mortal but themselves.

Young's Night Thoughts.

Man's love is of man's life a thing apart;
'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range
The court, camp, church, the vessel and the mart,
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart;
And few there are whom these cannot estrange;
Men have all these resources, we but one,—
To love again, and be again undone.

Byron's Don Juan.

Some feelings are to mortals given,
With less of earth in them than heaven;
And if there be a human tear
From passion's dross refined and clear,
A tear so limpid and so meek,
It would not stain an angel's cheek,
'Tis that which pious fathers shed
Upon a duteous daughter's head!

Scott's Lady of the Lake.

Eternal Hope! when yonder spheres sublime
Pealed their first notes to sound the march of time,
Their joyous youth began—but not to fade.
When all the sister planets have decayed;
When wrapt in fire the realms of ether glow,
And Heaven's last thunder shakes the world below;
Thou, undismayed, shalt o'er the ruins smile,
And light thy torch at Nature's funeral pile!

Campbell's Pleasures of Hope.

One morn a Peri[1] at the gate
Of Eden stood, disconsolate;
And as she listened to the springs
Of life within, like music flowing,
And caught the light upon her wings
Through the half-open portal glowing,
She wept to think her recreant race
Should e'er have lost that glorious place!

Moore's Lalla Rookh.

To be, or not to be,—that is the question:—
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune;
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them? To die—to sleep,—
No more;—and, by a sleep, to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to,—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished.

Shakspere's Hamlet.

Heaven doth with us as we with torches do:
Not light them for themselves: for if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touched,
But to fine issues. Nature never lends
The smallest scruple of her excellence;
But, like a thrifty goddess, she determines
Herself the glory of a creditor,
Both thanks and use.

Shakspere's Measure for Measure.

True love's the gift which God has given
To man alone beneath the heaven.
It is not fantasy's hot fire,
Whose wishes, soon as granted, fly:
It liveth not in fierce desire,
With dead desire it doth not die;
It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind.

Scott's Lay of the Last Minstrel.

[1] In *Persian Mythology*, a term applied to the descendants of fallen spirits.

If manly sense; if nature linked with art;
If thorough knowledge of the human heart;
If powers of acting, vast and unconfined;
If fewer faults with greatest beauties joined;
If strong impressions, and strange powers which lie
Within the magic circle of the eye;
If feelings which few hearts, like his, can know,
And which no face so well as his can show,—
Deserve the preference, Garrick, take the chair,
Nor quit it till thou place an equal there.

Churchill's Rosciad.

Here lies David Garrick—describe me who can,
An abridgment of all that was pleasant in man.
As an actor, confessed without rival to shine;
As a wit, if not first, in the very first line;
Yet, with talents like these, and an excellent heart,
The man had his failings—a dupe to his art.
Like an ill-judging beauty, his colours he spread,
And beplastered with rouge his own natural red.
On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting;
'Twas only that when he was off, he was acting.

Goldsmith's Retaliation.

There is a fragrant blossom, that maketh glad the garden of the heart;
Its root lieth deep; it is delicate, yet lasting, as the lilac crocus of autumn;
Loveliness and thought are the dews that water it morning and even;
Memory and absence cherish it, as the balmy breathings of the south.
Its sun is the brightness of Affection, and it bloometh in the border of Hope.
Its companions are gentle flowers, and the brier withereth by its side.
I saw it budding in beauty; I felt the magic of its smile;
The violet rejoiced beneath it, the rose stooped down and kissed it;
And I thought some cherub had planted there a truant flower of Eden.
As a bird bringeth foreign seeds, that they may flourish in a kindly soil.
I saw, and asked not its name. I knew no language was so wealthy,
Though every heart of every clime findeth its echo within.

Martin F. Tupper.

Now came still Evening on, and Twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests,
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;
She all night long her amorous descant sung;
Silence was pleased: now glowed the firmament
With living sapphires: Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon,
Rising in cloudless majesty, at length
Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

Milton's Paradise Lost.

Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy; for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life
Shall e'er prevail against us or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings.

Wordsworth's Lines on Revisiting the Wye.

Repine not, O my son!
That Heaven hath chastened thee. Behold this vine!
I found it a wild tree, whose wanton strength
Hath swoln into irregular twigs
And bold excrescences,
And spent itself in leaves and little rings,
So in the flourish of its outwardness
Wasting the sap and strength
That should have given forth fruit;
But when I pruned the tree,
Then it grew temperate in its vain expense
Of useless leaves, and knotted, as thou seest,
Into these full, clear clusters, to repay
The hand that wisely wounded it.

Southey's Thalaba.

Heaven from all creatures hides the book of Fate,
All but the page prescribed, their present state;

Appendix 3
Extracts from Ditties for Children
By Nancy Sproat

DITTIES

FOR

CHILDREN.

~~~~~~

BY A LADY OF BOSTON.

~~~~~~

NORTHAMPTON:
PUBLISHED BY E. TURNER.

THE GOOD BOY.

See the little bees,
  Flying to the bower;
Here they hum, and there they hum,
  And light upon a flower,

They suck the honey out,
  And away they fly home,
And then they go to work so fast,
  To fill the honey-comb.

See the little ants,
  Scattered o'er the plain,
How hard they work, and tug, and lift,
  To carry home a grain.

And then with how much care,
  They lay it up in store,
And travel off in haste again,
  To find a little more.

See the pretty birds,
  In glossy plumage drest,
Picking straws and little sticks,
  To build themselves a nest.

And then they place it safe
  Along the boughs so high,
Where green leaves o'ershading it,
  May keep the nestlings dry.

Shall I a little boy,
  Spend all my time in play,
When bees, and ants, and little birds,
  Are working all the day?

No, no, I'll go to school,
  And all the while I'm there,
I'll study hard to pay my friends
  For all their tender care.

And when I am at home,
  I'll be industrious too;
And not a single thing I'm bid,
  Will I refuse to do.

Sometimes, when I have *leave*,
  With clever boys I'll play;
And thus I mean to spend my time,
  On every future day.

THE LITTLE LIAR.

The coach is tackled, sister, run,
And put your gloves and bonnet on;
It is about a week ago,
Our parents promised us, you know,
If we were good, that we to-day,
Should have the coach, and ride away.
Our cousins too are all at home,
How glad they'll be to see us come!
And they're such lovely girls and boys,
And have so many pretty toys,
And we shall have the sweetest ride,

Through trees along the river side!--
Come, sister come, make no delay,
'Tis time for us to start away.
What ails you Mary? an't you well?
What makes you cry so! prithee tell--
"Harry, I can't--don't ask me why--
And yet I must--*I've told a lie!*
And here, shut up, I'm doom'd to stay,
And weep and mourn the live-long day,
I shall not dare to show my face,
Nor join the children in their plays--
They'll see my tears and then inquire
What I have done--and call me *liar*.
And, Harry, I'm afraid that you
And Harriet will hate me too--
But what is worst of all, Mamma
Don't speak to me, nor does Papa--
Not once upon me have they smil'd,
Since I was such a wicked child--
Oh! it wil break my heart, I'm sure,
I never told a lie before,
And never, never, will again,
If I their pardon can obtain.
Go--it is time that you were gone.

Appendix 4
Extracts from Peter Parley's Poetry

PETER PARLEY'S
METHOD OF
TELLING ABOUT
GEOGRAPHY
TO
CHILDREN.
WITH NINE MAPS AND SEVENTY-FIVE ENGRAVINGS
PRINCIPALLY FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS

HARTFORD:
H. AND F. J. HUNTINGTON.

CARTER, HENDEE AND BABCOCK, BOSTON; COLLINS AND HANNAY, NEW YORK;
TOWER, J. AND D. M. HOGAN, PHILADELPHIA; PLASKITT AND CO.,
BALTIMORE; THOMPSON AND HOMANS, WASHINGTON.

1831.

PREFACE.

The author of this little book, has sought to give to a work designed principally for the use of schools, the attractive qualities of books of amusement. As fiction derives its interest from its resemblance to truth, I can see no reason in the nature of the case, why matters of fact may not be presented in a guise to captivate youth, as well as matters of imagination. One of the principal sources of interest in the inimitable tale of Robinson Crusoe, is the appearance of reality which the author has thrown over the narrative. Now if fiction thus borrows its attractions from truth, why is it necessary to deal so largely in fiction in the instruction of youth? Perhaps the sarcasm of the player, to the preacher, "we represent fiction as if it were truth, and you preach truth as if it were fiction," is applicable to this subject. The cold and formal style of most books of juvenile knowledge, is probably the real cause that has driven parents and teachers to the use of books of fiction for children.

In the present work, I have ventured to treat a subject usually presented in a systematic form, in a somewhat colloquial manner, taking often a story-teller's latitude in the use of phraseology, in the method of illustration, and in the arrangement of facts. I have not hesitated to repeat several times the same thing, whenever it might better suit my purpose.

Geography, more than almost any other youthful study, deals in visible images. The eye is the most active of the senses, and a large amount of visible impressions are soon acquired. For this reason, Geography is better fitted than most other studies for children. They are sooner able to comprehend it, because they early possess more ideas and more knowledge of language, relating to such topics as it presents, than of other subjects. In other words, children have ideas of hills, mountains, water, both flowing and at rest,--of distance and dimension,--of forms and shapes,--of men and their difference of action, figure and complexion,--of the rites of religion,--and of most of the elementary ideas of Geography, long before the abstract notions which constitute the rudiments of grammar, for instance, are formed. They also understand names and modes of speech belonging to the former, much sooner than those belonging to the latter.

It is this adaptation of Geography to early instruction, that has brought it into almost universal use, as a first study for children. I have sought to make it a still fitter subject for this purpose, by suiting the language and the manner of its exhibition to children, and by presenting numerous cuts for the purposes both of illustration and association.

I do not pretend to have gone as far as I could have wished in conforming to my own idea of a good Geography for children, but until something better is furnished, I offer this to parents and teachers, and hope my little friends may find it amusing and instructive.

I hope I need make no apology for having availed myself of occasional opportunities to inculcate lessons of morality and religion upon the youthful heart. The heart is as capable of being taught as the intellect, and happiness depends much more upon its proper and right cultivation, than upon the cultivation of the mind. Yet I fear that the moral part of children, the source of feeling and sentiment is often left to run to weeds, and consequently shoots up into wild, irregular, and sometimes over-mastering passions. The sooner the juvenile bosom can be made to feel the gentle and genial influences of truth, love, humanity, and religion, the better. A principal thing to be aimed at on this subject, is to adapt moral instruction to the character of those whom it is designed to benefit, and carefully to avoid wearying and disgusting children with unsuitable and unseasonable admonition.

P. P.

INTRODUCTORY LESSON
Questions to my little Reader.

What place do you live in?
Is it a town or a city you live in?
What is a town? What is a city?
Which way is North? Which South?
Which way is East? Which West?
Have you ever been in any other town or city than the one you live in?
If you have, what was the name of that town?
In going to that town, which way did you go?
What town lies next the place in which you live, on the north?
What town is next, on the east?
What next, on the west?
What next, on the South?
What County do you live in?
Do you know what a County is?
What State do you live in?
Which way is Boston from the place you live in?
Which way is New-York?
Which way is Hartford?
Which way is Philadelphia?
Have you ever seen a river?
Have you ever seen a mountain?
If you have, what was it called?
Describe a mountain?
Did you ever see the sea, or ocean?
What is the sea, land or water?
Is the land smooth and level, like the water?
Are towns built on the water, or on the land?
Do animals such as horses and cows live on the water, or on the land?
Did you ever catch any fish on the land?
Where is the sky? Where are the stars?
Did you known [sic] what the shape of the world is?
Did you ever hear of England?
Did you ever see anybody who has been in England?
Do you know which way England lies?
Did you ever hear of Asia?
Do you know which way Asia lies?
Did you ever hear of Africa, where negroes come from?
Do you know which way it lies?

The parent or teacher can prepare the pupil to enter upon the following lessons, by addressing to him a series of questions like the preceding, and when the pupil is unable to answer, by instructing him how to do so. The questions will need to be a little varied to suit the different circumstances of pupils.

[p. 10]

[*Transcriber's note:* In this delicate engraving, the circumference of the earth is punctuated by tiny figures which project from the circle: a pagoda projects from Asia, and the sails of tiny ships dot the section circle over the oceans. A volcano spouts smoke on what appears to be Greenland. The continents are dotted with images of the animals living there.]

GEOGRAPHY FOR CHILDREN.

LESSON FIRST.
GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE EARTH.

1. Here is a picture of the World, or the Earth we live upon. It is round you see, and seems to swing in the air like a great ball. It is surrounded by the heavens, or a sky and stars.

2. The surface of the world is divided into land and water, as you will see by the picture. Men live on the land, and build towns and cities upon it; animals of various kinds also live on the land; vessels sail on the water, and fish live in the water.

3. Vessels sail around the world on all sides of it, as a fly would crawl around an apple. If you look at the picture, you will see vessels sailing in various directions.

4. Men and animals live on the land on all sides of the world. They have a sky and stars above them, let them be in what part of the world they may. If you were to go to Asia, or Africa, or any other country, there would still be stars over your head.

The only purpose of the engraving that faces this page, is to convey the general idea that the earth is a globe or ball, and that we inhabit its surface. Of course, nothing like the relative proportion of the objects is attempted in the representation.

---

p. 12

5. Now geography is a description of the world; it tells us of its shape, and how it is divided; and it describes the men and animals that live upon it. Geography is therefore a very useful and interesting study.

I am now going to ask you some questions to see if you remember what I have told you.

Questions.

1. What is the shape of the world or earth?
   What does it seem to swing in the air like?
   What is the earth surrounded by?
2. What is the surface of the earth divided into?
   What live on the land?
   What sail on the water?
3. Like what do vessels sail around the earth?
   What can you see in the picture sailing on all sides of the earth?
4. Do men and animals live only on one side of the world, or on all sides of it?
   What do men see above them, in all parts of the world?
   If you were to go to Asia, or Africa, what would you see above you?
5. What is geography?
   What does geography tell of?
   What does geography describe?
   Is geography a useful and interesting study?

Note. One of the first things to be taught a child in Geography is, that the world is round, and that men and animals inhabit its surface. Simple as the idea seems to be, it is one not easily received by children; and therefore at the end of this lesson, the teacher or parent should make the pupil understand it, and correct at the outset the crude and erroenous fancies which he will be apt to form. The use of an artificial globe will make this a very easy matter.

Appendix 5
Extracts from The Pearl

THE

PEARL;

OR,

AFFECTION'S GIFT.

FOR MDCCCXXXVII.

A CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S

PRESENT.

PHILADELPHIA:
THOMAS T. ASH & HENRY F. ANNERS,
CHESNUT STREET.

ENTERED, according to act of congress, in the year 1836, by THOMAS T. ASH & HENRY F. ANNERS, in the clerk's office of the district, for the eastern district of Pennsylvania.

A. WALDIE, PRINTER.

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Presentation plate.
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The Little Archer, Sartain [Engraved by J. Sartain]
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Mother and Child, J. P. Davis, [Engraved by J. Sartain]
The Whole Holiday, R. Farrier, [Engraved by J. Sartain]
Murder of the Princes, J. Northcote, [Engraved by J. Sartain]

A. D. W.

TO A LITTLE GIRL,
MY GENTLE GIRL
BY JAMES NACK.

My gentle girl! if prayers avail,
To bless thee mine shall never fail,
For from my heart beyond the skies
My aspirations shall arise,
That every passing year may shed
A blessing on thy angel head,
And all in vain be time's control
To cloud thy mind or shade thy soul.
May innocence adorn thee still;
And purity, that thinks no ill;
And modesty, whose bashful grace
In hues of heaven bedyes the face;
And charity, with open heart,
A ministering angel's part:
Affection too, whose feelings rush
In freshness like a fountain's gush;
And virtue, that to beauty lends
A charm that every charm transcends;
And piety, that on her flings
All of the angel but the wings!
May these with gems of heaven impearl
Thy path of life, my gentle girl,
Till welcomed to thy home of light,
To dwell with God, an angel quite!

p. 43

A MOTHER'S ANGER.
'Tis the first time--the only time
That e'er she turned away,
And left me with the brand of crime
To curse this fatal day!

For sixteen years her evening kiss
Has dwelt upon my brow,
Or lip, or cheek, in gentleness,--
Alas! where is it now?

Would that I were again the child,
Who lay upon her breast,
And looked into her eyes and smiled
Caressing and caress'd!

Would that I now could bend my head
Upon her knee in prayer,
And hear the holy words she said
When once I nestled there!

Oh, had I dashed the cup away

That lured me to my shame!--
I cannot weep--I cannot pray:
My heart--my thoughts are flame!

Mother, dear mother, turn once more
And bless thy sorrowing son!
Look on me as thou did'st before
Ere sin's dark work was done.

Oh, heaven! she comes--I feel her breath
Cool, on my fevered eyes!
She speaks--the burning torch of death
At her soft accent flies!

Oh, mother, on my knees I swear
To spurn the *tempting bowl*,
Nor risk again when revellers are
Thy love--my God--my soul!

CAROLINE GILMAN.

Charleston, S. C.

THE BLIND BOY.

And thou art blind, poor boy! The sun is shedding
A golden glow upon thy hidden way,
And all things full of loveliness are are spreading
their gayest charms to meet the Eye of Day,
Yet there is nought but shadow in the mind;
Alas! I grieve for thee, that thou art blind.

Fresh breezes blow around. The clouds are waking
The sleeping ether with their foot-tread light;
And insect tribes on filmy wings are taking
Towards its depths of blue their airy flight;
And bird and butterfly and blooming flower,
In every garden, seem to greet the hour.

'Tis holiday abroad. Bright, child-like faces
Form fair and lovely groups at every door,
And many a tiny foot the pathway traces
That leads to social pleasures yet in store;
Yet on *thou* movest with a measured glide,
Nor turn'st thy rayless eye on either side.

Art thou quite lone? Oh! no, for thou art leaning
With touching confidence on a slight arm;
A child's soft glance doth look with earnest meaning
Up to thy face, and bids thee fear no harm;
Is she thy sister? that she shares thy lot,
So full of loneliness, yet murmurs not.

The thoughtless prattler! how her lip is telling
Of every pretty thing that meets her sight,
Each passing show and toy and well known dwelling,
All stir her little breast with fresh delight!
And reckless that this world to thee is nought,
She fills with yearnings vain thy cell of thought.

Would I were thy companion: 'twere such pleasure
To learn the unknown language of thy heart;
And grow familiar with each secret treasure
Of joy, that in thy spirit must have part--
I would not read Creation's sealed book,

Since on its open page thou canst not look.

And yet I err: that guide, so young and simple,
Quite unaware hath touch'd a pleasant theme,
For on thy cheek there rests a playful dimple,
As sports on some rich cloud a bright sunbeam,
And by that happy smile I know full well
There is no solitude where Love doth dwell.

Farewell to thee, blind boy! mysterious Heaven
Hath clos'd the outer door, yet to the shrine
Of thought within, in mercy it hath given
A stronger light,--Oh! guard the lamp divine,
And though deep darkness veils this earthly sod,
No *shade* can come 'twixt thee and nature's God!
M. E. L.

Charleston, S. C.

WISHES

JULIUS.--I wish I were a comet
To sparkle in the sky,
And have the looks of all the world
Admiring me on high.

EMILY.--I'd rather be a taper,
To cheer the winter night;
And shine on happy faces,
Rejoicing in my light.

JULIUS.--I wish I were Niagara,
Adown the rocks to roar;
And have my glorious waters
With rainbows crested o'er.

EMILY.--I'd rather be a streamlet,
To ripple through the wood,
And cherish the sweet flowers
That deck my solitude.

JULIUS.--I wish I were an oak tree,
To lift my lofty form
Against the winds of winter,
And battle with the storm.

EMILY.--I'd rather be a snow-drop,
The pretty, modest thing,
That always brings good news to us,
Sweet harbinger of spring!

JULIUS.--I wish I were a stout ship,
Across the seas to go;
And bear Columbia's thunders
Against a gallant foe.

EMILY.--I'd rather be a life-boat,
To ride the stormy wave;
It may be *glory* to *destroy*,
'Tis *happiness* to *save*.

MOTHER.--Right, Emily--and Julius,
Though man abroad may roam,

While woman's quiet duties
Are better learnt at home;
This truth, my dearest children,
On memory ever bind--
None but the *good* and *useful*
True greatness ever find.
MRS. ANNA BACHE.

p. 133

REQUEST OF A DYING CHILD

[A little boy, of four years old, in his last moments spoke of fair green fields, and beautiful groves, which he supposed that he saw, and his dying words were,--"Let me go to them. Open the door, and let me go. Oh, *do* let me go home."]

"Yes, let me go. Yon fields are green,
Those groves are waving fair,
I see my bright and glorious home;
Oh, let me enter there.
Here, 'tis a weary strife to breathe,
A heavy toil to pray,
And goodness fades like morning-dew,
And darkness clouds the day."

'Twas thus the dying child implored
Of those who wept in woe,
Still sighing, till his eye grew dim,
"Oh, father! let me go."
His cheek grew pale. Had ghastly death
Death the last mortal blow?
Again those trembling lips unclose,--
"Dear mother,--let me go."

And how could they the soul detain,
Thus struggling to be free?
How league with the oppressor, Pain,
To bar its liberty?
So, opening wide their stricken hearts,
The uncaged warbler soar'd,
And from the everlasting hills,
A song of rapture pour'd.

p. 170

ADVICE TO A YOUNG LADY.

Life, dear girl! is but a flower,
Gay but transient is its hour!
And, though it blooms so fair in thee,
Then nurse it well while yet it lasts,
Shield it from the withering blasts;
Let indolence ne'er gnaw its root,
Nor folly blight the ripening fruit,
Support it with the props of truth,--
The noblest ornament of youth,--
And watch and guard a bloom so fair,
And shield it from each latent snare.
On it let fancy waft a gale,
And virtue's quickening suns prevail;
Let knowledge shed enriching dews,
And all its varied sweets infuse;
And hope stand by each storm to quell,
And gild it with her magic spell.
Then though in some ill-fated hour,
A nipping blast may blight they flower,
Though cruel death, with aspect drear,

Forbid thy bud to blossom here,
'Neath brighter suns and clearer skies,
It still will to perfection rise;
Will spring with beauty from the tomb,
Excelling e'en thy present bloom,
And show a brighter richer grace
Than e'en thy sweet ingenuous face.

p. 178

TO A LITTLE GIRL

Margaret, we never met before,
And, Margaret, we may ne'er meet more--
    Yet this I say at parting:
Scarce half a year has run its race
Since first I saw thy fairy face,
Around this gay and sprightly place,
    Sweet smiles and blushes darting;
Yet this to thee I frankly tell,
That from my heart I wish thee well.

I dare not wish thee stores of wealth,
A troop of friends, unfailing health,
    And freedom from affliction;
I dare not wish thee beauty's prize--
Carnation lips and bright blue eyes,
They look through tears, they breathe in sighs--
    Hear, then, my benediction:
Of these good gifts be thou possess'd,
Just in the manner God sees best.

But, little Margaret, may thou be
All that His eye delights to see--
    All that He loves and blesses:
The Lord in darkness be thy light--
thy help in need, thy shield in fight--
They health, thy treasure, and thy might--
    Thy comfort in distresses;
Thy hope through every future breath,
And thy eternal joy in death.

ANONYM.

p. 190

Appendix 6
Primary school pupil questionnaire

Student Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions

1. Name _____

2. School _____

3. Class _____

4. Age _____

5. Male ☐ Female ☐

6. Do you like poetry? Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain Why? _____

_____

_____

7. I like rhyming poems? Yes ☐ No ☐

8. Learning poetry is fun? Yes ☐ No ☐

9. I like short poems? Yes ☐ No ☐

10. Learning poetry is hard? Yes ☐ No ☐

11. My teacher makes poetry fun to learn? Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain how? _____

_____

_____

12. I like to learn poems with actions? Yes ☐ No ☐

13. I like to write poems? Yes ☐ No ☐

14. I learn lots of poems in class? Yes ☐ No ☐

Can you name your favourite poems? _____

_____

_____

15. Poetry is important? Yes ☐ No ☐

Why? _____

_____

_____

16. I like long poems? Yes ☐ No ☐

17. Poetry is boring? Yes ☐ No ☐

Why? _____

_____

_____

18. We learn poems in Irish? Yes ☐ No ☐

19. Poetry should be taught in primary school? Yes ☐ No ☐

Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

20. We use music to help us learn poems? Yes ☐ No ☐

How is it used? _____

_____

_____

21. I like to read poems at home? Yes ☐ No ☐

22. I only read poems because I have to? Yes ☐ No ☐

23. Only girls should read poems? Yes ☐ No ☐

Why? _____

_____

_____

24. Poetry is important? Yes ☐ No ☐

Do poems teach you anything? _____

_____

_____

25. We use poems in lots of subjects? Yes ☐ No ☐

Does it help you to learn the subject better? _____

_____

_____

26. Boys and girls should study poetry? Yes ☐ No ☐

27. We study lots of different kinds of poems in class? Yes ☐ No ☐

28. I like happy poems? Yes ☐ No ☐

29. We only learn hard poems? Yes ☐ No ☐

30. I think learning poems is a waste of time? Yes ☐ No ☐

Why? _____

_____

_____

31. Poetry is the best subject we learn? Yes ☐ No ☐

Why? _____

_____

_____

32. Poetry is the worst subject we learn? Yes ☐ No ☐

Why? _____

_____

_____

Thank you for your help with these questions

Appendix 7
Second level student questionnaire

Pupil questionnaire

1. Name _____
2. School _____

   _____
3. Age _____
4. Class _____
5. Did you study a lot of poetry in primary school?

   Yes ☐ No ☐
6. Did you enjoy learning poetry in primary school?

   Yes ☐ No ☐

   Please comment _____

   _____

   _____
7. Can you name a favourite poet or poem which you remember from primary school?

   _____

   _____

   _____
8. What kinds of poems do you like and why? _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

9. What do you like most about poetry? _____

_____

_____

_____

10. What do you like least about poetry? _____

_____

_____

_____

11. Would you say that your experience of poetry in secondary school is better than primary school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

12. How many times do you study poetry during the year?

Many ☐ Some ☐ A few ☐ Once a year ☐

13. Apart from poetry books what other things are used in your class to help you learn poetry? _____

_____

_____

_____

14. Do you study poetry written by young people?

Yes ☐ No ☐

---

15. Are you encouraged to write your own poetry in class?

Yes ☐ No ☐

16. What poem did you last study in class? _____

17. Do you read poetry outside of school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

18. Have you ever bought a poetry book to read in your leisure time?

Yes ☐ No ☐

19. Which sentence best describes the way you feel about poetry?
Please tick one box only.

Poetry is important ☐

Poetry helps you to develop as a human being ☐

Poetry is difficult ☐

Poetry has no value ☐

Poetry is boring ☐

20. Is your attitude towards poetry as a result of the way it is taught in class?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please comment _____

---

21. What would you change about your poetry classes? _____

_____

_____

_____

Other comments

22. Are there any other comments you would like to make about poetry?
Please write your comments in the space below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for completing this survey.

Marian Forde, Trinity College, Dublin.

Appendix 8
Covering letter to schools

The Education Department,
Trinity College Dublin.

Dear Principal,

I am a research student in the Education Department of Trinity College, Dublin. I was awarded a scholarship from Trinity to research 'The role and value of poetry on the holistic development of students in second level schools'.

The nature of the pupils' involvement to date has been in the form of questionnaires, poetry observation classes where they wrote their individual opinions on and responses to particular poems and forms of poetry; in some instances the pupils were attempting to compile their own poetry anthologies as an end of year project. This year I am hoping to encourage students to keep personal response journals during their poetry classes for a more indepth insight into their reactions to poetry.

The involvement of teachers is also an invaluable and essential component in the objective of the research project, which is, the formulation of new approaches to the teaching of poetry in second level schools. I have already worked with Andrea Hunter on this research project and would welcome the opportunity to do some follow up studies with her English students in your school. I would be very grateful if you would allow Andrea's English classes to complete the questionnaires enclosed and return them to me in the stamped addressed envelope provided. I would especially welcome any information you wish to include on specific poetry projects, workshops, Writers in Schools or any form of creative interaction with poetry that you have undertaken with your pupils (from 1st to 6th year) over the years.

All pupils and teachers participating in the project are guaranteed anonymity. Participating schools and teachers will be able to examine all findings in the research and will be welcome to avail of all poetry work schemes or new formulations for the teaching of poetry in second level schools.

I hope that you will participate in the project and in the meantime if you have any queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,
Marian Forde.

Appendix 9
Recently qualified primary school teacher questionnaire

Poetry in the classroom:

Please complete the following questionnaire

1. Name _____

2. School _____

3. Class/age group which you teach _____

4. Outline the specific teaching methods you received for teaching English during the B.Ed course

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Did you receive specific teaching methods for the teaching of poetry during the B. Ed course? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please specify _____

_____

_____

_____

6. Are you aware of any Department of Education pilot programmes on the teaching of poetry in primary schools?

Yes ☐ No ☐

_____

_____

7. Are you aware of any Department of Education publications on the teaching of poetry in primary schools?

Yes ☐ No ☐

_____

_____

8. Are you aware of any poets working with pupils on poetry projects in primary schools around the country?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes please specify _____

_____

_____

9. In your opinion how difficult is it to teach poetry to pupils?

Very difficult ☐ Fairly difficult ☐ Not difficult ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

10. Which of these statements best describes the difficulty of teaching poetry? Please number 1-4 with 1 being the greatest difficulty

Too many technical terms to be learned, e.g. metaphor, simile, etc. ☐

Too many poetic styles to be learned ☐

No adequate poetry resources available for teachers to use ☐

Too little time to do indepth analysis ☐

11. Please list the specific difficulties that you encounter in the teaching of poetry

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. Which of these statements best describes the attitude of pupils towards poetry? Please number 1-4 with 1 being the truest description of the pupils' attitude

Students love poetry ☐

Students find poetry difficult to understand ☐

Students think poetry is boring ☐

Students hate poetry ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

_____

13. How important is the teaching of poetry in schools?

Very important ☐ Fairly important ☐ Not important ☐

Please state why _____

_____

_____

14. Which statement best describes the range of poetry suitable for study with primary level pupils? Please tick one box only.

Students should be exposed to all kinds of poetry ☐

Students can only deal with poems relevant to their own age/experiences ☐

Only modern poetry should be taught in schools ☐

Students are not mature enough to handle abstract ideas in poetry ☐

Please comment on your choice _____

_____

_____

_____

15. Do you think that the study of poetry contributes to the personal and emotional as well as the intellectual development of the pupils?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

_____

16. Would it be beneficial for pupils to write and study their own poetry in class?

Very beneficial ☐ Quite beneficial ☐ Not beneficial ☐ Can't see how it would help ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

17. How well do you think poetry could be used in cross-curricular studies?

Very well ☐ Fairly well ☐ Not very well ☐ Not at all ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

_____

18. How important is it to teach poetry using multi-sensory as well as cognitive methodologies?

Very important ☐ Fairly important ☐ Not important ☐ Don't know ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

19. Has your teaching of poetry been affected by the way you, as a pupil, were taught in school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

_____

20. Which of these statements best describes your own experience of poetry as a pupil? Please number 1-4 with 1 being the truest description of your experience

My experience of poetry in school was imaginative and creative ☐

My teacher instilled in me a love for poetry ☐

The way I was taught poetry destroyed my interest in it ☐

Poetry meant rote learning without understanding ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. What kinds of poems do you like and why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

22. Who is your favourite poet(s) and why? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

23. What is your favourite poem(s) and why? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

24. How often do you read poetry?

Every day	Very often	Sometimes	Once in a while	Hardly ever
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

25. Why do you read poetry? _____

26. At what age do you think children should be introduced to poetry?

Pre-school	Primary school	Secondary school	University
☐	☐	☐	☐

Please comment

27. Do you think it is beneficial for children to read poetry?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please comment

28. In your opinion what do poets contribute to our society?

29. Which of these statements best describes the importance of poetry to society? Please number 1-6 with 1 being the truest description of the importance of poetry to society.

Poetry is important in so far as it is a good record of our literary past ☐

Poetry is fundamental to the intellectual and emotional needs of every society ☐

Poetry teaches us how to become better human beings ☐

Poetry is both psychologically and spiritually therapeutic for the reader ☐

Poetry provides a platform for critical commentary of the world around us ☐

Poetry is entertainment and should not be taken seriously ☐

Please comment

30. Do you write poetry?

Yes ☐ No ☐

31. If yes, how often do you write poetry?

Every day	Very often	Sometimes	Once in a while	Hardly ever	Never
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

32. Why do you write poetry?

33. Do you think it is important for pupils to write poetry?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

_____

34. Do you think that poetry is adequately taught in primary schools?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

35. How do you think poetry should be taught in primary schools?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

36. What methods and resources would you like to see used in the classroom to teach poetry?

_____

37. Do you think there is any value in writers doing poetry workshops in primary schools?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please comment

38. Are you aware of any poets who write specifically for primary level?

Yes ☐ No ☐

39. Do you think that poetry should be part of an exam subject?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Other comments

40. Are there any other comments you would like to make on any aspect of poetry teaching or learning? Please write your comments in the space below.

Thank you for completing this survey.

Marian Forde, Trinity College, Dublin.

Appendix 10
Second level student teacher questionnaire

Teacher questionnaire

1. Name _____

2. School _____

   _____

3. Age 20-30 ☐ 30-40 ☐ 40-50 ☐ 50+ ☐

4. Number of years teaching English? _____

5. Do you enjoy teaching poetry?

   Yes ☐ No ☐

6. How often do you teach poetry to the following groups?

	Once a term	Twice a year	Once a year	More often
1st - 3rd Years	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transition Year	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. Outline the approach you use in the teaching of poetry to the following year groups

   (a) Juniors (1st-3rd years) _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

(b) Transition Year _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. What resources do you use in the teaching of poetry? (For example, music, games, nime, art, drama, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Did you receive specific teaching methods for the teaching of poetry during the H. Dip course? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please specify _____

_____

_____

_____

10. Have you attended any Department of Education Inservice on the teaching of poetry?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please specify _____

_____

_____

_____

11. Do you think there is a need for Inservice training on the teaching of poetry?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please specify _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. Are you aware of any Department of Education pilot programmes on the teaching of poetry in schools?

Yes ☐ No ☐

_____

_____

13. Are you aware of any Department of Education publications on the teaching of poetry in schools?

Yes ☐ No ☐

_____

_____

14. Are you aware of any poets working with pupils on poetry projects in schools around the country? Yes ☐ No ☐

_____

_____

15. How difficult is it to teach poetry to pupils?

Very difficult	Fairly difficult	Not difficult
☐	☐	☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

_____

16. Which of these statements best describes the difficulty of teaching poetry?
Please number 1-4 with 1 being the greatest difficulty

Too many technical terms to be learned, e.g. metaphor, simile, etc.	☐
Too many poetic styles to be learned	☐
No adequate poetry resources available for teachers to use	☐
Too little time to do indepth analysis	☐

17. Please list the specific difficulties that you encounter in the teaching of poetry

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

18. Which of these statements best describes the attitude of pupils towards poetry? Please number 1-4 with 1 being the truest description of the pupils' attitude

Students love poetry ☐

Students find poetry difficult to understand ☐

Students think poetry is boring ☐

Students hate poetry ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

_____

19. Have you noticed any specific changes in pupils' attitude towards poetry since the introduction of the new syllabi at Junior and Leaving Certificate levels?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please specify _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. How important is the teaching of poetry in schools?

Very important ☐ Fairly important ☐ Not important ☐

Please state why _____

_____

_____

21. Which statement best describes the range of poetry suitable for study with second level pupils (1st - Transition Year)? Please tick one box only.

Students should be exposed to all kinds of poetry ☐

Students can only deal with poems relevant to their own experiences ☐

Only modern poetry should be taught in schools ☐

Students are not mature enough to handle abstract ideas in poetry ☐

22. Do you think that the study of poetry contributes to the personal and emotional as well as the intellectual development of the pupils? Yes ☐ No ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

_____

23. Would it be beneficial for pupils to write and study their own poetry in class?

Very beneficial ☐ Quite beneficial ☐ Not beneficial ☐ Can't see how it would help ☐

24. How well do you think poetry could be used in cross-curricular studies?

Very well ☐ Fairly well ☐ Not very well ☐ Not at all ☐

25. How important is it to teach poetry using multi-sensory as well as cognitive methodologies?

Very important ☐ Fairly important ☐ Not important ☐ Don't know ☐

26. Has your teaching of poetry been affected by the way you, as a pupil, were taught in school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

_____

27. Which of these statements best describes your own experience of poetry as a pupil? Please number 1-4 with 1 being the truest description of your experience

My experience of poetry in school was imaginative and creative ☐

My teacher instilled in me a love for poetry ☐

The way I was taught poetry destroyed my interest in it ☐

Poetry meant rote learning without understanding ☐

Please comment _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other comments

28. Are there any other comments you would like to make on any aspect of poetry teaching or learning? Please write your comments in the space below.

_____

_____

Thank you for completing this survey.

Marian Forde, Trinity College, Dublin.