SEEING THE REAL WORLD IN POETRY: AN EXAMINATION OF STUDENTS' VIEWS ON USING POETRY TO READ ABOUT THE REAL WORLD

Perception of the real world varies depending on aspects such as a person's age, sex, race, background and experience. An invaluable resource that could foster our understanding of history, society and culture is literary works. This study sought to examine how students respond to the real world in reading poetry by focusing on their perceptions of the real world, and their response to the real world in Bride Price by Mabel Segun. The perceptions of 68 TESL and ESL students enrolled in the Reading Poetry course were elicited via feedback forms. The findings revealed that the real world was defined in terms of the reality and problems they faced, human experiences as well as the context of time (past and present). Students perceived the real world in Bride Price as the reality and experiences that were common in the past and still relevant today in terms of how society views women. In addition, they identified the real world through the characters, dialogues, language use and themes despite the poem's foreign (Nigerian) setting. The study highlights the difficulty students face in responding to the real world in the poem as a result of the different perceptions and the levels of maturity (age and experience) that affect their construction of the real world. The findings highlight the importance of using literary texts as sites for learners' personal growth development by encouraging better understanding of the world they live in (Carter & Long, 1996).

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15th MELTA Conference 2008

Connie Chin Sexts Lan

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Publication

Jerome, C., & Chin, C. S. L. (2006, June). Seeing the real world in poetry. Paper presented at the 15th Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (MELTA) conference on 'Reading and Writing: Preparing ESL Learners for the Real World', Kuching, Malaysia.