

## ***IHE GA-DI MMA: MESSAGE OF HOPE IN THE POEMS OF WALT WHITMAN, EMILY DICKINSON, AND ROBERT FROST TO GEN Z***

**<sup>1</sup>Vitalis Chinemerem Iloanwusi and <sup>2</sup>John Ikechukwu Obasikene**

<sup>1</sup>Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, Godfrey Okoye University, Thinkers Corner,  
Emene, Enugu State.

<sup>2</sup>Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Enugu State  
University of Science and Technology, Agbani, Enugu State.

---

**Abstract:** This study examines how selected poems from *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman, *The Grass* by Emily Dickinson, and *Mowing* by Robert Frost can be referenced to teach Generation Z that life would be better. Grounded in Reader-Response Theory, the research adopts a transactional framework that positions meaning as co-created between text and reader. Through close textual analysis, the study explores how literary devices such as imagery, symbolism, repetition, metaphor, and personification construct themes of resilience, renewal, dignity, and purposeful labor. Whitman's democratic celebration of the self affirms shared human worth; Dickinson's portrayal of humble grass redefines simplicity and mortality as graceful continuity; and Frost's meditation on labor dignifies effort as authentic fulfillment. By drawing substantial excerpts from the poems, the analysis demonstrates how definitions of hope and human growth understood as resilience, continuity of life, and meaningful self development emerge organically from the texts themselves. The findings suggest that when Generation Z readers engage aesthetically rather than merely efferently, poetry becomes a transformative medium that reshapes perception, strengthens moral consciousness, and fosters existential reassurance. The study concludes that transactional engagement with poetic symbols of grass as representations of renewal, persistence, and purposeful growth offers a powerful pedagogical strategy for cultivating optimism, resilience, and ethical reflection in contemporary learners navigating uncertainty.

---

**Keywords:** Generation Z, Reader-Response Theory, resilience, poetic symbolism, moral pedagogy

### **Introduction**

What is evident in contemporary society is an increasing desperation to make money quickly, often at the expense of patience, ethics, and long-term growth. For Generation Z, this pressure is intensified by economic instability, social media influence, and the constant comparison with seemingly successful peers. The quest for survival gradually transforms into anxiety, and anxiety, when left unchecked, often

descends into moral compromise. Many young people are pushed into corrupt situations not necessarily out of wickedness, but as a response to overwhelming societal expectations. In this climate, literature, especially poetry, becomes a crucial corrective force. Poetry offers metaphorical wisdom that teaches endurance, reflection, and faith in gradual progress. Through poetic engagement, Gen Z can be reminded that life unfolds meaningfully over

time, as seen in Walt Whitman's insistence on continuity, where "there was a child went forth every day... and... will always go forth every day," suggesting life as an ongoing process rather than an instant result.

Being born into a highly competitive and fast-paced world, Gen Zs are usually conditioned to think that they have to achieve success right away. According to scholars, this generation best understands the world through emotionally captivating stories, which offer meaning beyond just teaching (Moore et al. 214). Literature is a place where unbiased questioning of values in society is allowed among young readers. Value judgment, in the context of literary studies, is the critical process of evaluating the characters, actions, and themes of the literature against moral, ethical, and cultural norms and, as a result, enabling the meaning to be produced by the reader and not through a judgment forced upon them. Poetry is especially slowing the reader down to a crawl, compelling the reader to pay attention, contemplate, and question themselves. Poetry is more about process and becoming as opposed to instant reward as in motivational rhetoric. This can be seen in the conception of gradual growth by Walt Whitman who talks of himself as a gradual grower, again backing the notion that growth is not abrupt, but gradual and constant.

The concept of growth in poetry more pertains to time, continuity, and persistence than to abrupt success. Natural imagery has been a traditional means of expressing this idea by poets, and grass emerges as one of the most enduring images of silence. Grass does not produce any sound, it also suffers in bad weather and it even sprouts up when mowed. It is these kinds of symbolism that we can

find in this poem by Emily Dickinson, the line "The Grass so little has to do/ A sphere of simple green" up to the point where growth is not something that has to be struggled to be perceived. Instead, it exists in mute perpetuity, "awakened to sweet Music all Day, and that it has Life after Death as it pours in Sweet Scents so Heavenly." The development in the sense in which it is addressed in poetry is not wondrous but inevitable.

The Igbo saying *Ihe ga-adi mma* meaning "things would be better" or "life would be better," embodies a philosophy of hope that is based on patience. It confirms that the current suffering does not mean that the future will not be fulfilled. This ideology is in contrast to the ideology that survival is a reason to make immoral shortcuts. To most Gen Z students, particularly in institutions of higher learning, the need to achieve success in a short time makes them vulnerable to corruption and to compromising their morals. The line *ihe ga-adi mma* assures them that things will get better, but that it will be based on the idea of perseverance. This is in line with Dickinson's description of grass, which is modest but persistent and with Whitman when he states that life is immeasurably long, which further supports the notion that growth is a process that occurs over time and not immediately.

In his poem, "Leaves of Grass," Walt Whitman depicts growth as an element of the process of everlasting existence. Whitman is in the presence of death and this helps the reader to recall the fact that death and life are a cycle. His patience and persistence are affirmed when he says that life is not brief, but infinitely long, and when he describes himself as a steadfast grower. The definition of growth that Whitman coined does not imply growth

in the sense of money but the way that one becomes involved in life. This vision is not the one that fosters hopelessness and offers Gen Z another view on time and life.

Emily Dickinson's "The Grass" offers a gentler but equally powerful vision of endurance. The grass "so little has to do," yet fulfills its purpose through harmony with nature and quiet beauty. It "holds the Sunshine in its lap" and "bows to everything," suggesting adaptability and humility. Even in death, it continues "in Odors so divine," symbolizing renewal beyond decay. Dickinson presents growth as simplicity, patience, and quiet persistence rather than competition or speed, challenging the pressure of constant performance experienced by Gen Z.

In "Mowing" by Robert Frost, we find growth in terms of pure hard work and discipline. The speaker is also saying that he can hear his long scythe whispering to the ground, which is the focus and commitment to work. Frost ignores the illusion of overnight success, and he is very explicit that "it was not a dream of the gift of idle hours, / Or easy gold in the hands of fay or elf." Rather, it confirms that, the fact is the sweetest dream that work knows, which helps to strengthen the notion that nothing can be accomplished without working hard. This comes right out attacking the get-rich-quick mentality and affirms patience as a moral virtue.

Throughout these poems, grass is a common symbol of perseverance, lowliness, and continuity. The grass of Whitman unites life through the continuity of becoming, Dickinson through her grass, and Frost through her field, which has been tended, were products of discipline. A combination of these portrayals provides Gen Z with a two-fold teaching about patience and ethical values. The poems do not

reject suffering but they denounce the myth of quick success. According to them, life is maintained by endurance.

Poetry may be used in learning institutions more so in institutions of higher learning as a moral intervention. Several students are under pressure to assume that academic excellence is not important as compared to social relationships and material success. Poetry dispels this notion by stating the importance of process, discipline, and integrity. The renunciation of the easy gold by Frost, contemplative against the backdrop of Dickinson, and gradual cultivation by Whitman all contribute to the ethical development. Narrative-based learning is also revealed to enrich the ethical and emotional comprehension of Gen Z (Devanti and Astutik 88). With the help of these chosen poems, students get to experience growth as slow, yet significant.

Finally, alluding to poetry and informing Generation Z that it could be a better life is a cultural and moral survival. Poetry brought back waiting, the wisdom of waiting, in a world that is obsessed with speed. The young readers with the help of Whitman thinking about time, Dickinson's strong grass, and Frost working with a scythe are able to see the growth as a slow and significant process. These poems encourage Gen Z not to be pressured to be corrupt. They confirm that patience has a reward of its own. Similar to grass, life exists patiently until it is fruitful. This research thus proves that with the help of the chosen poems, the poetic symbolism and literary reflection serve as a strong guarantee that perseverance, integrity, and disciplined development will finally result in an improved life.

**Theoretical Framework: Reader-Response Theory (Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory)**

Reader-Response Theory is the most suitable theoretical perspective for this study as it puts the meaning in the dynamics of interaction existing between the text and the reader. The theory, which started gaining popularity in the twentieth century, turns the literary criticism focus out of the text-related formalism into the experiential aspect of the reading process. Its theorist, Louise Rosenblatt believes that meaning is not fixed in the text permanently but rather is generated in a process of a reader interacting with words. It is in this process of transaction that literature can be seen to live fully. This is only when it is read, interpreted, and internalized. In this way, reading is turned into an experience and not the passive apprehension of a predetermined sense. Such a structure is essential in the context of this paper since the focus is not only to analyze poetry, but also to understand how it helps to reassure the members of Generation Z that life will be better. The pedagogical and moral intent of the paper is therefore in line with the theory.

The Transactional Theory by Rosenblatt identifies the efferent and aesthetic reading. Efferent reading is more concerned with information extraction, whereas aesthetic reading provides more favor to the experience of living and the emotional involvement. When it comes to educating Gen Z students about poetry, the aesthetic position gains a specific role due to the fact that it enables the latter to experience the beats of hope, patience, and resilience that are inherent in poetic metaphors. Rosenblatt still asserts that the reader takes his or her own history, cultural backgrounds, and emotional states into the interpretation process. This implies that the poetic

images of grass and growth will be faced by Generation Z who are defined by economic anxiety and digital immediacy through their own contemporary predicaments. There is thus co-creation of meaning. According to Gurgil and Erdaagin, the framework developed by Rosenblatt sheds light on the way the reader bargains meaning using contexts of life (45). This kind of negotiation is the major focus of confirming that the *ga dimma*- life would be better.

The moral aspect of the Reader-Response Theory also makes it more applicable to the paper. According to Weinberger, the model of aesthetics and ethics developed by Rosenblatt makes the reader responsible in the process of meaning-making (112). Interpretation is not an ethically neutral phenomenon; it influences perception and action. Whenever Gen Z readers read about Whitman and his democratic grass or Frost and his disciplined work, their reactions affect their perception of such issues as patience, integrity, and corruption. The poems do not tell what is right or wrong, but, they welcome contemplative involvement. Transactional engagement can help the students to internalize endurance as a good virtue, instead of a burden. In this way, poetry is morally educative but not morally instructive. This transformative potential is justified by the Reader-Response Theory.

The flexibility of the approach taken by Rosenblatt in modern-day classrooms is proven by educational research. Mousa and Ayad note that the reader-response model equips the students with the ability to express individual interpretations, thus enhancing involvement (73). On the same note, Hassan et al. show that transactional reading fosters critical thinking because it promotes the ability of students to

connect texts to lived experience (128). The findings are of special importance to Generation Z learners who appreciate authenticity and participatory learning. Approaching poetry in a transactional manner helps the students to get beyond memorizing and into introspection. They start perceiving literary signs as a reflection of their moral landscapes. This didactic change is necessary in order to assure them that persistence results in revival.

In addition, the reader-response orientation does not isolate readers although their themes are universal. According to Abla, the transactional theory developed by Rosenblatt has emerged as a significant model in language education situations since it supports the views of students and informs interpretive developmental processes (56). Gen Z students who face the pressure of society around them and have to resist the lure of shortcuts find the poetry about grass and growth particularly topical. The cycles of life of Whitman, the silent strength of Dickinson, and the sincere, laborious work of Frost are not lost in the past and distant nineteenth century, but they become topical commentaries through the interaction of the reader. The transactional model therefore fills the time distance. It enables poetry to address new concerns in contemporary anxieties. Literature in this way is historical and at the same time present.

The flexibility of the Reader-Response Theory at the education levels also confirms the appropriateness. In their systematic review of classroom applications, Momeni et al. conclude that the framework of Rosenblatt has been essential and flexible in contemporary education (210). Its focus on reader-oriented interpretation is in line with generational learning preferences that put more emphasis on

dialogue and reflection. In this case, the implication can be made: the reading of the poems of growth can alter the attitude of Gen Z to patience and moral discipline. The theory is not optimistic, but it develops optimism out of interpretive experience. Poetry is therefore an act of rehearsal of hope. The promise of life being better comes out via involvement and not enforcing.

Using this framework particularly in the context of the paper, which is about Referencing Poetry to Teach Gen Z That Life Would Be Better. The paper does not state that Whitman, Dickinson, and Frost are mechanical resolvers of the generational crisis. Instead, it argues that transactional reading can help Gen Z find in these poems the signs of continuity and rebirth. Ginting underlines that the Reader-Response Theory helps learners to share their affective reactions that enhance comprehension (39). This emotional involvement is the focus of reassuring the morally uncertain young readers. The grass images presented in the poems gain significance when the students apply them to their stresses. Interpretation has turned into a process of self-construction.

The Reader-Response Theory by Rosenblatt is the main paradigm of this paper since it portrays the dynamics of the reader and text interaction. The study establishes meaning as a part of transaction and therefore, the message, *the ga-di mma*- life would be better, is a result of reflective participation. The theoretical framework justifies the main idea of the theory that the poetic symbols of growth will be able to transform the definition of success, patience, and integrity among Gen Z. Resilience is internalized by the readers because of the aesthetic engagement and not observed only. The Reader-Response Theory therefore offers the methodological basis and also the

ethical perspective of this study. It makes sure that poetry is not studied but experienced. By doing this, it grounds the paper in its desire to prove that interpretive work on poetry can help make hopeful a generation that is experiencing uncertainty.

### **Empirical Review**

Empirical studies on Generation Z and literary pedagogy provide a necessary foundation for understanding how poetry and narrative function as transformative educational tools.

Widiastuti et al. examined how poetry can be employed within the storynomics paradigm to popularize Indonesian tourism among Generation Z. Storynomics as the strategic application of storytelling in communication, perception formation, and economic and cultural value creation is a coherent paradigm for integrating the aspects of artistic expression with developmental objectives. In this context, poetry is not seen as a means of aesthetic expression but rather as a narrative form of expression that can influence attitudes and give directions on how to interpret things. In this way, the research was aimed at integrating scientific knowledge and poetic imagination to shape the perception of Gen Z about the national identity and tourism stories. It aimed at discussing the role of science-poetry and storytelling approaches in educating Generation Z about tourism development and enhancing cultural appreciation. The researchers aimed at establishing whether poetic storytelling would be effective as an educational and promotional resource by rendering tourism more meaningful and emotionally appealing. The methodology used in the study was a qualitative one, which involved textual analysis of the poems created as part of tourism campaigns and responses of Gen Z participants. The

researchers also examined thematic trends, narrative devices, and reception by the audience, to make sure that the use of storynomics was in line with its focus on emotional involvement and value-making. The results indicated that poetry is effective in conveying the values of tourism in cases where the narrative strategy is congruent with the affective appeal (112). The participants of Generation Z expressed a greater interest in the tourism stories that are told in a poetic form, and it is possible that poetry can be effective in bridging education, creativity, and national development without sacrificing artistic quality. The resemblance between this research and the present one is that they both focus on Generation Z and the pedagogical effectiveness of poetry as a meaning-making device. Nevertheless, when Widiastuti et al. focus on how tourism can be promoted and branded using stories as the core element of interaction, the present research fits the scheme by expanding the role of poetry into the scope of moral reassurance and confirmation that life itself would be improved, thus keeping the analysis of poetry as both emotional and educative consistent.

Bagchi explored the idea of teaching phonological awareness and sound patterns to digital-native students using poetry as a teaching tool, mostly Generation Z students. This was to establish whether sound devices of poetry such as rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, and assonance might enhance language acquisition and involvement in digitally oriented learners. The research was experimental, where the classroom was used and students were subjected to a structured lesson on poetry that focused on the sound patterns, and a pre- and post- test was performed to evaluate the improvement. Results showed that poetry produced a great impact on phonetic

awareness and level of engagement in digital-native students (67). The attentiveness of the poetry was better maintained by the rhythmic characteristics of the poetry in comparison to the conventional prose-based exercises. The similarity to the present study is in the shared focus on the involvement of Generation Z in the world of poetry. Nevertheless, the work by Bagchi is linguistically based, as it deals with phonological competence, whereas the one under discussion is ethically and psychologically based, as it considers poetry as a source of hope and strength. Devanti and Astutik discussed the process of imparting moral values in the Generation Z students through the analysis of narrative transformation and character development as the means of ethical education. This was aimed at determining whether exposure to morally educative narratives could affect the Gen Z attitude towards humility, integrity, and social responsibility. The authors have adopted a qualitative descriptive approach, which involves the use of classroom discussions, reflective journals, and thematic analysis of the responses of students who were subjected to the selected classic texts. The results indicated that moral reflection occurred when Gen Z students were engaged in a narrative (54). The exposure to the morally transformative characters showed an augmented awareness of the ethical consequences and individual responsibility among the participants. Similar to the current study, the same issue is reflected in the common interest in literature as a tool of moral education of Generation Z. Nevertheless, prose narratives are employed by Devanti and Astutik, whereas the present work focuses on poetry. The current work is thus an extension of the discussion on literary moral

pedagogy where poetic symbolism and imagery are predetermined.

Tamayo tested instructional methods that would be suitable for Generation Z learners especially in argument-based frameworks to improve writing. The research aimed to understand whether the structured frameworks could optimize critical thinking with argumentative competence in Gen Z students. The article employed an action-research design in a classroom, and the students were taken through the structure of Moses, and their argumentation papers were assessed based on coherence and depth. The results indicated that the structured frameworks enhanced the clarity in the writing and critical thinking of the students (88). The learners of Generation Z positively responded to the scaffolded instruction that promoted active learning. The parallels between the proposed study and the present one are that both aim at improving the outcomes of Gen Z learning based on adaptive pedagogy. Nevertheless, the current work is interpretive and emotional in its nature whereas the one by Tamayo is skill-based and argumentative with the focus on poetry as a form of emotional reassurance and moral encouragement.

Guttesen examined how poetry education can be used to develop creativity, freedom, and character building. The aim was to determine the possibility of poetry teaching to foster wonderment and character education among modern students. The research methodology was qualitative research, which involved qualitative interviews, classroom observations, and interpretive analysis of the poetic responses of students. The results showed that poetry teaching develops imagination, awareness of ethics, and thoughtfulness (134). Students have claimed that

they have had personal development and a better understanding of self-poetic engagement. This paper is close to the existing literature in its acknowledgment of the transformative power of poetry on literary appreciation. Nevertheless, although Guttesen discusses character education in general terms, the current research paper specifically aims to convince Generation Z that life would be improved with the help of poetic symbols of growth and strength.

Boutelier and Donovan examined the idea of how poetry teaching can be improved with the use of digital tools by technologically obsessed students. This was done to find out whether teaching poetry using digital platforms would make creative writing inspiring and more engaging among the learners of Generation Z. The research took a mixed-methodology as it involved classroom application of digital poetry projects, surveys, and writing tests. The results indicated that the use of technology was a potent motivator of students to write poetry and supported creativity and collaborative learning (159). The similarity with the current study lies in the shared concern for engaging Generation Z with poetry. However, Boutelier and Donovan emphasize technological mediation, whereas the present study emphasizes interpretive and moral engagement. The current research therefore complements digital pedagogy with ethical and existential inquiry by positioning poetry as reassurance that life would indeed be better.

### **Textual Analysis**

The opening lines of “Leaves of Grass” by Walt Whitman is a bold statement of who he was and who we all were: “I celebrate myself, / And what I

suppose you suppose, / That every atom in me as good is in you.”

Celebration, as defined by Whitman, since the very beginning is not a form of prideful seclusion but rather an act of communion, and such definition is directly evident in the text. In the line, “every atom I own is good, as yours” is a use of synecdoche, in which the word “atom” symbolizes the entirety of human life. Whitman dismantles social hierarchies by demoting humanity to the level of atoms and proclaiming equality. This vision of freedom is in tandem with the assurance that life would be better as it starts with a common dignity. The poetic voice “lures and beckons my soul” implies a conscious relaxation of a fast world. The word “loafe” is used as a metaphor of contemplative life as opposed to idleness. The Gen Z reader is welcomed to this space through the Reader-Response Theory and is invited to reconsider the idea of rest as restoration.

Through metaphysical optimism, Whitman enhances a sense of immersion in the senses: “The smoke of my own breath, / Echos, ripples and buzzed whispers . . ., loveroot, silkthread, crotch, and vine.” The abundance is reflected in the technique which is characteristic of the free verse of Whitman. The grass is also literal and symbolic and signifies rebirth and renewal. In describing how he leans and loafe at his ease when writing, he refers to “a spear of summer grass.” “The spear” is a paradox, in that it is sharp but at the same time it is life-giving. The common grass that people tend to ignore becomes holy with attention. Embodiment is supported by the repetition of ellipses which make it rhythmic and breath-like. To the Gen Z audience who are being pressured by the productivity culture, this sense of celebration is the redefinition of value. Reader-Response

engagement allows them to observe their own overlooked spaces of development. The literary tool of imagery, therefore, turns into a healing experience. The grass itself is a hope as it perseveres.

In the stanza, Whitman questions the passive learning:

Whitman challenges passive learning in the stanza:

“Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,

You shall possess the good of the earth and sun . . . there are millions of suns left,

You shall no longer take things at second or third hand . . . nor look through the eyes of the dead.”

In this case, imperative verbs like: stop and possess are used in an active form. The meaning of authenticity comes about as a result of the order to avoid peeking through the eyes of the dead. This is a line that criticizes inherited thought. The meaning is filtered through, in other words, yourself, with the repetition of the words of Whitman himself which he writes, You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself. The poem in itself is an interpretative manifesto. This proclamation of firsthand experience is liberating to Gen Z, who are, in many ways, awash in consumerism. Direct address breaks the barrier between the poet and the reader which is a literary device. The Gen Z audience is a co-creator of insight in transactional reading. When the real is substituted for the fake, life becomes better.

The metaphysical optimism of Whitman comes out in the lines: There was never any more inception than there is now, / Nor any more youth or age than there is now. The use of now brings out the aspect of presentism. Anaphora reinforces immediacy. Whitman characterizes perfection in terms of the current reality by refuting the superiority of the past.

This contradicts desperation based on reminiscence or future fear. The use of repetition symbolizes the unstoppable force of life in Urge and urge and urge, / Always the procreant urge of the world. The term procreant describes the process of growth both biologically and spiritually by the very passage of the word. Gen Z readers are able to internalize this rhythm as affirmation in response to Reader-Response. The repetitive device turns into a heartbeat. Hope is no abstract thing, it is a linguistically patterned thing. The poem demands that life itself is vibrating towards a rebirth.

The spiritual closeness can be seen in the stanza:

“As God comes a loving bedfellow and sleeps at my side all night and close on the peep of the day, And leaves for me baskets covered with white towels bulging the house with their plenty.”

The myth of God as a loving bedfellow, breaks down the boundary between God and man. The title of the picture, baskets. bulging, implies plenty. Whitman does not specify divine presence in terms of doctrine but rather as a physical proximity. This is spirituality that is addressed to those who want to connect, not rituals. With the help of the Reader-Response Theory, the Generation Z readers can find this closeness as a promise of value. The sensual imagery used in literature redefines the sacredness. There is a constant presence in life that makes it better. The tone of acceptance Whitman uses is in opposition to anxiety.

The Grass by Emily Dickinson is a poem that is characterized by simplicity as a rule: “The grass so little has to do, — / A sphere of simple green.” The term “sphere” of simple green is a metaphor that characterizes grass as complete unto itself. Dickinson makes understatement to uplift humility. The grass

bows to it all, personification is used to represent grace. It is not a weakness but a kind of strength, humility. The dew is changed into treasure when she writes, and threads the dews all night, like pearls. The grass is a value that is determined by decoration. The reader-response engagement enables Gen Z readers to rebrand obscurity, as dignity. The softness of the tone of the poem is in opposition to the exuberance of Whitman. But both concur in life's silent plenty.

Dickinson continues:

“And even in passing away, to die.

In odors so divine,

As lowly spices went to sleep,

or amulets of pine.”

The meaning of death is remodelled using sensory imagery. The similes of the spices falling asleep and amulets of pine sweeten death. The grass never dies, it turns into a smell. With this passage, death is a continuity. Olfactory imagery literary techniques redesign loss as the passage. This poetic re-framing will be comforting to Gen Z readers who feel uncertain about the future. Reading helps them to internalize death as a renewed cycle. It is a good life since terminuses produce fragrance. The tranquility of the poem is read as comfort.

Robert Frost in his poem *Mowing* bases hope on work: And that was my long scythe whispering to the ground. The scythe is personified as a talking friend. “The whisper, but not the shout, indicates closeness to work. The question that Frost poses is: What was it that it whispered? I was not well known to myself,” creating reflective ambiguity. Labor is contemplative and is defined by the sound. The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows defines dream in a new way of reality. Frost does not believe in fictional wealth, which is easy gold in the hand of a faerie or an elf.

With the use of metaphor, easy gold symbolizes shortcuts. Poetry encourages Gen Z readers to re-evaluate hustle culture. The scythe which whispers, patient. Contentment is in hard work.

The final line, “My long scythe whispered and left the hay to make,” is an indication of productivity as by-product, rather than obsession. The grass in Frost is turned to hay--labor changed into. In contrast to the passive admiration of Dickinson, the grass that Frost writes about needs to be put into action. However, both of them characterize growth. Sound imagery and symbolism both place labor as meaningful. Gen Z readers generate meaning in this whisper. Hope does not come out of comfort but rather serious work. Whitman, Dickinson, and Frost glorify being, humility, and dignity, respectively. The poems have a holistic reassurance built up together. They characterize growth through the verses themselves through imagery, metaphor, repetition, and personification. These poems are transactionally read to say that life, like the grass, continues, changes, and renews.

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, the transactional engagement with the broad revelation of self by Whitman, the modest worship of grass by Dickinson, and the scientific whisper of work by Frost all bear out the truth that life would certainly be better when seen through the prism of reflective engagement. The statement about good being common to all atoms of me, the image of grass, which is said to be threading the dews all night like pearls, and the belief that fact is the sweetest dream known to work with, all these statements by Whitman, Dickinson, and Frost make the dignity a collective essence, make the grass look like a brush of night-dews, and make the work hard appear to be

a quiet glory. Each poem builds hope out of experience and not out of abstract promise through imagery, repetition, metaphor, personification, and symbolism. Reader-Response Theory points out that these meanings do not still exist on the page, but are realized in the interpretive experience of the reader. To Generation Z, not an escape but a reorientation, such poetic experiences offer a way to navigate, to cope with uncertainty, speed, and social pressure, a

### References

- Abla, Najla. "Reader-Response Theory in Language Learning Classrooms." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2019, pp. 52–60.
- Bagchi, Pradip. *Teaching Sounds through Poetry to the Digital Natives*. FUTURE PROOFING BUSINESS, 2024.
- Bila, Vonani, and Olufemi J. Abodunrin. "Angifi Dladla (1950–2020): An Embodiment of Ku Femba as a Poetry Teaching Philosophy for Renewal." *Education as Change*, vol. 24, 2020, pp. 1–15.
- Boutelier, Sarah, and Sarah J. Donovan. *Teaching Poetry in a Digital World: Inspiring Poetry Writing through Technology in Grades 6–12*. Taylor & Francis, 2025.
- Devanti, Yeni Mardiyana, and Indri Astutik. "The Power of Narratives: Instilling Moral Lesson in Gen Z through Classic Short Stories." *International Social Sciences Proceedings*, 2024, pp. 80–92.
- call to find dignity in the present, beauty in humility, and purpose in work. Grass is the symbol of the resilience of unity: it sprouts, bends, is trimmed, dies, and rebirths. Therefore, in transactional reading, poetry is not just about renewal, it enforces it into the mind of the reader and it teaches that it is through perseverance, genuineness, and contemplation that life is constantly in a position to be improved.
- Dickinson, Emily. "The Grass." *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson, Little, Brown, 1960, pp. 112–113.
- Frost, Robert. "Mowing." *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, edited by Edward Connery Lathem, Henry Holt, 1969, pp. 36–37.
- Ginting, Dina Rahmawati. "Applying Reader-Response Theory in Teaching Poetry to Enhance Students' Engagement." *Journal of English Education and Practice*, vol. 10, no. 12, 2019, pp. 35–42.
- Guttesen, Karen. "Freedom, Creativity, Time and Wonderment in Poetry Education." *Acta Missiologica*, 2024.
- Gürgil, Filiz, and Serpil Erdağı. "Reader-Response Theory and Its Pedagogical Implications." *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, vol. 5, no. 6, 2017, pp. 41–49.
- Hassan, Ahmed, Mahmoud Elhassan, and Samira Abdelrahman. "The Impact of Transactional Reading Strategy on Students' Critical

Thinking Skills.” *International Journal of Instruction*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2020, pp. 121–136.

Framework.” *International Journal of Teacher Leadership*, 2022.

Hodges, Chris. *Praise for Generation Z: Born for the Storm*. Journal Press India, 2020, pp. 40–45.

Weinberger, Jerry. “Literature and Ethical Formation in Reader-Response Theory.” *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2010, pp. 105–118.

Momeni, Saeed, Reza Keshavarz, and Maryam Ghaffari. “Reader-Response Theory in EFL Classrooms: A Systematic Review.” *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2020, pp. 205–214.

Whitman, Walt. “Song of Myself.” *Leaves of Grass*, 1855. *Norton Critical Edition*, edited by Michael Moon, W.W. Norton, 2002, pp. 185–205.

Moore, Ginny, Shaunna Parker, and Lindsey Baksh. “Generational Learning Preferences: Target Patient Teaching to Match Generational and Individual Needs.” *American Nurse Journal*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2021, pp. 210–216.

Widiastuti, Yuni, Dwi Saryono, Iwan Suherjanto, and Rini Puspitasari. “Writing Poetry Storynomics Tourism Perspective of Generation Z Indonesia.” *Journal of Poetry Studies*, 2024.

Mousa, Ghada, and Rasha Ayad. “The Effect of Reader-Response Approach on Students’ Literary Competence.” *Arab World English Journal*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2019, pp. 70–82.

Rosenblatt, Louise M. *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*. Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.

Stratton, Susan. “Re-enchanting Adolescence: Using Story to Give a New Generation Fresh Hope.” 2021. George Fox University Digital Commons, digitalcommons.georgefox.edu, pp. 60–75.

Tamayo, Kristine. “Gen Z Arriving at the Table: Providing Access to Argument-Based Concepts Using Moses’