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**“Imagination—the Golden Pathway to Everywhere”:  
Technology and Transformative Teaching of English Literature**

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The abrupt eruption of the pandemic suddenly changed the dynamics and definitions of all the possible realms of human life. Author Haroon Rashid puts it very well when he says “*We slept in one world and woke up to another/Suddenly Disney has no more magic, Paris is no longer romantic, and in New York everyone sleeps/and the Chinese wall isn’t a fortress anymore*”. It was as if an automatic reboot key was pressed and we suddenly found ourselves adjusting to the ‘new normal’ in our lives. Education sector was no exception and in fact, the role of teachers and educators in the current pandemic situation has rather been underrated and unacknowledged amidst the other professional roles, which of course certainly deserve to be in the limelight in their own right. As was the case with the entire world, teachers found themselves on tenterhooks as they found ways to reach out to students, switching from the real to virtual platforms. But, as cliched as it may sound, ‘the silver lining’ this dark cloud hath too, and we got a chance to reequip and recalibrate ourselves as far as the teaching learning is concerned. Times have been changing rapidly and technology has taken over all walks of life but somehow education sector especially in our state Haryana hadn’t been very proactive in adapting to the change. We have been following the traditional chalk-and-talk method and even if there have been some technology based initiatives by the authorities, they largely weren’t able to move beyond papers to reach the classrooms. There has been a sense of historicity in our ways and actions as the academicians of higher education. we had settled comfortably with this belief that what hasn’t been done till now, there no need to do that in future as well. The pandemic has done the job for us and we were made to think differently. The popular aphorisms ‘driven to the wall, one has no option but to strike back’ and ‘necessity is the mother of invention’ definitely held good in the current situation. Otherwise mostly procrastinating to learn the technology enabled tools for teaching, we have now got a chance to be a part of this defining moment in the history of humankind by rising to the occasion and opt for a complete transformation of the education system by setting new standards of innovation and creativity with the use of technology. Pandemic has presented us with an opportune time to revise our teaching strategies by using the

plethora of available multimedia tools useful for both virtual and real classrooms, or the amalgam of the two-- the 'blended' mode of teaching and learning. It was not for nothing that Albert Einstein said these words along with his affirmation about himself 'as an artist' who freely 'draws upon his imagination.' Imagination and literature are inseparable. Delving deeper into the term, one is bound to be reminiscent of the Romantics. We all have been fascinated with the everlasting poetry of the Romantics and their free play of imagination that makes it so perennial. The Romantic poets placed Imagination as a creative faculty of the highest order that allows the mind to see beyond the material world. For William Blake, imagination was the means through which one could see essence of the things. It was synonymous to the vision of the divine. Wordsworth and Coleridge have enumerated various facets of imagination, Wordsworth believing imagination to be synonymous with 'intuition', the inner power to envision reality. Shelley expressed similar views in his 'Defence of Poetry'. The current upsurge of technology is blamed for reducing the imaginative faculties of the learners but on the contrary, if we talk about its integration in the process of teaching and learning, it may comfortably be avowed that technology has opened before them a path to let loose their creativity and there is no dearth of resources that may be incorporated in teaching to give their imagination a boost and make teaching and learning an enjoyable, pleasurable experience for both learners and teachers. As English teachers, we can include instructional audio/visuals, e.g. movies, podcasts, animations, graphics etc and various activities can be conducted online through various digital tools which are easily and readily available. Literature, by virtue of being 'liquid' can be effectively taught by using the online/digital online resources and in fact, use of these resources takes the students on an imaginative journey to various literary landscapes, an experience they miss out on in a traditional 'lecture method' classroom. This can be done through both synchronous as well as asynchronous methods. There are various platforms to conduct the classes and engage the students creatively- we can create quizzes, assignments and assessments using various LMSs like Moodle, Edmodo, Google classroom, Blackboard, Schoology, Jitsi etc. Kahoot, Socratives, Classmarker, Quizzez, Voicethread, Quizlet, Lingt, Answer Garden, Padlet, Book Creator, and Podcasting platforms like Anchor.fm, Podbean etc. are very popular and highly useful as well as interactive platforms which can be used to create and organize an array of activities to facilitate the language and literature skills. The onus is now on the teacher to use her/his creative potential in making the students enjoy the fruits of technology along with the learning takeaways. In the section that follows, an overview of some ways of using technology in a literature class is presented for discussion.

Dr. Flavia Kaba of the university of Tirana in her article “Teaching and Studying Literature in The Digital Era - From Text to Hypertext” quotes Marc Prensky, an expert on digital technologies who used educational video games etc for teaching. according to him, the use of technology brings out an essential change in the students : “they had not only changed their style, their way of living, but also the way of speaking. Prensky referred to an event that had changed things so fundamentally that there was no turning back. It was a new generation, consisting of young growers surrounded by computers, digital music, smartphones, iPods, etc. One of the definitions was that this was the Internet generation or digital generation. But according to Prensky, the most accurate definition was "digital born", given that all of our students were born in the digital era and have as their native language a computer language, video games and internet.” For us, “educated in a culture dominated by the Gutenberg model of the printed words, technology has just been an instrument using technology as a passive instrument, with the purpose to document rather than exchange information.” Needless to say, for the ‘digital born’ generation, this goes way beyond that and they use technology for multiple purposes. Then why not in our classroom?

There are various ways of inclusion of ICT in our regular teaching learning process. For example, The play The Merchant of Venice is prescribed for the students of BA VI semester in the various universities of Haryana. We can teach the play through blended learning method-creating a virtual classroom on one of the easy-interface online platforms like Edmodo or Google Classroom with all our students and introducing the play by sending them a link of a video on Shakespearean Drama. Learners can watch and come prepared in the next class with their understanding and the teacher can discuss and start the play with that background. As the classes progress, learners may be asked to design posters of the play using digital poster making platforms. This shall get them interested in the play and they shall spend some time in choosing an aspect of the play for their design, which shall make them excavate certain related themes/ideas pertaining to the play. Then, there are multiple adaptations of the play available online. These include cinematographic adaptations, theatrical and musical renderings and so on. Merely explaining to the learners verbally the culture, lifestyle, clothing and music etc of the sixteenth century Venice shall not evoke their imagination and it shall be an incomplete learning for them. Why merely ‘tell’ them what we can actually ‘show’ them? A screening of the movie may be organised and followed up with a writing activity/discussion on the parallels/deviations between the text and the adaptation. Watching the movie shall make the play get etched forever in the minds of the learners as there is some truth after all in the famous adage credited to Confucius, “I hear and I forget, I see and I remember”. The learners learn to contextualise the text and it also inadvertently teaches them the use of technology-something they should get

accustomed to now with the changing dynamics. Derek Spenser in the article “Using Technology to Teach Literature” draws attention towards this very pertinent outcome of using technology in a literature class that the students learn both--the literature and the technology. Author and Teacher Jordan Shapiro is quoted in the same article putting forth some other fruitful outcomes of the inclusion of technology in teaching a particular text. He says, “I do it for two reasons- one is to engage contextualisation ; the other reason has to do with fostering critical way of thinking about media and interactive media.” He further avows that in the current times no one can go “without having gone through some kind of education into the digital, interactive, procedural process.” So, it’s only natural and indispensable for the teacher to give the learners some taste of technology in the regular teaching learning process. Also, there are various interpretations of the same text in other mediums like a graphic novel, a comic strip, an opera performance etc, the learners may be exposed to all these new mediums via blended mode , alongside the traditional reading of the text in the class in order to make it a comprehensive process. Online Tools like Nearpod and Google 360 view provide wonderful 360 degree pictures of the Globe Theatre/Shakespearean era and may be used in the classroom to teleport the learners to that world, in that particular time and locale so they understand the sights and sounds of the play better. This shall be an innovative way to add excitement in the class and give a stimulus to the imaginative faculties of the students. In a similar way, other genres like poetry, one act plays, short stories etc can be taught by making ample use of the online resources. For poetry, a host of audio versions/recitations of poems are available on Youtube, Librivox and Genius.com which actually allows the teachers and learners to make digital annotations. PoetryDaily is an easy interface platform which helps learners understand about the genre and engage in discussions. Sparknotes has an array of texts and their analysis. Pocket Fiction is another platform with a collection of “unique literature” for the learners and teachers to explore. Learners may also be taught to make accounts on Wikipedia and using that they can create their own page or some content. Online resources/tools on Digital Maps may be used for teaching the diasporic movements in a text which otherwise would be incomprehensible to the learners, the places in the texts being unheard of by them. The various short stories written by foreign writers may be put into context by making use of some adaptations of them which actually help the learners understand the socio-cultural background of a particular text. In case of non-availability of any multimedia resource related to a particular text, the teacher can create an interactive resource easily using MS Word and Google Slides. Platforms like Answer Garden, Padlet and Actively Learn allow learners to embed questions, comments and annotations in the e text. Book Creator is a platform where an entire digital book can be created using all audio visual and rather some other very advanced techniques. So, unlike popular belief that technology is only the cup of tea

for disciplines like Science and Mathematics etc, Literature holds immense potentiality of being taught using technology, by virtue of its being essentially 'liquid'. The article "Integrating Technology into Literature" on <https://educatellc.com/> very aptly sums up the idea--"Combining technology with literature will help expand the horizons of students and teachers, help students address humanity, develop better writing skills, appreciate other beliefs and cultures, and build critical thinking skills"

To conclude, one feels tempted to endorse Spenser Johnson who asserts in his bestselling work *Who Moved My Cheese* that change is inevitable, "if you do not change, you become extinct" and Ray Clifford, who makes a similar statement, "Technology will not replace teachers but teachers who understand technology will replace those who do not." Time is, hence, ripe for us to renovate, reconstruct and revamp our teaching methodologies in tune with the change that the pandemic and the subsequent exigency has imposed upon us, and which is going to change the dynamics of the world of education forever.

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