

WOVEN WORDS

TEXTBOOK IN ENGLISH FOR CLASS XI
(ELECTIVE COURSE)



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FOREWORD

The National Curriculum Framework, (NCF) 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this basic idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the National Policy on Education (1986).

The success of this effort depends on the steps that school principals and teachers will take to encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that, given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this textbook proves for making children's life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater consideration for child psychology and the time available for teaching. The textbook attempts to enhance this endeavour by giving higher priority and space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) appreciates the hard work done by the textbook development

committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chairperson of the advisory group in languages, Professor Namwar Singh and the Chief Advisor for this book, Professor R. Amritavalli for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this textbook; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, material and personnel. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairmanship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G.P. Deshpande, for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

New Delhi
20 December 2005

Director
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A NOTE FOR THE TEACHER

Woven Words is based on the new syllabus in English prepared in consonance with the spirit of the National Curriculum Framework 2005. This textbook is designed for students who have opted to study English as an elective subject at the higher secondary stage. The main objectives of this book are to help students

- read literary texts with pleasure and understanding
- develop critical thinking and literary appreciation
- develop a sensitivity to the nuances of language.

Woven Words is an integrated book consisting of three sections namely, short stories, poems and essays representative of literature in English from around the world. Most of the short stories included here are by contemporary writers. There is a fair share of Indian Writing in English with Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Arundhati Roy and Jhumpa Lahiri reflecting rural, urban and diasporic experiences. *The Rocking Horse* by D.H. Lawrence and *The Luncheon* by Somerset Maugham add native English flavour to the collection, and the Sherlock Holmes story would definitely appeal to youngsters looking for some thrill in reading. Chekhov's *The Lament*, a touching account of insensitivity to bereavement, underscores the universality of the human condition.

The aim of this selection is to make learners approach reading as a pleasurable activity. The stories are followed by exercises under four heads—textual comprehension, talking about the texts, literary appreciation and language work. These aim at fostering critical reading in the learners and instilling in them the confidence to express their responses. The second head encourages learners to discuss their responses with each other in pairs or small groups.

The poetry selection, representing different forms such as the lyric, sonnet and ode, reflects some of the pressing concerns of the contemporary world such as racial discrimination (Wole Soyinka's *Telephone Conversation* and W.H. Auden's *Refugee Blues*), marginalisation of languages (Padma Sachdev's *Mother Tongue*), environmental issues (Dilip Chitre's *Felling of the Banyan Tree*), manipulative politics (Arun Kolatkar's satire, *Ajamil and the Tigers*), and sensitive comment on human relationships (Nissim Ezekiel's *For Elkana* and Philip Larkin's *Coming*). *Hawk Roosting* by Ted Hughes brings out the parallel in human behaviour to the predatory instincts

of animals while Sujata Bhatt's *The Peacock* is a delightful visualisation of the bird's colours and grace of movement. Also included are all-time classics: pieces of enduring charm and appeal from Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Keats. Forms like the limerick and the haiku add variety to the reading experience and introduce an element of light humour and fun.

The activities suggested for the poems are directed more at eliciting sensitive responses to the issues and the language rather than detailed textual comprehension. Difficult words have not been glossed as the aim is to encourage learners to make intelligent guesses or refer to the dictionary when they encounter unfamiliar terms. However, allusions to Greek mythology have been explained. A glossary of literary forms and terms has been provided at the end of the book.

While the content of most of the essays provides for serious reading, Mark Twain's *My Watch* is a humorous piece that lightens the section. Bertrand Russell's *The Three Passions*, a short excerpt from his autobiography, introduces students to a philosopher's perspectives on life and its primary concerns. Three of the essays are speeches recorded in writing. John Ruskin's *What is a Good Book?*, an excerpt from *Sesame and Lilies*, and E.M. Forster's piece on the elements of a good story, *from Aspects of the Novel*, prepare learners for literary criticism. S. Chandrasekhar's lecture, *Patterns of Creativity*, explores the relationship between poetry and science. G.N. Devy's *Tribal Verse*, in another strain, familiarises students with recent trends in looking at literature from non-conventional standpoints bringing in oral folk traditions into its fold. Kumudini Lakhia's autobiographical extract from *Women Who Dared* gives expression to an artist's approach to life and art.

The tasks that follow the essays demand learners' engagement with the texts and lead them on to a deep understanding of life and language. Teachers should help learners move towards reading with discernment.

The following are recommended for additional reading: *The Outsider* by Albert Camus; *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen; *Pygmalion* by G.B. Shaw and *Dancing in Cambodia and Other Stories* by Amitav Ghosh.

It is hoped that this course will lay the foundations for a study of English language and literature at the tertiary level of education.

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