

ABSTRACT

To Determine The Nature of Third Form Students' Expressed Written Response to Literature and Factors Which Influence That Response.

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This research paper seeks to determine the nature of students' written response to Literature. Few would dispute that there has been a decline in the prestige of Literature study. In truth, the trend has been to reduce, if not eliminate, the Literature component from the schools' curriculum at the intermediate level.

Given such a situation one saw the need to investigate how the subject is taught, whether teachers take the time to encourage and develop personal responses to Literature, to make their students sensitive readers who will interact with the text and respond.

A Teachers' Questionnaire was administered and one third form in eight secondary schools was asked to produce written responses to separate pieces of Literature from each genre. The Teachers' Questionnaire showed that generally, teachers have a positive attitude and a high perception of Literature but three schools were significantly superior. These were Presentation College, Naparima Girls' High School and San Fernando Government Secondary School. The Questionnaire also revealed that only two schools

encourage the teaching of Literature and these were Naparima Girls' High School and San Fernando Government Secondary.

The students' responses revealed that response to drama is barely adequate in almost all of the eight schools sampled. One school - Naparima Girls' High School - produced superior responses in all three genres. Responses to Prose and Poetry were adequate in all of the schools with Presentation College, San Fernando Government Secondary and Naparima Girls' producing superior responses. Some schools produced weak responses in all three genres and these were, significantly, the two Government Secondary Schools, San Fernando East Junior Secondary and Gasparillo Composite. Responses that were weak too, were generally Objective while the superior ones were Affective and Interpretive.

The findings suggest that school type is a major factor influencing the quality of student response. Also, teachers' perception and consequently their approach to the teaching of Literature, impact on response. The overall abysmal performance in drama specifically, must be investigated and remedied.

The study of Literature must remain at the heart of the English curriculum in secondary schools, for it is only through a Literature-centred programme that the course in English retains identity as a humanistic experience.