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Spoon River Anthology: Lies and Epitaphs

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Abstract

Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* published in 1915 is a collection of more than two hundred poems, written in the form of post-mortem autobiographical epitaphs of ordinary residents of a fictional small American town called Spoon River in Illinois. Each poem is titled with the name of a long deceased resident whose unheard yet striking story is explicitly or implicitly displayed with meticulous use of language and imagery. Along with the universal themes and its call to action for a less hostile and more embracing world, the anthology serves as a fruitful source for translation, literary study, and stylistic and discourse analysis. The primary purpose of this paper is to introduce *Spoon River Anthology* to practitioners of related fields and help them enhance their teaching process.

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1. Introduction

Almost after a century its first publication, Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* (SRA) still maintains its popularity due to its relatively simple form and universal themes and messages appealing to a wide audience. Prior to SRA, Masters had published four books of poetry, seven plays and a collection of essays under the pseudonym Dexter Wallace but none of them had received much critical attention. What ensured his permanent place in the literary world was *Spoon River Anthology* written under the pseudonym Webster Ford in *Reedy's Mirror* in 1915.

SRA is a sequence of more than two hundred free-verse epitaphs spoken by the dead at the Cemetery of Spoon River, a small Midwestern town in Illinois, Masters' place of growth. Spoon River represents the typical American small town of the late 19th century, which, despite the enormous social, economic, political and demographic changes, remains relatively stable and strives to maintain "typical" values of the region which, in fact, is doomed

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to change. Each epitaph-poem in *SRA* is named after the person whose life story is told as self-confession. Yet, the difference between what the survivors know and tell and what the epitaphs claim is striking. Summing up one's life story on a gravestone is a great challenge as it may reinstate or contest the common knowledge and perception about the deceased.

Personas in *SRA* give their names to the poems and appeal to the inhabitants of Spoon River, who are now given a chance to learn the truth. The poems serve as striking witnesses to the dichotomy between appearance and reality. They often disclose what is not known or kept secret by a few, and thus clarify an issue that devastated, wasted or glorified lives. However, some poems just serve to the other end. They confuse the minds of the inhabitants of Spoon River about a supposedly "well-known" and all-agreed issue concerning the deceased. They do this by reversing the truth or by presenting a totally different and unvoiced perspective, which may have been avoided or disregarded during the life time of the dead person. As a lawyer, Masters knew the importance of different points of view and perceptions in defining, shaping and creating reality. Therefore he employed contradicting epitaphs to serve as a reminder that truth has a thousand faces.

The poems in *SRA* deal with a variety of universal themes: meaning of life, fate, devotion, power, greed, lust, aging, death, birth, health, politics, heroism, idealism, frustration, religion, anger, jealousy, determination, sacrifice, faith, racism, bigotry, prejudice, ignorance, nature, existence, intellectual development, gossip, love, abuse of power, lies, selfishness... The epitaph poems in the *Anthology* encompass almost all Spoon River community from all walks of life: preachers, atheists, politicians, soldiers, poets, inventors, artisans, capitalists, adventurers, women, children, elderly... As the dead have no reason to fear and hesitate any more, they drop their guard. Although in the form of monologues, the dead speak out the unsaid and the unvoiced. Their exposure of the truth, though rather subjective, also serves as open criticism of conservatism and rural fundamentalism.

Masters preferred free verse to strengthen the reliability of the accounts of the personas, which brought his poetry closer to real life dialogues. For adherence to reality, he avoided constraints of form and meter. Although his unconcern with the critical norms of his era resulted in his exclusion from the critical canons, his popularity has remained untouched and *SRA* is still read widely. Masters' poetry is in line with the romantic tradition that first found voice in the continental Europe in the works of French, British and German poets. The influence of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Goethe and other romantics is felt in his poetry. Yet, Whitman's influence on Masters in terms of subject matter, treatment of topics, portrayal of individuals, and avoidance of all poetic conventions that limit the flow of emotions should be noted.

What brought Masters fame was his experimentation with poetic forms. In *SRA* he blended classical forms with new ones and gave life to the people he had known in his childhood. A great majority of the poems in *SRA* were confessional epitaphs or epigrams that the dead wanted to share with both the survivors and the deceased. Masters' use of free verse served best to the needs of the dead to recite their stories, which except for Walt Whitman's, had not been welcomed in American poetry until 1920s. When published in 1915, *SRA* created great sensation; because it displayed a strikingly different picture of the Midwest and Midwestern values. Its forthrightness and cynicism about the dynamics of life in a small town, power politics, sex, greed, racism, moral decay, segregation and hypocrisy was found disturbing by some circles. Its demystification also opened a new venue for other poets and writers. Some critics defended that *Spoon River Anthology* and *The Waste Land* had equal impact in the first quarter of the 20th century. According to H. K. Russell (1991), *SRA* was one of the leading products of The Chicago Renaissance led by C. Sandburg, V. Lindsay, and Theodore Dreiser

Masters' unusual portrayal of the deceased inhabitants of Spoon River and his sharp criticism of small town values shattered the myth around idealized American small towns where lives were allegedly based on ethical conduct. Through his portrayal of the buried people with all their virtues, weaknesses, misdemeanors, ills and unethical qualities as adulterers, liars, thieves, Masters also presented a "gallery of many different types of people which ultimately served to universalize the people of Spoon River." (Russell, 1991)

Ezra Pound hailed Masters in the *Egoist*: "At last. At last America has discovered a poet... At last the American West has produced a poet strong enough to weather the climate, capable of dealing with life directly, without circumlocution, without resonant meaningless phrases." Carl Sandburg agreed with Pound (*Little Review, May,*

1915): "The people whose faces look out from the pages of the book are the people of life itself, each trait of them as plain or as mysterious as in the old home valley where the writer came from. Such a writer and book are realized here." Many other critics praised *SRA* as a major episode for its uniqueness and originality to open a new poetic movement that would shape the first half of the 20th century. Masters continued to celebrate the Spoon River region in *The New Spoon River* (1924) with lyrical and nostalgic poems. Almost all of his later poems of *Spoon River* were later collected in *The Enduring River: Edgar Lee Masters' Uncollected Spoon River Poems*, edited by Herbert K. Russell (1991). As a diverse and prolific writer and poet, Masters never stopped publishing novels, essays, biographies and poetry. Yet the popularity and success of *SRA* would overshadow all his later works. Although Masters was never pleased with his reputation as a one-book author, stage adaptations of the *Anthology* are highly popular and the book is still in demand.

2. Epitaph-poems in Spoon River Anthology

2.1. "The Hill": The Introductory of Poem of Spoon River Anthology

SRA's introductory poem, "The Hill" has a repetitive structure that first shocks the reader and creates curiosity about the people whose fates will be exposed in their epitaphs. While the first line announces the absence of five men, the second line informs the reader of their major characteristics:

WHERE are Elmer, Herman, Bert, Tom and Charley,
The weak of will, the strong of arm, the clown, the boozier, the fighter?

That the deceased are introduced with their first names creates an atmosphere of proximity between the dead and the reader of the epitaphs. Although the cited names seem to have nothing in common, the third line gives the immediate answer: "All, all are sleeping on the hill." While at first, sleep might be taken literally, the following lines inform the reader that all of them have ceased to exist in different ways:

One passed in a fever,
One was burned in a mine,
One was killed in a brawl,
One died in a jail,
One fell from a bridge toiling for children and wife.

The next line is like an insistent church bell tolling and summoning their deaths: "All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill." The reader is now assured that "sleep" refers to death and "the hill" refers to a cemetery inhabited by a variety of men and women. The second part of "The Hill" follows the same structure too. It first underlies the absence of five women, gives their names, and then cites their characteristics: Ella/the tender heart, Kate/the simple soul, Mag/the loud, Lizzie/ the proud, and Edith/the happy one. Then the reader is informed that the women, too, are "sleeping on the hill" and how their lives ended:

All, all are sleeping on the hill.
One died in shameful child-birth,
One of a thwarted love,
One at the hands of a brute in a brothel,
One of a broken pride, in the search for heart's desire;
One after life in far-away London and Paris

The reader is shocked with the causes of their deaths and the way they died, which are far from being usual for the inhabitants of a small conservative American town, which, as critics of urbanization contended, represented purity and innocence. This part, too, ends with the repetition of the line: "All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill." The third part names five other people and follows almost the same structure, yet it is more informative in depicting the characteristics of the deceased. With diverse backgrounds, stories, and fates, the people referred to in *The Hill*, in fact, are a sample of the deceased inhabitants of Spoon River.

Many cultures ban or at least avoid remarks that might hurt the deceased regardless they really deserve any

good mention. Therefore visitors of graveyards tend to think that graveyards are only for “good” people” Readers of epitaphs learn with great consternation that the deceased were endowed with exemplary qualities and that their deaths were great loss for both their beloved ones and humanity. Keeping this in mind, Masters introduces us with *Richard Bone*, the person who chiselled most of the epitaphs in the cemetery, where he lies as well. His striking epitaph shows how he philosophizes on the chasm and the thin line between the appearance and reality, the degree of falsification and distortion of truth, importance of empathy and conflicting perspectives in the definition and recreation of reality and how death smoothes down lies. During the first year after he settled in Spoon River, “All in ignorance of the truth” *R. Bone* first chisels whatever is asked of him, without thinking “how near to life” the epitaphs are. Yet, his discovery of the contradiction between what he knows and what he is asked to carve does not stop him from chiselling as long as he is paid. Thus, he confesses, he makes himself a

party to the false chronicles
Of the stones,
Even as the historian does who writes
Without knowing the truth,
Or because he is influenced to hide it.

Thus he warns the reader of the epitaphs and the *Anthology* that they may be misled either by the dead themselves or by the survivors who ordered the epitaphs. This is a warning to distance the reader from the epitaphs and to adopt a critical point of view to avoid confusion and being misled.

Mrs. Kessler's epitaph, too, points out the dichotomy between appearance and reality. *Mrs. Kessler*, neglected by her lazy and ungrateful husband shackled to his days in the army, supports the family by washing people's laundry, thus “Learning the secrets of all the people.” She claims that the laundry, with their running colours and patches widening with time, “have their secrets.” As a laundress, she can easily tell if people are prospering or not. She witnesses decay in relations which “No thread or needle can pace”, stains in souls “that baffle soap”, and colours in lives “that run in spite of you”. She is sure that people's lives are full of secrets hidden or disguised, which “The laundress, Life, knows all about.” Therefore, in all funerals she sees dead faces looking “Like something washed and ironed.” She believes, like Life, Death and epitaphs launder people and iron their wrinkles.

Like *Richard Bone* and *Mrs. Kessler*, *Julian Scott* points out a different town of multiple standards, hypocrisy, inconsistency, insincerity and injustice. He stands for the nonconformist who differed from the other inhabitants of Spoon River with his questioning mind and belief in universal ethical standards and values which often contradict with the local ones. As a person who can think out of the box and can see through it, he is not at peace with the established and unquestioned clichés and values of Spoon River. Towards the end of his life he gets too sharp to agree and reconcile with the people around him; thus he becomes the black sheep, if not the scapegoat of the town: “The truth of others was untruth to me; / The justice of others injustice to me;”. So disturbed with the injustice in the world, he believes that even God, who must act in justice, principle and consistency, “could not live in this world of men / And act among them side by side / Without continual clashes.”

2.2. Marriage

SRA includes several poems dealing with matrimony and gender relations. Epitaphs of *Benjamin Pantier* and his wife represent a story of frustrated couple each of whom were doomed to their own solitude, and yet were compelled to continue their marital ties due to social and moral constraints of the town. Benjamin Pantier, once an “attorney at law” is buried together with his dog Nig, which proved to be his last and most loyal companion especially after he was left alone with the deaths of his beloved ones one after another. “Once strong of will” and now lying “indifferent”, lacking the “aspiration” and “glory” of his youth, he directs his anger to his wife who transformed his life to nightmare: “Then she, who survives me, snared my soul / With a snare which bled me to death.” Buried now with his loyal dog, he is sure that his suffering of a lifetime is to be unheard: “Under my Jawbone is snuggled the bony nose of Nig / Our story is lost in silence. Go by, Mad world!” However, the account of *Mrs. Benjamin Pantier*, whose first name is not given and can exist only as Attorney B. Pantier's wife, contests her

husband's arguments and presents a different reality. She agrees that he was loved and respected by everybody except herself. She hints that her husband was workaholic, which left no time to satisfy the needs of a "lady" and a "well-endowed woman" with "delicate tastes." On the other hand, her husband, critical of her ungrounded hubris and self-claimed aristocratic behaviour, repeatedly quotes the lines of Wordsworth "Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" Her vanity combined with her feeling of loneliness renders their marriage unendurable. Yet bound with the small town morality, she can neither venture into another relation nor divorce her husband with whose title she can secure a respectable position in Spoon River. Her epitaph is an overt confession of her disgust for her husband:

And the only man with whom the law and morality
Permit you to have the marital relation
Is the very man that fills you with disgust
Every time you think of it while you think of it.

She does not hesitate to confess how she finally revenged by condemning him to isolation and oblivion after she "drove him away from home... To live with his dog in a dingy room." Despite their pretence as an ideal couple, outside observers, such as *Trainor, the Druggist*, hint that the *Pantiers* did not match, represented opposite poles of a magnet, and were: "Good in themselves, but evil toward each other / He oxygen, she hydrogen./ Their son, a devastating fire."

SRA does not only include accounts of unhappy marriages and frustrated people and devastated lives. *Lucinda* and *Davis Matlock*, a couple married for seventy years, and their epitaphs stand out as a recipe for a healthy marriage and a peaceful life. They contradict with others complaining about shackles of matrimony, dissatisfaction and frustration. *Lucinda's* recipe for a happy marriage, which she derives from her lifelong experience of ninety six years, includes patience, hard work, love and service to others, devotion, trust, finding meaning in life, appreciation of the moment and surrounding beauty which might be hidden in one's immediate surroundings, and contentment. Even the loss of her eight children during her life time cannot stop her from seizing the moment, enjoying the natural beauty around her and "shouting to the wooded hills, singing to the green valleys." Therefore she fails to comprehend the discontent, sorrow and pessimism of the youth and appeals to the young generation: "Degenerate sons and daughters, / Life is too strong for you— / It takes life to love Life." *Davis Matlock*, her husband, is not less wise than his wife, yet more philosophical. Likening their lives to the lives of bees storing honey, *Davis* says they stored "(Material things as well as culture and wisdom)" for the next generations because man's need is more than the need of bees. He wisely calls the readers of his epitaph to bear "the burden of life", disregard the urge from their "spirit's excess" and "to live it out like god / sure of immortal life... is the way to live it." The reader is implicitly informed about the couple's background as immigrants and pioneers whose survival depended on patience and toiling, required by the Puritan ethic to guarantee wealth and happiness in life time and to increase their chances to be among the "selected" in the other world.

2.3. *Crime, Adultery, Corruption*

The epitaphs disclose secret crimes as well. *Searcy Foote*, an exemplary character of devotion and goodwill during his life time, confesses how he killed his paralyzed "half alive" aunt with chloroform, inherited her money and married Della Prickett. The final line of his epitaph is far from hinting any regret: "A joke on you, Spoon River?"

Epitaphs shed light to multidimensional secrets too. *Minerva Jones*, "the village poetess/Hooted at, jeered at by the Yahoos of the street" for her "heavy body, cock-eye, and rolling walk" discloses an unvoiced secret: that she was raped and impregnated by "*Butch*" *Weldy*, who, in his epitaph, confesses that he repented, "got religion and steadied down." That he later got crippled and lost his eyes in a job accident comes as a relief to the readers of his epitaph who might wonder if there is ever poetic justice. Even her death in Doctor Meyers' office, probably during abortion, does not sadden *Minerva* as much as the fate of her unpublished verses. She finalizes her words as "I thirsted so for love / I hungered so for life!"

The anthology includes epitaphs about corruption in politics and media as well. *Editor Whedon* honestly acknowledges that as an editor of a newspaper he worshipped power and money and that his motto was “To win at any cost, save your own life.” He confesses that he was always ready “To pervert truth, to ride it for a purpose / For base designs, for cunning ends.” He accepts that, as a self-proclaimed “giant”, he abused his power to cover or invent scandals for money or revenge, and glorified himself in demoniac power. Yet, what he can never understand is how he, the editor, after such a life of fame and power, fell from grace and why he lies forgotten in a remote part of the cemetery “Where the sewage flows from the village.” *Editor Whedon’s* life reiterates that acquiring power and wealth does not suffice to save people from oblivion. *Elliott Hawkins*, a regular church attendant and a man of principle “standing for the rights of property and for order” confesses how he, in fact, secretly lobbied for the wealthy and gathered his wealth, while pretending to defend the labour and idealism. In his complacent address to his critics, he contends that success means wealth, and that it is visible in the quality of his grave stone:

And now, you world-savers, who reaped nothing in life
And in death have neither stones nor epitaphs,
How do you like your silence from mouths stopped
With the dust of my triumphant career?

2.4. Goal of Life, Greed

Some residents of the Spoon River cemetery philosophize about meaning of life, greed and contentment. *Cooney Potter* and *Fiddler Jones* represent two opposite characters with their approach to the meaning and goal of life. The discontented *C. Potter* says he spent his own and his family’s life toiling to multiply the size of their land denying himself and his family joys of life. Although he manages to increase the forty acres of land he inherited from his family to one thousand, he dies before he can make it two thousand. *Fiddler Jones*, on the other hand, represents a man of contentment, who believes that one should live and enjoy every moment and each day as if he should die tomorrow. He calls the passers-by to hear the vibration of the earth in their hearts and “to fiddle” for all their lives. He says he could not till his forty acres, let alone asking for more, as long as he heard “a medley of horns, bassoons and piccolos” stirring in his brain “by crows and robins”, which reminded him that life meant and was more than ownership of more land. Then he concludes his epitaph, comparing himself with *Cooney Pooter*:

I ended up with forty acres;
I ended up with a broken fiddle—
And a broken laugh, and a thousand memories,
And not a single regret.

Just like the epitaphs of *Fiddler Jones* and *Lucinda Matlock*, *Edmund Pollard’s* epitaph is a call to seize the day. *E. Pollard* says that life is too short to waste with hesitation and bashfulness. If your soul is “alive”, he says, you should “feed” it by leaving no balconies unclimbed, “Nor ecstasies of body or soul.” He accepts that death is unavoidable but one should “die while living / In depths of azure, rapt and mated, / Kissing the queen-bee, Life!”

Repentance and greed are frequent themes in *Spoon River Anthology*. *The Circuit Judge’s* confession of his misdemeanours and wrongdoings and consequent pangs of his conscience reiterates that power corrupts and he was not free from corruption. Once “a maker of notches” with his decisions “not on the right of the matter”, the Judge now lies speechless “yet with vision clear” in a grave eroded by wind and rain. However, what disturbs him is neither the collapse of his grave stone nor “the curses of the poor”; it is his unbearable sense of guilt and shame that render “even *Hodd Putt*, the murderer hanged by his sentence ... innocent in soul compared to him.”

John M. Church shares similar feelings with *The Circuit Judge*. An attorney for an indemnity company that insured the owners of a mine, *John M. Church* makes a fortune defending the mighty and the wealthy, regardless “the claims /of the crippled, the widow and orphan”. Now he is not easy in his grave where there are no more “high-flown praises or the floral tributes” but “rats devouring [his] heart and snakes making a nest in [his] skull.”

2.5. Religion, Nonconformity, Idealism, Relativism

There are several epitaphs belonging to people whose lives were devoted to religion and shaped by faith. *J. Milton Miles*, namesake of John Milton, the author of *Paradise Lost*, symbolizes the people whose minds are confused when they encounter too many “truths” and varying religious interpretations that give birth to competing and sometimes conflicting religious sects even within the same religion. Although he sounds to be a devout Christian, *J. Milton Miles* cannot overcome his confusion of mind as he finds himself unable to distinguish between the Presbyterian, the Methodist, The Baptist and the Congregational bells. Thus he walks long “miles” in diverging paths of religious interpretation. His openness to welcome all faiths as long as they are sincere and his exclusion of bigotry, in return, further increases his confusion, and probably leads to his isolation and exclusion from all groups:

And as many voices called to me in life
Marvel not that I could not tell
The true from the false,
Nor even, at last, the voice that
I should have known.

William Goode, like *J. Milton Miles*, suffers from lack of belongingness caused by his questioning and sceptical mind urging him for constant search for the ultimate truth. While the people of Spoon River regard his quest for truth and vacillations as aimless wanderings of bats, *William Goode*, with his unquestionable goodwill, says he was just “trying to find the path.” And thus he utters his final words in his epitaph:

You should understand I sought the way
With earnest zeal, and all my wanderings
Were wanderings in the quest.

Columbus Cheney, like his first name, encompasses an exploring soul and inquisitive mind devoted to ideals and idealism. Acknowledging the importance of finding meaning in life and the after world, he calls the readers of his epitaph to be of service to others, this time in the form of planting willows “For the millions of children not yet born,” and yet without neglecting the self. He celebrates “the field of unexplored intuition” in people to show them the right path both to worldly and other-worldly happiness. He agrees with Marie Bateson whose “index finger pointing heavenward” but is not sure if there is only one way to it. Thus freeing himself of religious bigotry and limitation, he presents his own recipe, which can be adopted by multitudes both religious and irreligious: “It is well to abstain from murder and lust, / To forgive, do good to others, worship God / Without graven images.” These universal goals, according to him, do not require self denial, ascetic life, and relinquishing one’s freedom of mind and conscience. He defends that an individual has responsibility for his own self as well, and his vision will be lit with purity of mind and goals:

But these are external means after all
By which you chiefly do good to yourself.
The inner kernel is freedom,
It is light, purity—
I can no more,

Find the goal or lose it, according to your vision.

Oaks Tutt’s account of his own life story is an example of how idealism, often confused with hubris, may not suffice to change the world for better. Young *Oaks*, son of a rich miller, inexperienced and ignorant, yet sincere in his dreams to right the wrongs of the world and determined to “learn how to reform the world”, leaves Spoon River and travels to other countries. During his search for the ultimate truth and a panacea to eradicate the ills of the world, he visits ancient cities of Europe and Asia to learn the wisdom of old civilizations. Upon hearing “a voice from heaven” which says “Injustice, Untruth destroyed them. / Go forth Preach Justice! Preach Truth!” he hastens back to Spoon River. Yet, in Spoon River he loses his zeal, when he loses a debate with *Jonathan Swift Somers*, the town philosopher, on the question of “What is Truth?” and its relativity.

2.6. Service, Frustration, Wars

The Cemetery of Spoon River houses many frustrated individuals, who contend that their lives were wasted in quest of service to the people of Spoon River. *Seth Compton*'s hopes for a better future for his people are shattered when, from his grave, he witnesses the circulating library he built up and "managed for the good of inquiring minds" of Spoon River is sold at auction "As if to destroy the last vestige / Of [his] memory and influence." He accepts defeat in his endeavour to save the townspeople from ignorance and his failure in enlightening them to distinguish between good and evil, and true and false.

For I could never make you see
That no one knows what is good
Who knows not what is evil;
And no one knows what is true
Who knows not what is false.

Reverend *Abner Peet*'s disappointment with his congregation's show of gratitude with an unintended consequence is also a shocking proof how of one's treasured items and accumulation of wisdom that require lifelong patience and devotion may be wasted away by others once a person perishes. He says he can understand the people's motive for selling away his household items at an auction to gather the fund for his memorial. What hurts him, however, is their selling of a trunk that "contained the manuscripts / Of a lifetime of sermons?" to a man who "burned them as waste paper." The ultimate destruction of his written sermons marks the final and real death of Rev. Peet who sounds to be a believer of the motto "*verba volant, scripta manent*."

SRA deals with universal theme of wars and their meaning with the accounts of people who fought in the American Independence War, the British-American War of 1812, the Civil War, and finally the Spanish-American War of 1899. *Harry Wilmans*, who died in the Philippines in 1899, explains how young people can easily fall prey to fiery speeches of warmongers and their ensuing disappointment when they meet the cold face of death and brutality in the war field. Although he is buried as a hero, he believes that there was nothing heroic in his death in the trench and the flag over him is not as meaningful as it was when he was moved by Henry Phipps's fiery speech to uphold the flag: "Now there's a flag over me in / Spoon River. A flag! / A flag!"

3. Conclusion

To conclude, with its easy-to-read poems and rich gallery of people that provide different perspectives on shared human problems that go beyond race, nationality, gender, ethnicity and religion, *SRA* appeals to inquisitive minds of all levels and ages that believe that truth has a thousand faces. Therefore it can serve as an invaluable source in teaching literature, history, sociology, philosophy, psychology, history, politics, and media studies. *SRA*, as a microcosm, sheds light to the macrocosm by reminding the reader that human beings are the same despite their superficial differences and they all belong to the same species facing similar problems. Therefore *SRA*'s inclusion in literature courses can expand students' horizons and widen their perspectives for a peaceful world.

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