

Geography Lesson

This poem is about a teacher and how he influenced his students. The poet feels that what we learn from our teachers is much more important than the books they teach us with. What have you learnt from your teachers?



Our teacher told us one day he would leave
And sail across a warm blue sea
To places he had only known from maps,
And all his life had longed to be.

The house he lived in was narrow and grey
But in his mind's eye he could see
Sweet-scented jasmine clinging to¹ the walls,
And green leaves burning on an orange tree.

He spoke of the lands he longed to visit,
Where it was never drab² or cold.
I couldn't understand why he never left,
And shook off the school's stranglehold.

Then halfway through his final term
He took ill and never returned.
He never got to that place on the map
Where the green leaves of the orange trees burned.

The maps were redrawn on the classroom wall;
His name forgotten, he faded away³.
But a lesson he never knew he taught
Is with me to this day.

I travel to where the green leaves burn,
To where the ocean's glass-clear and blue,
To places our teacher taught me to love—
But which he never knew.



¹clinging to: hanging tightly on ²drab: not interesting or colourful
³faded away: (here) forgotten by everyone