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**Poem - 2**  
**An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum**

-BY STEPHEN SPENDER

**GIST OF THE POEM**

In this poem the poet focuses on the theme of social injustice and inequalities. He presents the pathetic and miserable picture of the elementary classroom in a slum. These children have pale and lifeless faces. They are like rootless weeds which are uncared and unwanted with their disorderly hair torn around their faces.

They are depressed and oppressed with the burdens of life and keep their heads down. They have stunted growth. They inherit the diseases of their father. Some of them do have dreams. A sweet young boy is sitting at the back of the dim classroom. He is dreaming of a squirrel's game in the trees and probably other interesting things.

The walls are dirty and creamy and on them are hung the donations given by the rich and also Shakespeare's portrait. A civilized dome found in the cities and Tyrolese valleys with beautiful flowers are also up. The map on the wall shows the children, the beautiful world outside; but for these children of the slum it is meaningless.

The children studying in these schools do not have the means to go and explore the world. For them what they see through their classroom windows, the narrow street and the lead sky is the world.

Shakespeare is wicked for them as he has written only about the rich, beautiful world tempting them to steal.

The map is of no interest to them because it does not reflect the world they live in- cramped and dark lanes. Their lives start in darkness and ends in utter darkness. They are undernourished and their poverty has distorted their vision as they spend their whole time in foggy slums. The poet feels that the map which shows beautiful and exotic places should be replaced with slums as it is not the world they live in.

Unless the governor inspector and visitor play a vital role in bringing about a change, their lives will remain in dark. The slum children will be able to peep through the window only when the gap between the two worlds is bridged.

They should break the barriers till they come out of the dirty surroundings and their world should be extended into the green fields, golden sands and bright world. They should have the freedom of expression and their outlook be broadened. For, only the educated and learned people can create history whose language has strength and power.