



Ecocriticism on the Short Stories of Grade 7 Philippine Literature Textbook: Ecological Themes in Teaching

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Abstract

Ecocriticism is the field that is characterized by a lively exchange of opinions, with audiences playing an essential role in the construction of the work of art. This approach challenges readers to reconsider their relationship with the world and their surroundings. This research focuses on examining the relationship between literature and the physical environment in the short stories in the Grade 7 Philippine literature textbook, particularly in the book entitled English Learner Material, with an author and a connection between humans and the physical environment using an ecocritical lens. The ecocritical lens is the literary lens used to examine the different ecological themes in the textbook. The result shows 8 animal themes, 5 pastoral themes, 5 dwelling themes, and 2 apocalypse themes found in the 9 selected short stories from the Grade 7 Philippine literature textbook. Still, not all selected short stories from the Grade 7 textbook exhibit a clear relationship between humans and the physical environment. This study emphasizes the importance of nature in the lives of humans. It raises awareness about the environment and its importance in the Philippine literature textbook used by public schools in the Philippines, particularly in the students' learning and development of the teacher's pedagogy in teaching literature that will make learning more meaningful and valuable for the students to gain new insights through literature reading. In conclusion, this study fosters environmental awareness among young learners as the stewards of Mother Earth.

Keywords: *Ecocriticism, Short Story, Environmental Education, Grade 7, Literature Teaching, Secondary School Learning*

INTRODUCTION

As global environmental issues become increasingly severe, environmental awareness and the concept of sustainable development have gradually become an international consensus. At this time, it is particularly important to explore the research on environmental literacy education and sustainable development in schools based on teaching effectiveness (Huang & Hsin, 2023). As the world evolves, many changes in the environment are noticeable and experienced by many; this implies that the destruction of the environment impacts the individuals who aim to live and have a better life. Encouraging broad collective acknowledgement of how this contemporary moment of compounding ecological pressure, deepening global economic inequality, and rising political violence has emerged, ecocritique offers an understanding of how and why the climate emergency is simultaneously a crisis of accountability and democracy and a struggle for power and knowledge (Lawrence, 2023).

Environmental awareness plays a vital role in developing sustainable development. Individuals with better environmental knowledge can implement more environmentally friendly behavior. The higher the capacity of an individual's concern about the environment, the easier it is to respond positively to ecological problems and take a corresponding solution (Zhang et al., 2024).

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Environmental awareness can be attainable when humans and the environment connect; knowing that the relationship between the environment and individuals has a significant role in shaping environmental awareness is essential (Jadgal et al., 2024). Environmental sustainability awareness has encouraged the promotion of a number of environmental programs and initiatives, and, accordingly, the use of social networks for the dissemination and support of these initiatives has grown significantly (Zarrabeitia-Bilbao et al., 2022). Similarly, environmental awareness significantly and positively affects environmental quality and pro-environmental behavior (Kousar, 2022).

Environmental Education is important to increase awareness and social responsibility for the environment among students. It is also hoped that students will understand more about the importance of environmental aspects not only for now but also in the future (Mutolib & Pamungkas, 2025). Environmental literacy is an attitude and behavior that must be possessed by a student to protect the environment. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a plan and action to empower environmental literacy through education (Wajdi et al., 2022). Several studies imply that environmental literacy is carried out to prepare individuals or communities to better understand and overcome environmental problems. The community's poor environmental literacy is associated with several factors, such as a lack of environmental content in curriculum at all education levels, an uninformed community with proper knowledge of the environment and disasters, and inadequate environmental-related information published through mass media (Yusuf et al., 2022).

Environmental education programs often are designed to impact knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors; consequently, researchers measure changes in those areas, rather than documenting direct ecological impacts. Thus, questions persist about the extent to which, and through what pathways, environmental education can improve environmental quality. A review of 66 studies evaluating youth environmental education programs found positive correlations with the outcomes of knowledge, awareness, skills, attitudes, intentions, behavior, and enjoyment. A review of 119 studies of K–12 environmental education programs reported 121 discrete outcomes grouped categorically into domains of knowledge, dispositions, competencies, behavior, and personal characteristics (Ardoin et al., 2020). The idea that education can be a vehicle to spread knowledge and help protect the natural environment has gained prominence since the 1960s. Young people can be agents of sustainable change. To this end, environmental education programs aim to promote their environmental knowledge, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. Early environmental education programs commonly relied on the assumption that when children and adolescents fail to engage in environmental behavior, they do so at least in part because they lack knowledge about the environment. From this reasoning, one would assume that if environmental education effectively improves students' environmental knowledge, then it should predispose them to engage in more environmental behavior as well (van de Wetering et al., 2022).

Environmentally oriented teaching practices may be regarded as ways to understand how ecologies interact locally, regionally, and globally in cultural contexts. It is crucial to create environmental awareness in the local sphere, but also to develop global responsibility. Ecocritical dialogic teaching is not about the degree to which the student teachers master the learning outcome as delineated in the curriculum, but rather about how they develop awareness as intended; more exactly, if and how they become environmentally aware in the given teaching process, or in the ecocritical dialogic space. (Goga et al., 2023). This shift in education – “the ecocritical turn” – is certainly significant today in the Anthropocene, a geographical era defined by the human impact on the earth's ecosystems. With a move towards the US liberal arts style of education, it therefore makes sense for the humanities to tap into this important, cross-disciplinary area of study. It caters

to students who want their literature classes to respond to real-world problems (Bristow & Moore, 2013).

While it is difficult to control how children spend their free time at home, change can lie within schools. Yet not all schools have the curricula, time, or resources to engage their students in experiential, outdoor education. Therefore, it is important to observe the already in-place curricula in the schools to discover how to increase environmental awareness amongst the students. Schools have the potential to impact children's attitudes and to influence wider community goals in the long term (Allen, 2012). It is clear from the existing studies that although students' use of textbooks has been characterized in various models of curriculum implementation, the number of studies on students' use of textbooks is very small compared to that of the studies on teachers' use of textbooks. Students should be the most important subject in using textbooks; the ultimate purpose of teachers' use is still for students' development, and ignoring students' use of textbooks may hinder the realization of the original purpose of textbook design. Research found that students' use of textbooks seems to help students learn and consolidate their knowledge and skills (Li & Wang, 2024).

The role of textbooks is multifaceted and crucial for pedagogical practice. As a resource for teaching, textbooks present teachers with a set of learning objectives and their transformation into didactic presentations of the material intended for teaching. As a learning tool, they are a fundamental and reliable source of information for students as they acquire new knowledge, while offering the teacher the opportunity to focus attention on improving pedagogy and effective learning. Textbooks are a fundamental written source of knowledge and often represent a factor in educational research that explains differences in students' knowledge at different levels of the education system (Pavešić & Cankar, 2022).

More recently, the literature on activity space has broadened the scope of the local environment to incorporate social spaces that individuals enter through their daily routines of commuting, working, schooling, and other activities (Cheng et al, 2025). Literary works can show problems in our life, such as the ones in the relationship between human beings and nature (Prabawati, 2023). Short stories and other literary works are valuable for teachers in promoting environmental awareness and building students' character (Juanda & Azis, 2023). Short stories are a useful pedagogical tool for developing students' critical thinking and analytical abilities (Abdulrahman & Alkhateeb, 2024). In the context of American short stories in English literature, ecocriticism can be seen as a lens through which to analyze how authors depict the natural world, human interactions with nature, and environmental concerns in their narratives. (Faulkner & Sing, 2023). Language and social science textbooks are instrumental in the transmission of values, shaping students' moral and ethical perspectives, and preparing them to navigate the social world with a strong sense of responsibility and justice (Nandi et al, 2024).

The *Republika* Newspaper published seven short stories in Indonesia between 2015 and 2018, focusing on environmental themes. The most dominant phenomena in the stories are disasters and forests. Through those stories, readers understand the importance of having a balance in nature to ensure the Earth's sustainability through the characters' representation in the stories. These stories promote environmental education, emphasizing the need to preserve nature, protect and plant trees, and preserve rare animal species. Romli's story reflects on how an ecological phenomenon affects rivers. (Juanda & Azis, 2023). Philippine literature encompasses the life experiences of the Filipino people expressed in different literary genres. It is an expression of thoughts, feelings, ideas, values, and various aspects of human life. It preserves cultural heritage and life-learning insights. It empowers the Filipino people to live with moral and socio-cultural

values towards humane relations and inspiring life-goals (Clemente, 2019).

Ecocriticism is a field that is characterized by a lively exchange of opinions and viewpoints, with audiences playing an essential role in the construction of works of art. This approach challenges readers to reconsider their relationship with the world and their surroundings, depicts the interactions within them, and re-envision the environment as a product of both natural and human influences (Juanda & Aziz, 2023). It deals with the presentation and analysis of environmental concerns, environmental-related cultural issues, and attitudes toward nature. Studying how people behave and respond in their cultures toward the environment and ecological issues is one of ecocriticism's key goals (Al Fawareh, 2023).

Given the pressing global concerns and environmental issues, the Department of Education (DepEd) urges all public and private schools to lead environmental awareness by enhancing ecological education and pursuing practical school-based activities to preserve and protect the environment (DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2003). The act directs environmental education to be integrated into school curricula at all levels through diverse teaching and learning strategies. These include training, seminars, workshops, environmental education materials development, and teacher education courses. This investigation will not only add to the increasing body of scholarship on the ecological perspective in speculative texts from the country. However, it may also demonstrate the significance of this literary genre as an essential tool to understand and solve real environmental issues (Maleon, 2023).

The Philippines is among the most vulnerable to Climate Change effects, such as rising sea levels and extreme weather. In response, the government and private sectors invest in various policies and projects to mitigate the impacts of the phenomenon and to reduce vulnerability (Maleon, 2023). Environmental issues in recent literary works are still tightly engaged due to people's high concern and attention toward the environment's condition (Sri Sartini & Endahati, 2023). The literature gap of this study is to figure out the importance and role of ecocriticism in teaching and learning practices, specifically in Grade 7 students, knowing that it has only a few studies that have examined ecological themes in Grade 7 Philippine literature textbooks. The researchers want to know the impact of this study on the learners and the teaching pedagogy of the teachers in public schools.

This study explores the ecological themes found in the Grade 7 Philippine Literature textbook that Junior High Schools in the public schools are using to raise awareness about the environment and the importance of having the ability to take good care of the environment. The findings can promote awareness and advocate for services that enhance student engagement and success in their studies. This study was conducted to explore the ecological themes that can be found in the Grade 7 Philippine textbook. More specifically, it sought answers to the following questions

1. What are the prevalent ecological themes found in the short stories of the Philippine literature textbook?
2. Based on the findings, what lesson plan can be crafted to teach environmental awareness? What lesson plan can be crafted to raise environmental awareness in students?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Environmental literacy comprises environmental knowledge, attitudes, sensitivity, and responsible environmental behavior. (Svobodová, 2023). Environmental literacy can empower students to make positive changes in their environment (Drake et al, 2024). To develop environmental literacy in our youth, we rely on the teacher to be environmentally and inquiry

literate and on an enabling curriculum. However, much of the available research indicates we must have this in Australia. We need teachers and curricula that promote "learner-centered approaches, learning-by-doing processes, and seek to engage and guide rather than lead and inform" (Kidman & Casinader, 2019). Environmental literature is a catch sight of through the lens of ecocriticism. It advocates a peaceful interaction between man and nature and opposes excessive human exploitation of the natural world. Man's conflicts with nature cause ecological crises, but they are not the only crises that civilization causes; conflicts within people cause social crises, and conflicts within oneself cause spiritual crises. The interaction between man and nature is currently central to environmental disasters. In the previous 50 years, there has been much talk about the ecological crisis (Asenath & Santhanalakshmi, 2021).

Environmental literacy is defined as one's ability to find relevant information regarding environmental issues (Mykolas Simas Poškus, 2024). One of the goals of environmental education is the development of environmental literacy (Dada et al., 2017). Environmental literacy can be assessed from cognitive, affective, and psychomotor perspectives, so the assessment of environmental literacy can vary depending on its goals. Various studies have shown variations in the development of environmental literacy assessment tools based on the aspects being evaluated. This information is essential for teachers to consider which assessment tools to use to evaluate students' environmental literacy competencies and for policymakers to make decisions regarding the implementation of environmental literacy improvement efforts and how to assess them. As future contributors to development, students must be equipped with environmental literacy competencies. Environmental literacy can be incorporated into formal education in relevant subjects. In this context, the role of teachers is crucial in managing environmentally-based learning. Without environmental literacy, teachers may struggle to conduct environmentally oriented learning activities. Therefore, it is important to enhance environmental literacy competencies for prospective teachers within the formal education system at higher education institutions because students' environmental knowledge correlates with their attitudes and responsibilities outside the classroom. The increasing awareness of environmental education has led to various efforts to improve environmental literacy, including environmental literacy among future educators (Arif, 2024).

Environmental education is intended to encourage social groups and individuals to increase their awareness of and sensitivity to the environment, acquire a basic understanding of the environment, gain a set of values and feelings for the environment, acquire skills for solving environmental problems, and become involved in working towards resolutions. The goal of environmental education is to "develop citizens who are knowledgeable about the world around them and involved in working toward a more livable future" (Allen, 2012).

Currently, in the new stage of education, the national education department responds to the wave of education reform and gives a new look to literature education. With the deepening of the education reform situation, the teaching of modern and contemporary literature should be carried out by making full use of the teaching resources of our schools, combining with the professional teaching situation, adjusting and optimizing the methods and modes of literature teaching, enhancing the quality of teaching, improving the relationship between teachers and students, and paying attention to the cultivation of the students' comprehensive quality and enhancement (Liu, 2025). The range of environmental studies has increased. It has come in its way in a way belonging to scientific literature. One of the partners in the range of such studies is ecocriticism (Hazarika, 2021). Special importance is given to the content quality of school textbooks. The influence of school textbooks is determined by the fact that school children should necessarily get familiar with the printed materials, resulting, as a consequence, in accepting the

patterns of social interaction and motive codes introduced there. Due to the high constructivist potential of school textbooks, it seems necessary to carry out content analysis of textbooks for the purpose of identifying the influence on certain motive trends formation in schoolchildren (Bataeva, 2018).

In general, the research literature suggests that textbooks should be considered as an important parameter in education studies and textbook choice a relevant factor for education practice. The importance of textbooks in educational research is growing as the research literature shows a trend towards the increased use of textbooks as the primary source of teaching. Textbooks link the expected, implemented, and achieved curriculum as different curricular levels are understood by international large-scale assessments. As a resource for teaching, textbooks present teachers with a set of learning objectives. As a learning tool, they are a fundamental and reliable source of information for students as they acquire new knowledge, while offering the teacher the opportunity to focus attention on improving pedagogy and effective learning (Pavešić & Cankar, 2022).

Textbooks are vital for academic and personal development, fostering critical thinking. Short stories in English teaching serve as both teaching materials and learning bases (Empalmado et al., 2024). Textbooks are integral and beneficial to the learning process because they provide meaningful input in the form of various activities, readings, and explanations (Slamet et al, 2025). Textbooks function as catalysts for social change, influencing students' values, beliefs, and cultural awareness from the primary education level. Textbooks serve as key learning resources for students that significantly influence students' character development (Nandi et al, 2024). The ultimate aim of education is to shape human behavior (Hungerford & Volk, 1990).

In addition to effective teaching strategies, it is important for schools to provide holistic support for students. This includes addressing students' social and emotional needs, as well as their academic needs. Finally, an emphasis on student assessment and evaluation is also critical to promoting student success. This includes not only formal assessments but also ongoing feedback and opportunities for self-reflection (Kilag et al, 2023).

Textbooks are one of the most important, indispensable, cheap, and easily accessible educational materials. They provide a lot of certain knowledge that students will follow to learn, and can also affect students' thoughts, beliefs, and values. Textbooks play a pivotal role in shaping individual and societal behaviors. The textbook material embodies various types of values, which are conveyed primarily through two media: written text and illustrations. These elements foster a dynamic lifestyle among students. The values presented in textbooks may be interpreted differently by different students. Due to personal background, Cognitive development, and cultural context, for example, perceptions of values such as respect may vary based on cultural norms and personal experiences. This leads to diverse understandings of the same content (Nandi et al, 2024).

Ecocriticism explores literary ecology or uses the idea of ecology in literary readings, teaching, and writing (Xu & Gong, 2012). It is characterized by a lively exchange of opinions, with the audience playing an essential role in the works of art. This approach challenges the readers to open their minds, reconsider their relationship with the world and the interaction within them, and make their vision of the environment a product of natural and human influences. Moreover, ecocriticism focuses on examining ecological ideology in literary works that seek to reveal the involvement of humans in the environment (Juanda & Azis, 2023). Ecocritics encourage others to think seriously about the relationship of humans to nature, about the ethical and aesthetic dilemmas posed by the environmental crisis, and about how language and literature transmit values with profound ecological implications (Nadira, 2024). Ecocriticism nurtures a language and symbolism that enables thinking about the "impact" that humans have had on the environment and

our complex relationships with the material conditions of the earth ([Bristow & Moore, 2013](#)).

Ecocriticism these days is indeed a relatively new revisionist and reformist trend that has dominated the ecological point of view in recent English literature worldwide. The ecological perspective constructed under Eco-criticism delineates the nature-human alliance in both detrimental and constructive ways ([Al Fawareh, 2023](#)). Ecocriticism is crucial in understanding how literature not only reflects but also shapes human perceptions of nature. Literary works have the power to evoke emotional responses, foster empathy towards the environment, and inspire action. By analyzing texts through an ecocritical lens, scholars can uncover the ways in which literature critiques anthropocentrism, advocates for ecological balance, and envisions sustainable futures. Furthermore, ecocriticism challenges the conventional boundaries between nature and culture, encouraging a holistic view that recognizes the interconnectedness of all life forms ([Dr. Suchitra Sharad Tajane, 2024](#)).

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

In quantitative content analysis, the process of categorization runs automatically, following a fixed algorithm, whereas in qualitative content analysis, the assignment of categories to text passages always remains an act of interpretation. But this process strictly follows the rules of interpretation ([Mayring, 2020](#)). Qualitative content analysis is a research design that uses words as data to collect information, realizations, and affirmations in human experiences ([Ellis & Hart, 2023](#)). The researchers specifically used qualitative content analysis ([Mayring, 2020](#)), focusing mainly on the Grade 7 selected short stories. These enable the researchers to interpret and determine the text that contains environmental and human connectivity. This design is appropriate for this study, knowing that this study is a corpus study, which examines the written text to gather the data that is needed.

The reason why the short stories focus mainly in the Grade 7 year level and only nine stories has been purposely chosen for a reason that this level is the crucial level in junior high school, specifically in shaping students' character and awareness about the environment and through these nine short stories, the Grade 7 students can critically think and ask questions about how important the environment is to human. The nine short stories are the most relevant to be used in this study, considering that the context, the character, and events in the stories can be mirrored in the Filipino practices in the Philippines, and the students can truly relate to them. The researchers selected the short stories from the Grade 7 English textbook. The selection is being done through purposive sampling, reading each story multiple times, and looking into the content and the context of the short stories by highlighting each line from the stories. After reading each story, the researchers take notes about which stories have the most content about humans and the environment. Next, the short stories that have been chosen through note-taking will be the stories to be read again, and upon reading, the researchers highlight the lines that are suited to each ecological theme, such as apocalypse, animals, pastoral, wilderness, pollution, dwelling, and the earth ecological themes, according to [Gregg Garrard \(2004\)](#).

This study was conducted in a public Junior High School in Zamboanga Del Sur. The research environment is appropriate, as public schools promote environmental awareness and provide students with knowledge and understanding of the environment. It could be beneficial for the students in public schools to be open and value the importance.

The researchers used the Grade 7 English textbook by the public school in the Philippines, entitled English Learner's Material. The researcher analyzed nine short stories with authors in Grade 7 textbooks. The short stories are being analyzed by multiple coders by systematically

focusing on the lines that have been highlighted and categorizing them by themes. Triangulation with the teacher perspective is being done to make sure that the lines that have been categorized by themes are being confirmed and to ensure that the information is credible. The thematic interpretation is being done by analyzing each line that has been highlighted in the stories. Looking into the definitions of each ecological theme and looking as well into the short stories' lines, through this, the lines from the short stories can be suited to the ecological themes.

The selected short stories that can be looked through are as follows: "My Father Goes to Court" by Carlos Bulosan, "The Centipede" by Rony V. Diaz, "The Happiest Boy in the World" by NVM Gonzales, "The Bread of Salt" by NVM Gonzales, "Footnote to Youth" by Jose Garcia Villa, "Hunger in Barok" by N. V. M Gonzales, "The Stranger" by Ismael Mallari, and "Man in Dapitan" by Loreto Paras-Sulit.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined ecocritical themes in English short stories from Grade 7 textbooks. By analyzing the short stories, the researchers wanted to identify how ecocritical themes are portrayed in the stories. The insights gained were used to develop an instructional pedagogy for teaching learners about literature, especially in high school.

Ecocritical Themes Found in the Selected Short Stories

In examining the short stories, the researchers focused on ecocritical themes to identify the existence of the relationship between humans and non-humans in the textbooks. This analysis involved evaluating the lines in the story that show the different kinds of tropes and their subcategories. The data results provide clear insights about the themes prevalent in the story from each year level. These findings address environmental issues in educational materials and contribute to promoting environmental sensitivity in academic settings.

Table 1. *Summary of Ecocritical Themes Found in the Selected Short Stories*

Year Level	Pollution	Pastoral	Wilderness	Apocalypse	Dwelling	Animals	Earth
Grade 7	0	5	0	2	5	8	0
Total	0	5	0	2	5	8	0

Table 1 shows the Ecocritical themes found in the short stories of the Grade 7 Philippine literature textbook. The animal theme appears 8 times. On the other hand, the pastoral theme appears 5 times in the story, followed by the dwelling theme, which appears 5 times in the selected short stories, and the apocalypse theme, which appears 2 times in the story. Lastly, wilderness, pollution, and the earth themes do not appear in the selected short stories. The seven short stories extracted from the textbook contain various aspects of environmental phenomena, such as animals, apocalypse, pastoral, and dwelling. The following description explains this phenomenon.

Animals

Animals are part of nature; humans and animals must be treated with the same rights in one unit called life, without having to differentiate between the two. Thus, human mistreatment and animal cruelty can be avoided (Garrard, 2004). The principle of equality in utilitarianism states that everyone is entitled to equal moral consideration, regardless of family, race, nation, or species (Garrard, 2004).

"He had been out all afternoon looking for one of Kaponso's carabao that had strayed away"
- *The Happiest Boy in the World.*

"A boy of twelve was riding a carabao along the river road to town. He made a very punny load on the carabao's broad back" - *The Happiest Boy in the World.*

"And take good care of the carabao" - *The Happiest Boy in the World.*

"After he had unhitched the carabao from the plow, and let it to its shed and fed it" - *Footnote to Youth*

"Usually, he had to go send out somebody with a carabao and a cart to get his due, and Mang Cesar did not have much rice to give" - *Hunger in Barok.*

"He tied the horse to a coconut tree nearby, pulled off the wet sack that covered the animal's back, and with this gently rubbed his flanks" - *Hunger in Barok.*

"The dog ambled after me. He found the birds for me." - *The Centipede.*

"May I keep him, Father? I said, pointing to the dog," - *The Centipede.*

In the story "The Happiest Boy in the World," this line says, *"He had been out all afternoon looking for one of Kaponso's carabao that had strayed away."* It portrays that taking good care of the animals and thinking about their well-being is a sign that being kind is not only limited to humans, but it can be shown to anybody, no matter who they are and where they belong. Every animal deserves respect, especially those animals that help people in their farm work. It implies that humans and animals are connected. The animal represents needs, knowing that it is needed in the farming activities of the narrator's father.

"A boy of twelve was riding a carabao along the river road to town." He made a very punny load on the carabao's broad back." It implies that animals, especially carabaos, play an important part in rural areas as part of nature. In addition, carabao are one of the companion animals of the Filipino people in their farming; they help farmers to carry heavy loads of crops to be sold in the city for them to sustain their everyday needs. The line from the story also shows that animals can be trusted, for a reason that it does not know how to betray a person and it also portrays that since then, carabao's is one of the animal that has a big impact to the lives of the people, that is why treating them with kindness as we treat human beings is important, considering that having a good manner is crucial in dealing with nature.

"And take good care of the carabao." It implies that humans show love and care to the carabao, considering that it supports human life, especially in rural areas. It is important to let the Grade 7 students know the presence and importance of the carabao animal in the lives of the people, especially in this generation, where appreciating this kind of animal is not a responsibility anymore, but a choice to learn about its use in the field of farming. That is why introducing such literary stories to the junior high school students, specifically the Grade 7, is needed.

In the story "Footnote to Youth," this line says, *"After he had unhitched the carabao from the plow, let it to its shed and fed it."* It implies that there is a presence of equal moral considerations that show people can form a special connection with animals by treating them correctly. Being a trusted animal companion, feeding them to live, and treating them right are characteristics that the

students must uphold in the early years in high school through learning Philippine English literature, specifically short stories, so that their character will be molded and they can gain knowledge about the life of the people in the Philippine setting. It is evident in the study of [Nadira \(2024\)](#) that people can create a unique, personal bond with animals. Yusuf treats the crow respectfully and enjoys its presence without caging or controlling it, instead of considering it a scary or troublesome bird. In this way, Yusuf challenges the negative societal views.

In the story "Hunger in Barok," this line says, *"Usually, he had to send out somebody with a carabao and a cart to get his due, and Mang Cesar did not have much rice to give."* This line portrays that the role of the carabao never ends because it can also be used as a farmer's buddy in moving from one place to another to send goods for planting. In teaching, this can imply that students must learn how to fully understand the role of the carabao to make people's lives easier to handle by reading and understanding the essence of the stories.

"He tied the horse to a coconut tree nearby, pulled off the wet sack that covered the animal's back, and with this gently rubbed his flanks." It portrays that humans need rest, and so with the animals, it is essential to let the students know that being kind to animals costs nothing. Teaching literature in Grade 7 is very crucial, knowing that the content of the short stories has many values to be considered and put into practice.

In the story "The Centipede," this line, *"The dog ambled after me."* He found the birds for me." The dog represents the friendship and companionship of humans. In this excerpt, the dog finds the birds for the narrator while they are hunting. In addition, the goodness of the animals to the people naturally comes out when they are not being harmed; regarding this, the students in Grade 7 must learn that dogs are animals and they have feelings as well. In reading short stories, learning and teaching are vital in developing the student's characteristics in treating the different kinds of animals in the environment.

"May I keep him, Father? I said, pointing to the dog." This line reveals the theme of animals since the narrator wanted to keep the dog they only encountered in their hunting activity. This implies that it is natural for us humans to take care of animals, especially dogs. It is natural for humans to take good care of the animals and treat them as part of the family, especially dogs. That is why treating them right and with respect must be considered. In reading short stories in the Philippine literature textbook, students in Grade 7 must keep in mind and ask questions to the teachers about the role of animals and the importance of animals in the environment in general, so that they can gain insights and valuable ideas from the teacher, and they can apply them in their lives. ([Garrard 2004](#)) defines animals as part of nature. Humans and animals must be treated equally and have the same rights without the need to differentiate between the two. Thus, cruelty to animals must be avoided.

There is also clear evidence that human-animal relationships may be characterized by different forms and levels of discomfort and suffering for animals and, in some cases, also for people ([Prato-Previde et al, 2022](#)). It is also evident in the study of [Nadira \(2024\)](#) that most of the Pakistani and Indian people believe that a crow's cawing is a sign of misfortune or death. However, this narrative gives respect to crows, as well as other ecological creatures and elements, and this story supports Garrard's ecocritical notion that animals should be appreciated for who they are, rather than being limited to traditional, symbolic roles.

Pastoral

Pastoral is an ecocritical theme that concentrates on the interconnectedness of urban and rural environments ([Garrard, 2004](#)). Pastoral literature portrays rustic life as serene and sense-soothing, contrasting urban life as contaminated and chaotic. Through such depictions, this trope

emphasizes the significance of reconnecting with nature and the critical need to preserve the rustic life from urbanization and environmental degradation.

"The petroleum lamp on the ceiling was already lighted, and the low, unvarnished table was set for supper. His parents and he sat down on the floor around the table to eat." - Footnote to Youth.

"Dodong's mother removed the dishes when they were through and went out to Batalan to wash them" - Footnote to Youth.

"We went out in the sun and bathed in the cool water of the river that flowed from the mountains into the sea" - My Father Goes to Court.

"Every afternoon after school, we went to the field to chase quails or to the bank of the river" - My Father Goes to Court.

"On my way back to the house, I passed the woodshed. I saw Berto in the shade of a tree, splitting wood." - The Centipede.

In the story "The Centipede," this line, *"The petroleum lamp on the ceiling already was lighted, and the low, unvarnished table was set for supper. His parents and he sat down on the floor around the table to eat."* This implies a raw life that is simple and peaceful. Just like the lines portray simplicity in life, students must learn that living a life that is free from any trends and technology is somewhat amazing, and it gives a feeling of solitude where rushing life is not necessary, but slowly enjoying the natural world is a privilege. Reading short stories through Philippine literature and understanding its context and culture is a treasure that students can have in their journey.

In the story "Footnote to Youth," this line says, *"Dodong's mother removed the dishes when they were through and went out to Batalan to wash them."* It suggests that they live in a rural area, where they experience the purest nature at its finest. In life, happiness can be found in the natural environment and the essence of the environment, just like the line from the story, they do not need to have all the richness in life, knowing that a simple and meaningful life makes them feel rich, even though they do not own anything luxurious. In learning, students shall remember that nature is a gift, a gift, and the richness that human beings can have.

In the story "My Father Goes to Court," the line *"We went out in the sun and bathed in the cool water of the river that flowed from the mountains into the sea"* The line describes the little things in life that humans must experience in their life, it can also be thought to the students that life does not revolve around the gadgets being held by the hand, finding happiness in nature and appreciating the environment and the goodness it gives is important so that when time comes, the life they live will not be wasted by the small screen attach to them which is the technology.

In the story "The Centipede," the line *"Every afternoon after school, we went to the field to chase quails or to the bank of the river."* The line describes the connection between humans and nature, as nature plays an important role in life. This can also be used in teaching literature as it gives meaning in the learning process of the students.

"On my way back to the house, I passed the woodshed. I saw Berto in the shade of a tree, splitting wood." The lines portray the ordinary life of the people living in the countryside, where experiencing firsthand the beauty of nature while playing their role in living life is somehow meaningful for students. Garrard (2004) defines pastoral as a rustic life that is serene and sense-

soothing, contrasting urban life with a contaminated and chaotic life. Through such depictions, this trope emphasizes the significance of reconnecting with nature and the critical need to preserve the rustic life from urbanization and environmental degradation. Britannica defines Pastoral as the literature that represents the society of shepherds, where they live an unalloyed, raw life that is pure from the complexities of city life. The excerpts mentioned above reveal the theme of pastoralism since it represents life in a rural community, and the relationship with humans towards nature suggests an interconnectedness of all living things on earth that is present in the environment.

The findings are also evident in the study of [Nadira \(2024\)](#). When he visits his friend Shahbano's patio office and looks out from the window, he sees his childhood home in Karachi. He recalls the half-forgotten memory and says that he is sure that he once climbed these trees. This remembrance makes him long for a simple past and a strong bond with nature.

Dwelling

Dwelling is a lasting state that signifies the enduring, deep connection of Sapiens to the land, which is their memory, ancestry, and mortality, encompassing rituals, life, and labor ([Garrard, 2004](#)).

"Smoke smudged the sky, for someone had been busy in his clearing, burning the felled trees and under the bush" - Hunger in Barok.

"People would come to him and ask for a hillside to clear and later pay him rice after each harvest" - Hunger in Barok.

"When the rain comes, you will have the best kaingin in all Barok. You and your wife and children - why, you will have a good harvest" - Hunger in Barok

"They were planting upland rice" - Hunger in Barok.

"That is a good cavan of rice seed he has, said Mang Cesar. Moreover, the man has a way with the soil" - Hunger in Barok.

In the story "Hunger in Barok," the line "Smoke smudged the sky, for someone had been busy in his clearing, burning the felled trees and under the bush." Farming is the primary source of living among Filipino people in the countryside. Clearing the felled trees and bush is one of the procedures to do to be able to plant crops, but this does not mean that the land has been destroyed; instead, it goes beyond that, knowing that it produces goods to sustain their lives. Grade 7 students should understand that cultivating land to plant is essential in the countryside. Through reading the story, learning can be meaningful since there will be questions that arise, and the students can critically think about their answers to the questions being asked, and the learning will be more meaningful and relevant to the topic of environmental awareness. [Garrard \(2004\)](#) defines a dwelling as a lasting state that signifies the enduring, deep connection of Sapiens to the land, which is their memory, ancestry, and mortality, encompassing rituals, life, and labor.

"People would come to him and ask for a hillside to clear and later pay him rice after each harvest." In the story, it is clearly stated that the people struggle to maintain life on their plantations. This line implies that nature is crucial to man's life; it sustains life. Students should know that in the environment where they belong, there is a cycle of giving and taking. The action taken for the

environment may have a positive impact either way it goes.

"When the rain comes, you will have the best kaingin in all Barok. You and your wife and children—why, you will have a good harvest." This implies that farming plays a significant role in life, but dealing with nature is complex, particularly when a phenomenon occurs. This portrays that nature will give back its role to humans when it is being treated the right way. As the students learn from the context of this story, they can gain meaningful insights that they can apply to themselves as part of the environment and live with dignity and pride, knowing that they played their role.

"They were planting upland rice." This line from the story suggests that nature gives and makes the lives of people more meaningful lives to live in. It implies that the environment really plays an important role in life. Students can appreciate their presence with the environment, knowing that it sustains life.

"That is a good cavan of rice seed he has, said Mang Cesar. Moreover, the man has a way with the soil." This line implies that in the near future, the environment will evolve and change; it is important to keep in mind that, in the present, taking good care of it and cultivating its land may lead to a positive impact in the future. Students should make time to read and comprehend the content and lessons from the stories they have read in school. According to [Garrard \(2004\)](#), dwelling can be part of two main types: Georgic and Primitive. The former type is associated with agricultural practices to support human lives, primarily seen in North America and Europe, which tend to disturb the natural balance.

In contrast to the study of [Nadira \(2024\)](#) in *A Convalescence*, Rashid welcomes the pigeon into his hostel room, provides it food, places a clay bowl, and lets it come and go on its own will. This shows the idea of dwelling. Instead of considering the pigeon as a problem or something to rule over, Rashid treats it as a companion, respecting its freedom. He also repels pigeon fanciers and refuses to clip the bird's wings or sell it by stating that it should stay free from boundaries. This aligns with Garrard's idea of dwelling, where Rashid creates a relationship of coexistence with nature, creating a meaningful connection with the environment.

Apocalypse

"During two or three months of the year in Mindoro, there is hunger, a kind of half-famine, as it were, and riding homeward down the empty bed of the river early on the afternoon, Cesar Manalo was thinking of this very phenomenon" -Hunger in Barok.

"Father's farm had been destroyed in 1918 by one of our sudden Philippine floods." My Father Goes to Court.

In the short story "Hunger in Barok," the line *"During two or three months of the year in Mindoro, there is hunger, a kind of half-famine, as it were, and riding homeward down the empty bed of the river early on afternoon, Cesar Manalo was thinking of this very phenomenon,"* reveals the theme of the apocalypse since there is the presence of environmental crisis in the area. It is explicitly described in the phrase "there is hunger, a kind of half-famine" which means that there are hardship and scarcity of food that leads to hunger. Moreover, it also suggests that they cannot perform their task of planting rice and other crops. This implies that they have lost their emotional connection with nature because of this phenomenon. [Garrard \(2004\)](#) defines apocalypse as a metaphor that symbolizes disaster and represents images of crisis and conflict. This line from the story portrays that in life, nature challenges people to experience life crisis and difficulties that will make life more meaningful, it means that knowing how to save goods and other means to live to be ready for an uncertain future to be face is necessary, considering that life has ups and downs, being

responsible and determined enough to plant a crops during rainy season is a must so that in the draught season, goods are prepared and can sustain a family's everyday means. It is also important for Grade 7 students to know how to take good care of the environment, knowing that the school is the training ground for them to be molded as an individual who knows the importance of all the things that surround them, because it is there where humans live and survive.

In the story "My Father Goes to Court," the line "*Father's farm had been destroyed in 1918 by one of our sudden Philippine floods*" reveals the theme of the apocalypse because a disaster, the "flood," portrays the destruction of the farmlands. This line from the story shows that being a good citizen and having the will to take good care of the environment, including nature, forest, and the trees present on it is a very crucial act to practice in this time, wherein there are many calamities happen in the present world, knowing to act the right way and think for the sake of everyone present in the environment is not a hard thing to do because at the end of the day, we will be the one to reap the fruit the good act we gave to the nature. [Garrard \(2004\)](#) defines apocalypse as a metaphor that symbolizes disaster and represents images of crisis and conflict. It is a dreadful incident that leads to destruction and devastation to a great extent. The nature of apocalypse in the story is not the usual presentation of violent or cataclysmic end of everything but comic in the sense that it 'unveils' or 'uncovers' the weaknesses and follies of human beings such as greed for money and power that are responsible for the looming threats of the problem of overcrowding and loss of space in the near future ([Nepal, 2023](#)). The findings are also evident in the study of [Nadira \(2024\)](#) when Mehreen, his childhood friend, is unable to recognize her former home due to environmental changes/shifts. This transformation indicates the gradual apocalypse as the tamarind tree has perished, and the walls are high. This is how environmental changes cause emotional disconnection with nature.

There has been a great deal of research on how the content of textbooks has changed in line with changing values in different societies and over different periods of time, but little research has been done on how different types of textbook substrates and design have changed, and how these changes have affected learning and comprehension. Textbooks play an important role in almost every school system in the world, representing a useful resource for both teachers as course designers and students acquiring knowledge ([Torkar et al., 2022](#)).

Teaching practices are important for understanding and improving educational processes. They are closely linked to the teachers' strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life and to their general well-being, and they shape the learning environment and influence learner motivation and achievement. Teaching in schools and in classrooms is a moral practice. Teachers have a role in developing the moral character of the learners consistent with ethical standards. Teachers are charged with the responsibility to both students and society for the training of the students, and they have considerable authority in their roles ([Nomabandla et al., 2015](#)).

The ecological themes mentioned above which is animal, pastoral, dwelling, and apocalypse appears frequently in the story for a reason that most of the cultural context and content of the stories revolves in the rural areas in the Philippine setting, wherein the characters live in the countryside with a simple and raw life, while the ecological themes pollution, wilderness, and earth does not appear in the stories, knowing that back then, the Filipino people is not destructive in the environment and nature in general, they live normally and simply to survive in their everyday battles in life, that is why pollution does not exist, the the earth is still untouched and well taken care of.

Lesson Plan to Raise Awareness about the Environment

The lesson plan has a code of EN7LT-IIIIf 3 and a learning competency of how a selection can be influenced by culture, history, environment, or other factors. In the motivation part, the students will share their insights or ideas about the excerpts from the short story "Hunger in Barok." Group activity and analysis of the preliminary activity will follow. Then, there is a discussion about the story in connection to culture, history, environment, and other factors. The students will create an infographic to raise environmental awareness in the application part. Then, in the assessment, which is the individual work, students will reflect on the importance of the human-nature relationship as part of nature; they will reflect on how humans and nature work together to make a living, knowing that the story is about nature and humans that centers the idea of environmental crisis that leads to severe famine and humans struggles to make a living. The lesson plan will include a section wherein the students will create an info graphic on raising environmental awareness.

CONCLUSIONS

The ecocritical themes in the selected short stories from Grade 7 are animals, apocalypse, pastoral, and dwelling, which are explicitly shown in the narrative. However, an open interpretation can still be made. Most of the stories portray a good narrative that shows how important it is to have a strong and meaningful connection to the physical environment and nature. On the other hand, some narratives do not show any ecocritical themes. It is also important to note that it is possible that a literary work does not have the presence of ecocritical themes; thus, in looking into different literary texts, it is important to zoom out and see the other side of the story to create a better interpretation.

Not all selected short stories from the Grade 7 textbook exhibit a clear relationship between humans and the physical environment, but the relationship is not explicitly stated. Thus, it is necessary to understand each short story and interpret it openly using the literary lens.

In conclusion, textbooks should promote environmental awareness to students. Students should be able to read and understand the importance of a balanced relationship between literature and the physical environment so that they will advocate for environmental awareness and see what goes beyond literature. In addition, in crafting lesson plans, teachers can integrate the story into their lesson planning, focusing on the possible implications that can be drawn from the short stories. Activities on the lesson plan should let the students apply their knowledge and play their roles by formulating a scenario that requires students to express their opinions and share possible ways on how to take good care of the environment, so that their journey in attending school to learn and to gain insights will lead to transformation.

The findings of the study refine ecocritical theory by highlighting the importance of the story's role in shaping environmental awareness, rather than viewing literature as a glimpse of ecological representation. This study also suggests a pedagogical way of teaching that fosters environmental literacy through learning. It also extends ecocriticism by rooting it in the field of environmental education. It shows that ecocriticism is not just a literary lens, but it is a transformative approach to education that promotes environmental consciousness among students. By applying ecocritical theory in classroom instructions, curriculum design, and school policies, this study explains how literature can be used as a powerful tool in fostering environmental responsibility and ecological awareness. These recommendations are not just to enhance environmental education but also to place literature as a transformative tool within education for sustainable development.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study is limited to the short stories of the Grade 7 Philippine literature textbook, limiting the genre to short stories restricts the other literary genres, and the scope of ecological themes is not fully captured, knowing that the researchers focus only on a single literary genre. Further research can explore other grade levels to figure out which year level has the most ecological themes present, comparing a public and private school textbooks to see if there will be similarities and differences of the findings from the current research, analyzing teacher or student's perspective on ecocritical themes that could provide more insights about the themes and how it can be use or integrate in teaching, and testing how ecocriticism-based lesson plans affect student learning outcomes. These are some of the recommendations that future researchers can explore to contribute to the body of knowledge.

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