Unit 4.2: Protest

Worksheet A

Activity 2.8 Approaches to literature: Percy Bysshe Shelley’s ‘A Song: “Men of England”’

In three groups, answer the questions below, about different ways to approach Shelley’s ‘A Song: “Men of England”’:

Group 1 Reader response approach

Group 2 Formalism approach

Group 3 Marxist approach

**Group 1 – Reader response**

1. How does this poem make you feel?
2. What personal associations do you have with the language of the poem? Select specific words and phrases to support your claims.

**Group 2 – Formalist approach**

1. How would you describe the rhyme and metre? How does that impact your understanding of the poem?
2. What are two other structural or stylistic choices made in the poem? What meaning derives from analysing the author’s use of these devices?

**Group 3 – Marxist approach**

1. What social classes are depicted? Why? What are the power struggles between characters and classes, especially with regard to the rise of the proletariat against the ruling class?
2. What is the significance of this poem as an impetus for social change or a manifestation of progressive ideas?
3. Research the time period when this was written and the author’s political views. How does that impact your reading of the poem?

**Conclusion:** How is each group’s presentation different in nature? Is any single method or approach more effective than the other in determining meaning? Why?