

### **An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum**

Far far from gusty waves these children's faces.  
Like rootless weeds, the hair torn around their pallor.  
The tall girl with her weighed-down head. The paper-  
seeming boy, with rat's eyes. The stunted, unlucky heir  
Of twisted bones, reciting a father's gnarled disease,  
His lesson from his desk. At back of the dim class  
One unnoted, sweet and young. His eyes live in a dream,  
Of squirrel's game, in the tree room, other than this.

On sour cream walls, donations. Shakespeare's head,  
Cloudless at dawn, civilized dome riding all cities.  
Belled, flowery, Tyrolean valley. Open-handed map  
Awarding the world its world. And yet, for these  
Children, these windows, not this world, are world,  
Where all their future's painted with a fog,  
A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky,  
Far far from rivers, capes, and stars of words.

Surely, Shakespeare is wicked, and the map a bad example  
With ships and sun and love tempting them to steal--  
For lives that slyly turn in their cramped holes  
From fog to endless night? On their slag heap, these children  
Wear skins peeped through by bones and spectacles of steel  
With mended glass, like bottle bits on stones.  
All of their time and space are foggy slum.  
So blot their maps with slums as big as doom.

Unless, governor, teacher, inspector, visitor,  
This map becomes their window and these windows  
That shut upon their lives like catacombs,  
Break O break open 'till they break the town  
And show the children green fields and make their world  
Run azure on gold sands, and let their tongues  
Run naked into books, the white and green leaves open  
History is theirs whose language is the sun.

"An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum" was first published in 1964 in Stephen Spender's Selected Poems. The poem has since \_\_\_\_\_ in several collections, including Collected Poems 1928–1985, published in 1985. "An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum" is perhaps the best example of Spender's political voice \_\_\_\_\_ throughout a poem. In this poem, Spender expresses his \_\_\_\_\_ positions on government, economics, and education. The students in this classroom are underprivileged and malnourished. The capitalistic \_\_\_\_\_ is supposed to supply equal opportunity for education, but the \_\_\_\_\_ in the slum offers little hope for change or progress for its lower-class students. This poem, written during the time of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, is fitting both in its \_\_\_\_\_ about race issues in American education and as a Socialist proclamation against capitalism and social injustice in general. Although Spender was British, his extreme left-leaning \_\_\_\_\_ ideologies were in response to the global question concerning social injustice. His poem does not \_\_\_\_\_ name any country, location, race, or citizenship. Spender's intent was to shed light on social injustices worldwide; regardless of Spender's own ethnicity, the hotbed of this global struggle was the American Civil Rights movement.

Stephen Spender highlights the plight of slum children by using vivid \_\_\_\_\_ and apt words to picture a classroom in a slum. Through this he touches, in a subtle manner, the themes of social injustice and inequalities.

Lines 1, 2

The opening line of the poem uses an image to \_\_\_\_\_ the slum children's faces with those of other, happier and more \_\_\_\_\_ children. The line should state: These children's faces are far removed from looking like gusty waves. The image used is 'gusty waves' indicating brightness, verve and animation. But these are \_\_\_\_\_ from faces of these children. The next image of 'rootless weeds' produces double effect. 'Weeds' indicate being