

An Ecoliterature Approach to Environmental Conservation: Take Four Selected Literary Works as Examples

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Abstract—The reciprocal relationship between humans and nature is determined based on their respective natures. This mutualism symbiosis is based on a relationship of use for mutual prosperity. Living together with nature means living in cooperation, mutual help and tolerance. The whole relationship becomes an inseparable entity; all things are interrelated and functional and have the same goal of protecting and preserving nature. Protecting the environment is key to the survival of fragile ecosystems, wildlife, and even humankind. However, the endless human needs often make humans act excessively, exploiting the environment as much as possible to meet the needs of life, resulting in severe environmental damage. This is the rationale for raising the theme of environmental conservation through literary media by referring to the concept and theory of eco-literature. The whole research is conducted using a qualitative descriptive method that focuses on content analysis, revealing the concept of nature conservation. The data sources are obtained from literary works randomly taken: *Lines Written in Early Spring*, a poem by William Wordsworth, *Ode to Nightingale*, a poem by John Keats, *Nature*, an essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson and *An Enemy of the People*, a drama by Henrik Ibsen. The results show that all the literary works chosen stand as the representative of literature on environmental conservation and literary works are sure to become an appropriate medium to teach and awaken people's consciousness of the importance of nature conservation.

Index Terms—consciousness, ecosystem, environmental conservation

I. INTRODUCTION

The environment surrounds humans and affects the development of human life, consisting of biotic and abiotic components. Abiotic components are inanimate things such as soil, air, water, climate, humidity, light, and sound; while the biotic component is everything animate such as plants, animals, humans and microorganisms (viruses and bacteria). In the scope of the environment, humans, animals and plants need one another; thus, environment conservation is a necessity pondering that environment provides basic human needs, sources of energy and minerals, a home for humans and other living things, and ecosystems of flora and fauna.

Just like the concept or understanding of the environment that starts from the natural environment and the artificial environment, environmental conservation efforts that have an impact on environmental damage sometimes cannot run well (Okyere-Manu et al., 2022; Kopela, 2019; Idowa et al., 2020); this is caused by two main factors, natural and artificial factors. Man-made factors in environmental damage are the biggest. Nowadays, people are unaware to see the condition of cruel activities that are happening in both nature and animals where they are treated inappropriately (Yudith et al., 2023). As the most intelligent creatures on earth, humans can perform appropriate or inappropriate actions for certain purposes. The development of science and technology makes it easier for humans to carry out their activities including meeting their needs. These developments also have an impact on increasing human needs which

often lead to excessive exploitation of natural resources. This is in line with the concept of nature preservation proposed by Arafah et al. (2021) in which it is said that people's intense activities have considerably changed the natural environment due to their intimate relationship to science and technology which can mainly be felt and seen in the era of the industrial revolution. Advances in science and technology have changed the way of thinking in this era (Arafah & Hasyim, 2019). Development has a major impact on society by drastically changing how to live and how to believe. The everyday life of people tends to be easier and more sophisticated, proven by the existence of online services in almost every aspect which makes it as simple as just one click away on the internet (Anggrawan et al., 2019; Purwaningsih et al., 2020). It continues all aspects of human life (Suhadi et al., 2022). As for the rise of online media, the changing behaviour can be seen through the high number use of social media, the addition of emoji in conversation, or the excessive use of tablets or gadgets (Arafah & Hasyim, 2019). In the language system, the shift of using language, words, or lexicon from traditional to modern impacts the authenticity and the changing of meaning in a community (Takwa et al., 2022). As for nature, if this keeps continues, it will eventually trigger natural disasters such as waste disposal in rivers causing flooding and illegal logging in forests causing landslides (Zhou et al., 2020; Aliabadi et al., 2020; Gao, 2020).

Environmental conservation must be a priority in shaping the personality of the nation's children and can be determined through education (Yun-Sen et al., 2020; Xuan, 2021; Poskus, 2017; Anufrieva et al., 2020). One of the teaching materials in the world of education is literature because literature has a major role in the formation of human character through its didactic function (Hersila, 2019; Hart et al., 2019). Teaching literature gives the students a realization of cultural consciousness and the existence of cultural value in a text that reflects human life (Sunardi et al., 2018). The cultural values here refer to how a group of society act and behaves to perform a good attitude that later becomes their guideline in life (Takwa et al., 2022). The moral message conveyed by literary works can be used as a reference in carrying out life, including protecting and preserving the environment, commonly found in eco-literature, an interdisciplinary study providing an overview of the relationship between living things and the natural surroundings in a literary work. The relationship and harmonization between humans and nature, in a literary work, is a cultural product with a focus on human behaviour in conserving the environment. Based on the concept that literature is a reflection of human life, it is illustrated that there is a dependence of literary texts on the environment. In many cases of writing literary works, the author usually puts ideas and thoughts using metaphor because it presents vivid images (Baa et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the meaning of particular messages should be interpreted according to the context because it can cause multiple meanings. Therefore, semiotic analysis can be used since metaphor is a part of comparable meaning in the scientific field of semiotics (Hasyim & Arafah, 2023).

Literary work is classified as a social and cultural product that represents the existing reality consisting of values and various sociocultural backgrounds (Arifin et al., 2022). It can also be said that literary work is a creation of human creativity from ideas, thoughts, and imagination that produce highly valued text (Mutmainnah et al., 2022). The reflection of human life presented in literary work comes from the author's personal opinions on a certain matter that happened around the environment in the author's life (Fadillah et al., 2022). It is proven that literary work links to the environment where it was created (Sunyoto et al., 2022). In short, it can be said that eco-literature leads to the study of literature and environmental discourse, analysis of problems and the preservation of nature and at the same time presenting the value of local wisdom to maintain the balance of the ecosystem (D'Cunha & Saldanha, 2021; Sharma, 2019). Implicitly local wisdom surely emerges to shape character education, meaning that character education shaping could be obtained from the either formal or informal system. The goal of character education is to shape the moral visions within which the next generation becomes socialized and encultured (Mokoginta & Arafah, 2022). This goal can be achieved if a person has a positive view that will create positive energy to help that person in shaping moral visions (Arafah et al., 2020b).

A good literary work is at least able to present the two main functions, meaning, a literary work can be said to be of high literary value if the work can provide entertainment to the reader, and to provide positive teaching for the reader. A literary work should contain values as it is a product of an author's perception based on a real-life experience so that it is full of lessons in life either good or bad (Afiah et al., 2022). Literary works that are only able to provide entertainment without any benefit are barren. Likewise, literary works that are only able to provide benefits and are not able to provide entertainment for readers will taste bland. Therefore, literature then should be an entertaining teaching medium. Using style in the language is also a tip from the author to entertain the readers and becomes an identity that shows the uniqueness of the author as a way to brand himself (Asriyanti et al., 2022; Hasyim et al., 2020). Furthermore, it needs to note that the language used is important to entertain the readers by not using complicated words or abbreviations that can ruin the whole meaning of a literary work (Hasjim et al., 2020). If an error or mistake exists even after a literary work has been done, then it can cause a misunderstanding or misinterpreting (Iksora et al., 2022). As a result, the language used needs to be written effectively, so that both author and readers understand the context and gain the same perception (Yulianti et al., 2022).

"Nature never did betray the heart that loves her" (Wordsworth, 2022).

This is a famous line from the poem *Tintern Abbey* by William Wordsworth, one of English famous romantic poets. Wordsworth is known as a nature poet as he highly cults nature as a source of human life. It is undeniable that nature has a major role in the formation and development of human civilization. Everything is given by nature for the welfare

of mankind, from air, water, soil, and light to other facilities. Nature is a storehouse of incomparable happiness for humans. A nature lover will never feel sad or disappointed in carrying out his life because nature is a place of beauty and beauty can calm the mind.

Unfortunately, modern man because of the advancement of science and technology always ignores nature and even destroys it for personal and group interests. People like this are ready to pawn their self-esteem and also their hearts to worship the progress of the times without realizing that progress will never exist without the intervention of nature. We must realize that nature is the mother of all beings and when we destroy nature for unlimited profit, we are betraying our motherland (Abas et al., 2018; Rubenstein & Newman, 2020).

Irresponsible people, destroying nature and destroying ecosystems do not realize that their actions also damage other species other than humans. Surprisingly, when a natural disaster occurs, people like this easily blame other parties and even blame nature and this is a reflection of hypocrisy. They should realize that every action must be followed by a reaction; their actions destroy nature, of course, will be followed by nature's reactions in various forms of disaster. For this reason, actions to protect and preserve the environment cannot be delayed any longer and socialization regarding nature conservation can be carried out through literary media.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Eco-Literature*

The environment is a combination of physical conditions that include the state of natural resources such as land, water, solar energy, minerals, and flora and fauna that grow on land and in the ocean, with institutions that include human creations such as decisions on how to use the physical environment. In essence, humans live in an environment that consists of several components. This environment is known as the living environment (Francis & Thomas, 2020).

According to Agoes (2012), the environment or the living environment is everything that is found in living things and affects the lives of related living things; humans are one creature on earth, so everything that is around humans and that supports human survival is called the human environment; as well as other creatures such as animals, or trees.

Details related to the environment can then be narrowed down into two major parts: the natural environment and the artificial environment. The natural environment is provided by nature without any human intervention; the artificial environment is certainly made by humans and these two types of environments must be maintained and preserved to obtain harmony in the relationship between humans and humans or humans with nature. In addition, it is undeniable that human life is very dependent on nature and if the natural environment is not well maintained, then human life cannot run well (Batinovic et al., 2019).

Through eco-literature, an interdisciplinary study, which is also a combination of two disciplines, literature and environment, it is hoped that there will be changes in behaviour, perspective and mindset to overcome this environmental crisis. Ecology and literature can be applied with a natural approach as the main study and then literary ecology can be concluded as a study of the relationship between literature and the environment. The environment or nature is a source of inspiration in literature, while literature is a conservation tool for nature.

By looking at literature anthropocentrically as a cultural artefact that is centred on humans, we, guided by logic, see that the moral message as the main essence in literary works is addressed as a standard reference for human behaviour in social life as individual or social beings, not as biological or ecological beings. However, if we rely on eco-literature, we can see that literary works are creating products that are supported by nature and this concept reveals that humans are inseparable from nature, an integral part, so that the moral message or wisdom in literary works can reach the whole of life in the universe, not only human life (Sharma, 2019; Asenath & Santhanalakshmi, 2021).

Eco-literature explores the problem of the relationship of literature with its environment extrinsically, thus any discipline outside literature is included in the category of environmental science which is directly related to the relationship of organisms with their environment. Eco-literature is the study of guidelines related to writing and reading that describe and influence the interaction of living things with the natural environment in a literary work (Niblett, 2020).

The concept of ecology can be used as a critical tool in literary works. The relationship between the concept of ecology and the literary work gives birth to a form of eco-critical concept with the basic paradigm that every object can be seen in an ecological network and ecology can be used as a tool in the critical approach. The criticism of human and nature relation comes from the fact when an author finds or experiences a situation where an action violates the social norms, in this case, nature, and fails to meet the author's expectations then finally turns out that critic into a literary work (Arafah & Kaharuddin, 2019). Eco-literature is then the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, the study of literature centred on the world (Muderere et al., 2018).

The study from the perspective of environmental literature can be focused on: pastoral and apocalyptic narratives with a focus on respect for nature, an attitude of responsibility towards nature, an attitude of solidarity with nature, an attitude of compassion and concern for nature, and an attitude of not disturbing the natural life, all of which are described through literary works.

The discussion of environmental literature produces a literary narrative construction environment with important elements, the presence of the environment or nature and the theme of the environment as an ethical orientation of the

text. The presence of the environment or nature as an ethical orientation of the text will be a precondition for a more in-depth study on the discussion of environmental wisdom. Nature and the environment are not only understood as the setting of the place and atmosphere in making the storyline in a literary work but also as aspects that help build the storyline of a literary work. The use of language in a literary work relates to the cultural environment (Arafah et al., 2020a). Therefore, the text presented in a literary work uses language as means of persuading the readers as the function of language can impact people's perceptions and thoughts about the world (Arafah et al., 2023).

B. Environmental Conservation

The environment is an inseparable part of the lives of all creatures, especially humans because in this case, humans have a very large role to maintain or damage the existing environment. Preservation is the activity of maintaining, restoring, and maintaining something both concrete and abstract. Ideas, cultural traditions or ideologies are examples of things that are abstract and in space and time, related things like this must be preserved (Lamba et al., 2019).

Talking about environmental preservation we refer to human activities to save the environment from species loss, and ecosystem damage, especially due to pollution and human activities or extinction and the fading of the concept of cultural heritage due to changes in lifestyle, modernization, technological developments or other related matters. Conservation is generally held to include the management of the use of natural resources by humans for the current public interest and sustainable social and economic use (Ola, 2019). Nature or the environment has a large enough influence on human life. Humans and the nature of the environment have a causal relationship. Human behaviour has a major impact on the preservation of nature (Siwi et al., 2022)

The earth is a home for a wide variety of living species and we all depend on the environment for food, air, water and other necessities. Therefore, every individual needs to save and protect our environment. The environment provides many resources, from medicine to food. In addition, the environment is home to countless species of organisms, some of which are on the verge of extinction. Another factor that accelerates the extinction of organisms is the destruction of their environment. Most maximum organisms need their natural habitat to thrive. Without it, organisms can perish.

According to Asteria et al. (2021), the objectives of various environmental conservation efforts are,

1. Protecting an area from pollution and/or environmental damage.
2. Ensuring the safety, health and life of humans and other species.
3. Ensuring the continuity of the life of living things and the preservation of the ecosystem.
4. Realizing the sustainability of human relations with the environment.
5. Realizing humans as environmental coaches and partners.
6. Controlling the use of natural resources wisely and wisely.

Conserving the environment does not mean that humans should not take advantage of the environment. Environmental preservation means using the environment wisely so that the environmental balance is maintained (Hamilton et al., 2019).

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is conducted employing a descriptive qualitative method to reveal and analyze the roles of literature in environmental conservation, by assessing the nature and circumstances of the visible to obtain an overview of the characteristics of environmental conservation as they are (Busetto et al., 2020). The data are then described in the forms of text according to the problems studied based on five data sources from selected literary works, *Lines Written in Early Spring*, a poem by William Wordsworth, *The Odes*, a poem by John Keats, *Nature*, an essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Eternal*, a novel by Kancan J and *An Enemy of the People*, a drama by Henrik Ibsen.

In addition, this study is also focused on the natural data related to the context of environmental conservation based on the eco-literature approach with the basic assumption that there is a relationship between literary works and the environment and the concepts of environmental conservation exist in literary works. Eco-literature is then used as guidelines to analyze aspects of nature conservation, and the impacts of natural damage by humans so that if there is no effort to raise awareness about the importance of nature conservation, humans and other living things could be victimized.

The data collection technique used is a documentary study by reading and observing the five literary works mentioned above, identifying the problems discussed, classifying the data related to environmental conservation, and describing the data obtained. The researchers stand as data instruments, planners, implementers, data collectors, analyzers, interpreters and reporters. The data validity checkups in the forms of observer persistence, triangulation, peer checking and adequacy of references are carried out to get truly objective data so that the research results can be accounted for (Ormston et al., 2014; Gheondea-Eladi, 2014; Aspers & Corte, 2019). The data analysis technique is performed by analyzing and interpreting all the data related to environmental conservation and concluding the results of the analysis in line with the points of discussion.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Literature as art places language in the most important domain in the appearance of aesthetic aspects. Literature combines sound, rhyme, style of language and other supporting elements to become a blend that is full of meaning,

aesthetics and even ethics. Plato makes a kind of formula that art is the result of imitation of nature, literature is no exception. This formulation produces the concept of a literary approach, namely mimetics. Nature is the starting point of language in literature. Literature is bound by convention and nature is one of the elements that make up the convention (Lawtoo, 2022; Gu, 2021). In literature, the use of natural phenomena as a building object in literary works almost always appears.

Below are literary works referring to environmental conservation. Through the analysis, it is seen that literary works play important roles in preserving the environment and at the same time raising public awareness about the importance of maintaining the integrity of the ecosystem. Harmonization must be preserved; a harmonious relationship between humans and humans and humans with nature.

Lines Written in Early Spring by William Wordsworth

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I no reason to lament
What man has made of man? (Wordsworth, 2022, Stanza 6)

The name of William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850), a poet from England, is no stranger to the world of literature; he is one of the founders of romanticism. He is always remembered as being very concerned with the relationship between humans and nature. For Wordsworth nature is everything to humans.

The above quote is from Wordsworth's poem *Lines Written in Early Spring*. The word 'heaven' here refers to nature or natural resources that are abundant and created by God for humans so that humans can live calmly, peacefully and happily and do not lack the necessities of life. For this there is no reason for humans to complain about life, competing with each other to defend their ego and possessions because basically all forms of ownership do not belong to humans because life is temporary. Unfortunately, so many people are dragged down by worldly passions that they forget that everything comes from God and will return to God; from dust to dust; which metaphorically describes everything will return to nature, a sacred place that does not deserve to be polluted or damaged. God's love has been manifested through nature.

Through this poem, there is an implicit moral message that nature is given or say given by God to humans, so it is appropriate that every individual who lives depending on nature must take care of nature, its environment and all the components involved in it. William Wordsworth is a high priest of nature because, throughout his literary career, Wordsworth writes about nature through his romantic works. Wordsworth does not give a sensuous description of an object; the element of eroticism is not the focus of his work, he is more focused on the element of sensuality in nature as a vehicle for eternal happiness.

Wordsworth's poetry is also characterized by optimism; for him, even though there are many crimes committed towards nature, he still believes that basically all humans are good and no human wants to destroy his mother, namely nature. Evil is a process within a person to become good. Evil is the embodiment of suffering. Man is not alone in the world, nor is he alone in his suffering, for God, is always and everywhere present to protect and support him.

For Wordsworth nature is sacred; nature is a teacher, protector, nurse and caregiver for humans. No human being can repay nature's goodness except by taking care of it.

Ode to Nightingale by John Keats

Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singing of summer in full-throated ease (Keats, 2009)

John Keats (1795–1821), an English poet also uses nature as a source of inspiration in producing his works. His poetry contains praise and high respect for nature for her sensuous appeal. For him, nature is a refuge from all existing problems, especially those related to modern life problems. Using beautiful language, Keats describes the beauty of nature as God's masterpiece: flowers for their colour, scent and softness; rivers for their coolness and oceans for their unlimited wealth.

Keats gives an overview of the calm, happy and peaceful life that Nightingale has. The bird is free from feelings of fear or worries about the life it leads. The life of the bird is always colourful and full of joy. Keats compares the life of the bird to that of a human. Humans are always hit by various problems that make them always feel anxious, afraid, and uneasy in carrying out life and also facing the future.

Keats says that he too wants to live like the bird, which is full of happiness; he does not feel jealous of the bird. He feels that the bird is so close to nature that nature is also close to the bird. The bird loves nature and nature also loves the bird. Humans who are not close to nature, or who do not love nature, certainly cannot enjoy all the needs and facilities provided by nature. Nature has provided all human needs and for that, it is natural that humans express gratitude to nature by taking care of nature.

Nature by Ralph Waldo Emerson

To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most people do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man but shines into the eye and the heart of the child. The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood. His intercourse with heaven and earth becomes part of his daily food (Emerson, 2019, Chapter I).

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) is an American poet, and essayist, the leading exponent of Transcendentalism, the 19th-century movement of writers and philosophers in New England who were loosely bound together by adherence to an idealistic system of thought based on a belief in the essential unity of all creations, the innate goodness of humanity, and the supremacy of insight over logic and experience for the revelation of the deepest truths (McGraw, 2020).

For Emerson nature is everything to humans. The sun rises and sets every day providing warmth and other invaluable benefits to humans, but not everyone realizes how important the sun is for human life. Only those who have a clean and sincere heart and are free from negative thoughts can feel and realize the importance of the existence of the sun. The sun with its rays sees no difference; all people, regardless of religion, ethnicity, or nationality have the same right to get that sunshine, an incomparable form of justice.

In essence, humans cannot live without nature. Humans need trees for oxygen and protection from floods. Trees also provide beauty, coolness and inner peace. These are gifts whose value cannot be measured. All progress is a deposit from God; therefore, humans do not deserve to destroy nature, whatever the reason is. People who love nature must have very good personalities so that without being forced, they always protect nature from damage.

An Enemy of the People by Henrik Ibsen

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), a Norwegian playwright and poet is considered to be the father of Modern Theatre and also referred to as the father of realism. As a realist, Ibsen sees that the function of nature has changed for humans, initially nature is hope and a source of life for humans, but over time humans have completely controlled nature for their interests and to fulfil their unlimited needs.

In the drama script entitled *An Enemy of the People*, Ibsen provides enlightenment for humans about the importance of environmental conservation so that humans do not stumble with their actions. Nature is not to be destroyed. Advocacy against environmental damage caused by human actions must be performed.

DR. STOCKMANN:

Does not make sense!? Instead, I said: The whole building is none other than only limestone graves spread the poison. Threatening people's health. All of this is due to pollution from oil companies as far as the Miil Valley there. You know how bad it smells in the area around the place. And the sewage had seeped into the pipe-pipe that goes into the popa chamber. Not only that, this toxic waste even continues to seep all the way to the shore (Ibsen, 2019).

Through the main character, Dr. Stockmann in the play *An Enemy of the People*, Ibsen gives a real picture that humans have destroyed nature. Humans have succeeded in making natural breakthroughs in technological progress, providing convenience for humans to carry out life, and improving their standard of living; but unconsciously humans also destroy not only nature but all elements of the environment. This can be seen from the existence of giant industries in various sectors which eventually trigger other problems such as pollution, the release of hydrocarbons, and increasingly narrow residential areas, all of which make human life more uncomfortable and can even be said to be threatened with extinction. Technological progress should be balanced with nature conservation. Therefore, it is important to preserve nature to provide a healthy and decent environment for living things.

V. CONCLUSION

Literary works with environmental themes are born from writers who place nature and the environment as a source of inspiration and imaginative creations. The number of literary works that contain natural and the environment shows that literature and the environment are closely related and inseparable. The writers show that from time immemorial, they care about nature. Eco-literature is a bridge for literary enthusiasts to criticize humans who are not responsible for today's natural conditions.

In the world of education literature also plays an important role. Maintaining and caring for the environment is one indicator of character education. Increasing readings on children's literature with environmental themes can help children to care more about the environment. Folklore with a natural setting contains many educational values that can be a behavioural guide for children so that a sense of love for nature will naturally be embedded in them.

Literature is also very relevant to the literacy movement, which is to get children to read literary works, whether poetry, short stories, or pictures with the theme of nature and the environment. This will educate children's awareness from an early age about the importance of nature. Earth is our home and place to live. Therefore, as a living being that enjoys and absorbs a lot of the results of the environment, it is obligatory to maintain, care for, and preserve it. The literature considers nature and culture as signs. Signs in literature represent a text's meaning. Nature as an object of the sign is an inexhaustible source of inspiration to create images and aesthetics in literary works.

Earth is home to a wide variety of living species and we all depend on the environment for food, air, water and other necessities. Therefore, every individual needs to save and protect our environment. The environment provides many

resources, from medicine to food. In addition, the environment is home to countless species of organisms, some of which are on the verge of extinction. Another factor that accelerates the extinction of organisms is the destruction of their environment. Most maximum organisms need their natural habitat to thrive. Without it, organisms can perish.

The results of the analysis show that the earth is home to a wide variety of living species and we all depend on the environment for food, air, water and other necessities. Therefore, every individual needs to save and protect our environment. One effective way is to apply education or teaching that is environmentally sound and the media that can be used to socialize environmental conservation is literature with various genres such as novels, dramas or poetry, which of course have the theme of nature and the environment.

From this, it is illustrated that every individual is obliged to protect, maintain and preserve the environment, both natural and artificial and starting from the smallest scope, the family, as the first educational institution for children. Within every family, there should be a discussion or some kind of education about environmental conservation so that every member of the family can act following the concept of environmental preservation. At the formal school level, students should be given information about the importance of environmental conservation; such information can be provided through various subjects and one of them is literary texts.

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