

---

---

# LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 14:4 April 2014

ISSN 1930-2940

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.

A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.

Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.

Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

S. M. Ravichandran, Ph.D.

G. Baskaran, Ph.D.

L. Ramamoorthy, Ph.D.

C. Subburaman, Ph.D. (Economics)

Assistant Managing Editor: Swarna Thirumalai, M.A.

---

---

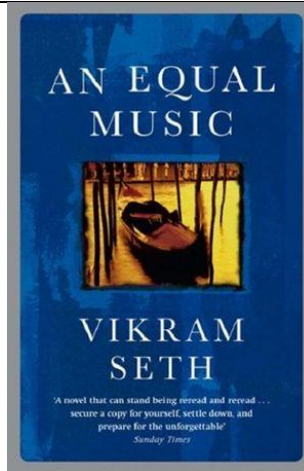
## Novels as a Tool to Enhance Thinking Skills – An Activity-Based Language Teaching Method Using Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music*

T. Sathya, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Dr. R. Saravana Selvan, M.A., M.Phil., M.Ed., P.G.D.J., P.G.D.T.E., Ph.D.

---

---



Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 14:4 April 2014

T. Sathya, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Dr. R. Saravana Selvan, M.A., M.Phil., M.Ed., P.G.D.J., P.G.D.T.E., Ph.D.

Novels as A Tool to Enhance Thinking Skills – An Activity-Based Language Teaching Method Using Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music*

## Abstract

Thinking skill is an essential element of most profession in this competitive world. It is a vital part in the process of learners' progress. Thinking Skills are the mental processes of solving problems, making decisions, asking questions, making plans, passing judgments, organizing information and creating new ideas. Novels lend a hand to improve the productive thinking skills of the learners.

The range and length of Vikram Seth's literary productivity present a ground-breaking challenge to undertake the power of thinking competence. His *An Equal Music* is shot through with the elements of European classical legacy. It is based on the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice that has haunted music lovers through the ages. It managed to convey the psychology, thinking abilities even the human potentialities of those who practice music for a living. It displays a paradoxical twinning of discordance, anxiety and tension with aspirations to harmony.

Vikram Seth used a strategy to detail a particular kind of egoistical or illusion-ridden protagonist, Michael, a professional violinist. He never forgot his love for Julia, a pianist and their musical career was affected by this affair. The story of this novel induces the productive thinking skills of the learners. This paper aims to show how the activities are considered as the practical approach to the acquisition and learning, and also aims to present how the Activity Based Language Teaching assists the learners to improve their thinking skills through Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music*.

## Introduction

Indian Writing in English has a diversity of themes, forms and styles. Along with Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth is arguably one of the three Indian English authors today. He has proved his power of flexing and using the English language in his literary works. His reputation as a stylist and a perfectionist is also supplemented by the hype around the advances his fiction receives and his location as a celebrity in the global literary market place.

*An Equal Music* is the second prose novel of Vikram Seth and published in 1999. The European setting of this novel focuses on the lives of classical musicians. Music has been a recurring preoccupation in his work. It is based on the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice that has haunted music lovers through the ages. The range and length of Vikram Seth's literary productivity present a ground-breaking challenge to undertake the power of thinking competence. It displays a paradoxical twinning of discordance, anxiety and tension with aspirations to harmony.

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 14:4 April 2014

T. Sathya, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Dr. R. Saravana Selvan, M.A., M.Phil., M.Ed., P.G.D.J., P.G.D.T.E., Ph.D.

Novels as A Tool to Enhance Thinking Skills – An Activity-Based Language Teaching Method  
Using Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music*

## Thinking Skill

Thinking skill is an essential element of most professions in this competitive world. It is a vital part in the process of learners' progress. Thinking Skills are the mental processes of solving problems, making decisions, asking questions, making plans, passing judgments, organizing information and creating new ideas. Researchers at Newcastle University, UK found well over 50 different classifications of thinking skills. Productive Thinking skills are as follows:

- Using information and understanding
- Creating, deciding, analyzing, evaluating.

## Lower Order Thinking Skills to Higher Order Thinking Skills

- Remembering
- Understanding
- Applying
- Analysing
- Evaluating
- Creating

Novels lend a hand to improve the productive thinking skills of the learners. An *Equal Music* managed to convey the psychology, thinking abilities even the human potentialities of those who practice music for a living. Michael Holme, the narrator and main protagonist, is a violinist in London. He reveals his love affair to Virginie, a young French student in String quartet called Maggiore. Ten years before he had an affair with Julia, a pianist and an Austrian mother. Their love was broken because of misunderstanding and the behavior of professor Kall. The theme of the novel is encapsulated in a piece of music by Beethoven: Opus 104. On his return from old library in Manchester, he sees Julia, who has become deaf. He comes to discern from her letter that she wants to live with her husband James and her son Luke. The final straw is when Julia goes back on her promise to play the “Art of Fugue”, which is a birthday gift for him. He uses his talent for commercial purpose and makes peace and harmony with himself and music.

## Activities

Activities are practical approach to enhance the skills of the learners. It is to discern the comprehension and thinking skills of the learners. It will be designed by the teacher to implement inside the classroom to develop the thinking skills of the learners through novels. Some sample activities are as follows:

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 14:4 April 2014

T. Sathya, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Dr. R. Saravana Selvan, M.A., M.Phil., M.Ed., P.G.D.J., P.G.D.T.E., Ph.D.

Novels as A Tool to Enhance Thinking Skills – An Activity-Based Language Teaching Method  
Using Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music*

### Activity 1

“I did not think at first that I could live through it. Music is the heart of my life. For me, of all people, to be betrayed by my ears was unbearable”

- Aim : To improve thinking skills
- Skills aimed at : Creative Thinking and Decision making
- Level : Under Graduate
- Question : How will you react creatively to the situation, if you were in the place of Julia?
- Time : Two Minutes

**Step 1 :** Students are asked to read the above mentioned extract from *An Equal Music*.

**Step 2 :** They are asked to link themselves with the character Julia and also asked to think and decide creatively.

### Activity 2

“It is a beauty beyond imagining- clear, lovely, inexorable, phrase across phrase, phrase echoing phrase, the incomplete, the unending “Art of Fugue”. It is an equal music.”

- Aim : To improve the Thinking Skills
- Skills Aimed at: Analytical Thinking and Evaluation
- Level : Under Graduate
- Question : How will you analyze and evaluate “Music” in your life, if were in the place of Michael?
- Time : Five Minutes

**Step 1 :** Students are asked to read the above mentioned extract from *An Equal Music*.

**Step 2 :** They are asked to analyze and evaluate “Music” in their life in an innovative manner within five minutes.

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 14:4 April 2014

T. Sathya, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Dr. R. Saravana Selvan, M.A., M.Phil., M.Ed., P.G.D.J., P.G.D.T.E., Ph.D.

Novels as A Tool to Enhance Thinking Skills – An Activity-Based Language Teaching Method Using Vikram Seth’s *An Equal Music*

## Summing Up

Amidst the various tools used in improving the thinking skills of the learners, novel too acts as an effective tool to enhance the thinking skill. When a novel is introduced in the classroom as a tool to enhance productive thinking skills, it also improves creative thinking, analytical thinking, decision-making and evaluation skills. The activities given above will help the learners to acquire the thinking skills rather than learning.

---

## References

Hosking, Susan. "An Equal Music: A Novel In-between." New Delhi: Prestige, 2005.

Mokashi-Punekar, Rohini. "Contemporary Indian Writers in English." New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

[www.teachingthinking.net/thinking/](http://www.teachingthinking.net/thinking/)

---

T. Sathya, M.A., Ph.D. Research Scholar (Full-Time)  
Department of English and Foreign Languages  
Bharathiar University  
Coimbatore  
Tamilnadu 641046  
India  
[sathyathangavel.89@gmail.com](mailto:sathyathangavel.89@gmail.com)

Dr. R. Saravana Selvan, M.A., M.Phil., M.Ed., P.G.D.J., P.G.D.T.E., Ph.D.  
Associate Professor & Head i/c.  
Department of English and Foreign Languages  
Bharathiar University  
Coimbatore 641046  
Tamilnadu  
India  
[raja\\_saravanan@rediffmail.com](mailto:raja_saravanan@rediffmail.com)

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 14:4 April 2014

T. Sathya, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Dr. R. Saravana Selvan, M.A., M.Phil., M.Ed., P.G.D.J., P.G.D.T.E., Ph.D.

Novels as A Tool to Enhance Thinking Skills – An Activity-Based Language Teaching Method  
Using Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music*