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REVIEW ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism***Water Words: Cultural memory, conservation, and the environmental imagination in English literature for Saudi schools**Rami A. Sa'di¹ & Neelofar Hussain Wani²¹College of Humanities and Sciences, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia²Department of English, College of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University Abha, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* Correspondence: r.alsadi@psau.edu.sa**ABSTRACT**

Water is at once a physical necessity, a cultural archive, a religiously resonant sign, and an urgent educational concern. In Saudi Arabia, where aridity, groundwater pressure, desalination, climatic uncertainty, and changing patterns of consumption converge, water education cannot be confined to scientific facts or behavioural instructions. It also requires forms of attention capable of making hidden infrastructures, inherited memories, and more-than-human relations imaginatively present. This article develops a curriculum-oriented framework for reading water in English literature within Saudi secondary education. Rather than conducting discourse analysis of existing school textbooks, it offers comparative close readings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, and Alice Oswald's *Dart*. Across these works, water appears as unusable abundance, damaged urban memory, tidal temporality, and polyphonic river agency. The article introduces cultural hydroliteracy to describe the capacity to interpret water simultaneously as material resource, infrastructure, cultural memory, ethical relation, and climate-sensitive system. It then proposes a four-stage pedagogical sequence—remember, attend, compare, and act—that preserves literary complexity while connecting interpretation to Sustainable Development Goals 4, 6, 12, and 13. Literature does not automatically produce conservation behaviour, and the article makes no such causal claim. Its more credible contribution is to deepen perception, unsettle habits of entitlement, and give learners a language through which global literary traditions can be placed in dialogue with Saudi water histories and contemporary responsibilities.

KEYWORDS: English literature, Saudi education, water conservation, cultural memory, ecocriticism, blue humanities, cultural hydroliteracy, SDG 4, SDG 6, SDG 12, SDG 13

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1. Introduction

Water seldom enters human life as a merely technical substance. It is drunk, stored, feared, blessed, wasted, engineered, and remembered. Communities organise themselves around its presence or absence; families recall wells, coasts, floods, seasonal rain, household tanks, and journeys made possible or impossible by access to it. Literature gives such relations durable forms. A sea can become a moral tribunal, a dry landscape can register civilisational exhaustion, a tide can measure grief more precisely than a clock, and a river can speak through a multitude of human and nonhuman voices. These representations do not replace hydrology, conservation science, or policy. They disclose dimensions that numerical accounts cannot fully contain: attachment, reverence, anxiety, estrangement, historical loss, and responsibility.

Those dimensions matter acutely in Saudi Arabia. The National Water Strategy 2030 identifies aridity, limited renewable freshwater, high demand, dependence on desalination, and the environmental costs of present supply systems among the Kingdom's defining challenges. Its aims include demand management, resource protection, service quality, innovation, and environmental safeguarding for present and future generations (Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture [MEWA], n.d.). Research similarly shows that Saudi water security is shaped by climate pressure, groundwater vulnerability, household practice, infrastructure, pricing, and public awareness (Almulhim & Abubakar, 2023, 2024; DeNicola et al., 2015; Ouda et al., 2013). Conservation therefore cannot be reduced to telling individuals to close taps. It requires attention to how habits are formed, how reliable supply becomes invisible, and how personal conduct intersects with technology, energy, agriculture, planning, and governance.

Education is central to that work. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.7 calls for learners to acquire the knowledge and capacities needed for sustainable development. SDG 6 addresses water quality, efficiency, ecosystems, and integrated management; SDG 12.8 emphasises information and awareness for sustainable lifestyles; and SDG 13.3 foregrounds climate education and capacity-building (United Nations, 2015). Saudi educational policy likewise connects learning with the conservation of natural resources and climate responsibility (Ministry of Education, n.d.). Yet an exclusively informational approach can leave the cultural and affective life of water untouched. Students may memorise scarcity statistics while continuing to experience water as ordinary, limitless, remote, or someone else's responsibility.

English literature offers an underused route into this problem, but only when it is not treated as a decorative supplement to environmental science. Literary works organise perception through image, rhythm, voice, narrative delay, ambiguity, and scale. They can make learners feel the difference between salt water and drinkable water, between a mapped river and a lived river, or between technical abundance and ethical scarcity. Scholarship on literary education and sustainability suggests that texts become especially productive when students interpret, compare, question, and create rather than merely receive a predetermined ecological lesson (Arikan & Zorba, 2024; Cordova, 2024; Jung, 2021).

The present article therefore recasts the "Water Words" project as an English-literature-centred study for Saudi secondary education. It asks how selected works transform water into a medium of cultural memory and environmental thought; how literary form produces distinct ethical relations; and how these works might support SDGs 4, 6, 12, and 13 without being reduced to policy slogans or imposed as a supposedly universal British environmental imagination. The corpus comprises Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, and Oswald's *Dart*. Together they traverse ocean, river, coast, drought, rain, Romanticism, modernism, poetry, and fiction. Each constructs a different "literary hydrology": a patterned relation among water's material states, cultural meanings, temporal scales, and ethical claims. Their value for Saudi learners lies not in offering one doctrine but in cultivating a disciplined practice of noticing water differently.

2. From Environmental Literacy to Cultural Hydroliteracy

Ecocriticism challenges the treatment of environment as a passive setting for exclusively human dramas. It asks how texts distribute attention among people, other species, landscapes, material processes, technologies, and systems of power. Literary form is central to that inquiry: point of view allocates visibility, metaphor organises value, genre shapes imaginable futures, and narrative scale can disclose or conceal environmental harm (Buell et al., 2011; Heise, 2006). The blue humanities extend this work by moving oceans, rivers, coasts, rain, ice, and

fluidity from the margins to the centre of cultural analysis (Mentz, 2009).

Water is especially suited to such reading because it unsettles stable categories. It moves through bodies, homes, farms, pipes, aquifers, clouds, seas, and economies. It may be abundant yet unusable, visible yet politically concealed, locally remembered yet globally circulated. Material ecocriticism accordingly treats matter not as silent background but as active in producing events and meanings (Iovino & Oppermann, 2012). Barad's (2003) account of material agency offers a related caution against imagining that language acts while the physical world merely receives representation. In literature, water need not become a speaking character to exert pressure: salinity, force, absence, sound, recurrence, and contamination can organise plot, rhythm, and perception.

Cultural memory supplies a second foundation. Literature does not simply preserve an already complete communal past; it selects, arranges, transmits, and revises what can be remembered (Erll & Rigney, 2006). Environmental memory may therefore hold competing accounts of abundance and hardship, cooperation and inequality, mobility and settlement. Under climate disruption, memory also looks forward. Communities must register conditions that are changing, recognise slow loss, and imagine how present choices will be remembered by later generations (Craps et al., 2018). Water sharpens this tension because its cycles suggest recurrence even while extraction and climatic change show that recurrence cannot be assumed.

The concept of **cultural hydroliteracy** brings these strands together. It names the ability to read water in five connected dimensions: as a material condition of life; as a system shaped by infrastructure and governance; as a bearer of cultural and religious memory; as an agent within more-than-human relations; and as an ethical claim extending across communities and generations. The concept is broader than knowledge of the water cycle but more focused than general environmental literacy. A culturally hydroliterate reader asks not only what water symbolises, but what kind of water is present, where it comes from, who depends on it, how it moves, why it is available or withheld, and what histories its representation activates.

This framework guards against two weaknesses in SDG-oriented literary teaching. The first is thematic reduction: a river poem is labelled "SDG 6," a drought scene "SDG 13," and analysis ends with classification. The second is moral compression: an ambiguous text is forced to deliver the instruction "save water." In both cases, literature matters only because it repeats policy language attractively. The sustainable humanities propose a more substantial role by examining the desires, narratives, habits, and conflicts through which sustainability becomes imaginable or credible (LeMenager & Foote, 2012). The SDGs should therefore function as a public horizon rather than a substitute for criticism. SDG 6 supplies essential categories; literature explores how they are lived, hidden, feared, or remembered. SDG 12 connects consumption with awareness; literature exposes narratives of entitlement and invisibility. SDG 13 requires climate learning; literature trains attention to delayed consequence and uneven vulnerability. SDG 4 provides the educational frame in which knowledge, judgement, intercultural understanding, and action may reinforce one another.

3. Method, Corpus, and Scope

This is a conceptual, curriculum-oriented study based on comparative close reading. It does not analyse the content of existing Saudi textbooks, claim that the four works are prescribed nationally, or present imagined activities as evidence of student outcomes. The analysis asks five questions of each text: What material state of water dominates? How does form make that water perceptible? What memory does it carry? How is agency distributed among human and nonhuman actors? What ethical and educational questions follow without forcing a single message?

The corpus was selected for contrast. Coleridge presents an oceanic world in which water surrounds the sailors but cannot sustain them. Eliot moves among drought, polluted urban flow, rain, river memory, and drowning. Woolf situates domestic memory within tidal and meteorological time, especially in "Time Passes." Oswald follows a river from source to sea through layered voices, occupations, species, histories, and sounds. The selection is not representative of all English literature, and its canonical British emphasis is a limitation. Its purpose is to form a coherent unit that can enter a reciprocal dialogue with Saudi water experience rather than displace Arabic, Islamic, Saudi, or other world traditions.

4. Four Literary Hydrologies

4.1 Unusable Abundance and Broken Relation in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

Coleridge's poem offers one of English literature's most memorable water paradoxes: the sailors are surrounded by an ocean they cannot drink. Scarcity here is not a simple lack of quantity. Water is everywhere, but potable water is absent. Thirst, heat, swollen tongues, stillness, and the immobilised ship turn the distinction between abundance and availability into bodily knowledge. For Saudi learners, the episode can open a careful comparison with a country bordered by seas yet reliant on technically complex, energy-intensive desalination for much urban supply. The analogy must remain limited: a supernatural ordeal is not a model of a modern water system. Its value lies in unsettling the assumption that visible abundance equals accessible resource.

The poem's environmental ethics emerge through broken and partially restored relations. The Mariner kills the albatross without adequate motive, turning a living being into an object of arbitrary power. Ecotheological readings have accordingly located the movement towards reconciliation in the recognition of interdependence rather than human dominance (Kim, 2014). The later blessing of the water snakes marks a change in perception: creatures first encountered with disgust appear beautiful without becoming useful. The poem's theological, colonial, and psychological tensions resist conversion into a simple conservation allegory, yet its sequence remains educationally suggestive. Ethical relation begins not with a rule but with altered attention. Narration then becomes environmental memory. The Mariner must retell the event, interrupting the wedding and compelling a listener to inherit an experience that cannot remain private. The poem offers no guarantee that testimony will be understood or translated into lasting conduct. That uncertainty makes it more useful than a slogan. Students can ask why some environmental injuries become memorable, what grants a narrator authority, and whether guilt alone can sustain responsibility. In relation to SDGs 6.4, 6.6, and 12.8, the poem's deeper contribution is not the notion that nature takes revenge. It is the recognition that damaged relations transform perception, community, and the conditions of survival.

4.2 Dry Modernity and Polluted Memory in *The Waste Land*

Where Coleridge overwhelms through unusable abundance, Eliot repeatedly exposes thirst, failed renewal, contaminated urban flow, and fear of drowning. Water never settles into one symbol. It promises fertility, carries refuse, recalls earlier songs, threatens death, and disappears into rock and dust. McIntire (2015) reads the poem as an ecocritique in which environmental damage and cultural disintegration are entangled. Such a reading prevents its exhausted landscapes from being reduced to private psychology: damaged consciousness inhabits damaged material worlds.

The Thames sequence brings cultural memory and pollution together. Earlier literary idealisations of the river remain audible, yet the modern waterway bears the residues of leisure, commerce, and urban use. Memory becomes polluted in two senses: the physical river carries waste, while inherited forms struggle to contain the present. Through allusion, quotation, and abrupt shifts of voice, the Thames becomes temporally layered. A river is not only what appears at one moment; it is also what has been sung about it, built beside it, discharged into it, and forgotten through familiarity.

The dry passages create another form of pressure. Repetition, fractured syntax, and barren rock enact fatigue and a nearly hallucinatory desire for water. Yet approaching rain does not complete an easy pastoral recovery. The ending offers fragments, thunder, and uncertain commands. This hesitation matters for climate education, which too often oscillates between catastrophe and uncomplicated optimism. Eliot supplies neither. He asks readers to remain within damaged conditions where renewal is desired but not guaranteed and where cultural inheritance is compromised but still available for recombination.

For SDG 6.3, students could classify the poem's different waters before tracing where water in their own city originates and where wastewater goes. The contrast is revealing: Eliot's river is materially present in London, whereas much Saudi urban water arrives through networks whose source, treatment, and energy costs remain distant from daily experience. The question is not whether the environments are equivalent, but how infrastructure shapes imagination. *The Waste Land* also supports SDG 13.3 by making temporal disorientation part of environmental understanding. Its difficulty can train students to notice broken links among memory, place, consumption, and renewal.

4.3 Tidal Time, Domestic Memory, and Care in *To the Lighthouse*

Water in *To the Lighthouse* shapes time, distance, mood, and the fragile continuity of domestic life. The sea separates the Ramsays' holiday house from the lighthouse while binding the novel through rhythm and return. From the postponed journey to the final crossing, water holds desire in suspension. The lighthouse seems fixed at a distance, but on approach it enters a changing field of waves, weather, memory, and altered relationships. Environmental knowledge is therefore not imagined as arrival at one stable viewpoint.

The novel's most radical environmental passage occurs in "Time Passes," where human consciousness recedes and weather, darkness, damp, air, plants, and decay occupy narrative attention. Sultzbach (2016) places Woolf's modernism within an ecophenomenological tradition sensitive to relations between human awareness and more-than-human worlds. In the vacant house, objects weather, fabrics deteriorate, and the sea continues beyond individual grief. Human losses are registered obliquely, almost parenthetically. The effect is not to deny their significance but to place sorrow within material durations that neither mirror nor stop for it.

This altered scale is valuable for climate learning because gradual environmental change exceeds the time of a lesson, a school year, or an individual life. Woolf allows students to experience more-than-human time formally. Maintenance also acquires ethical weight. The house survives only through repeated labour under conditions of impermanence; conservation therefore becomes more than prohibition. It includes repair, vigilance, care, and recognition that apparent stability depends upon continuing relations.

Cultural memory is equally mobile. Return does not restore the original family, and the lighthouse remembered by James is not identical to the object he reaches. Saudi students might connect this instability to intergenerational accounts of a well no longer used, a farm altered by pumping, a developed coastline, a wadi associated with rare rain, or domestic routines changed by continuous supply. Such memories should not prove that the past was ecologically pure. They reveal shifts in labour, access, scale, technology, and feeling. Woolf thereby enriches SDGs 4.7, 12.8, and 13.3 by joining reflective judgement to gradual change and care for vulnerable systems.

4.4 Polyphonic Water and Distributed Stewardship in *Dart*

Alice Oswald's *Dart* challenges the belief that a waterway can be represented by one authoritative voice. The book-length poem follows the River Dart from its upland source to the sea, gathering the speech of people who work, travel, study, play, remember, and take risks along it. Voices flow into one another, interrupt, recur, and become difficult to assign securely. The river is less an object of detached description than a moving field of relations.

Middleton (2015) shows that the poem's intense local attachment remains open to wider ecological, economic, and cultural processes. Histories, occupations, myths, animal lives, weather, waste, and sea movement converge within the catchment. Students therefore meet a river not as a blue line on a map but as an assembly of tributaries, bodies, livelihoods, pollutants, permissions, memories, and sounds. Scientific expertise remains indispensable, but it does not monopolise knowledge. Workers, fishers, swimmers, residents, and the textures of water itself contribute partial perspectives. The poem thus helps distinguish plurality from relativism: not every claim is equally accurate, yet integrated management requires more than one way of knowing.

Jung (2021) demonstrates *Dart's* value in a green English-language poetry classroom through participatory and creative work. In Saudi schools, its form should be adapted rather than transplanted. Students might compose a "wadi poem," a coastal sound-map, or a polyphonic account of a municipal water network. Voices could include a grandparent recalling water collection, a farmer, a desalination engineer, a student, a migratory bird, a leaking pipe, a cloud, a household tank, and treated wastewater. The exercise remains literary only when rhythm, sequence, voice, silence, and the ethics of speaking for nonhuman entities receive sustained attention; otherwise, it becomes a poster project in verse.

Dart most directly illuminates SDGs 6.3, 6.5, and 6.6, while supporting SDG 12.8 by revealing how lifestyles are embedded in shared systems. Its formal refusal to let one speaker own the river yields a realistic environmental ethic. Stewardship appears distributed, situated, and contested rather than the achievement of a solitary heroic conserver.

5. Re-situating English Water Literature in Saudi Education

Bringing these works into Saudi classrooms requires more than attaching a local example after a British reading is complete. It calls for a **double reading** in which English texts illuminate Saudi experience and Saudi experience exposes assumptions within English texts. Maritime Britain, modern London, Woolf's island setting, and Devon's River Dart arise from particular climates, infrastructures, literary traditions, and class histories. A Saudi learner may notice what a British reader overlooks: the taken-for-granted presence of flowing freshwater, the symbolic luxury of rain, or the difference between living beside a river and receiving water through long technological chains.

The reverse movement is equally important. Saudi water culture should not be represented only by scarcity, a frame that reproduces a thin desert stereotype. Wells, oases, springs, wadis, seasonal rainfall, coasts, irrigation, household storage, and religious meanings have generated varied forms of knowledge. Qur'anic representations connect water with life, measure, growth, gratitude, reflection, and human limitation; recent scholarship has related these meanings to water conservation without treating scripture as a technical policy manual (Blankinship et al., 2024). Sacred language can enter the comparative classroom as an interpretive context, but not as a decorative sustainability slogan.

Cultural memory makes comparison concrete. Learners might interview older relatives about changes in water access, storage, agriculture, rain, or domestic use, with consent and accurate recording. Memory is evidence of experience, not an infallible historical record: one person may recall hardship, another cooperation, another inequality, and another technological liberation. Reading such accounts beside Woolf or Oswald reveals how remembrance is shaped by genre, feeling, and later knowledge. It also prevents conservation from being framed as a simple return to an idealised past.

Modern infrastructure must remain visible. Desalination may create an impression of dependable abundance while shifting costs to energy systems, marine environments, public finance, and future planning. Leakage reduction, treated-water reuse, efficient appliances, agricultural reform, and pricing are not equally visible in daily life, yet they shape what private conservation can achieve. Research on Saudi households indicates that awareness, responsibility, social norms, and enabling conditions all matter (Almulhim & Abubakar, 2024). Literature cannot solve infrastructural problems, but it can challenge the convenience of treating water as either purely private consumption or purely governmental provision.

Each text creates a different bridge: the Mariner's saline abundance opens questions about desalination; Eliot's Thames prompts inquiry into urban supply and wastewater; Woolf's weathered house foregrounds maintenance and leakage; Oswald's polyphony can be reworked through a wadi, oasis, coast, farm, or municipal network. These are comparisons, not equations. Their value lies in identifying both resonance and difference.

Accessibility also matters. Canonical English can exclude learners when difficulty becomes a test of personal worth. Selected passages, audio performance, bilingual glossaries, visual mapping, and collaborative annotation can create multiple entrances without reducing works to moral summaries. English proficiency and literary insight are related but not identical. A learner may perceive an environmental connection before being able to express it fluently, so assessment should recognise developing interpretation as well as linguistic accuracy.

6. A Four-Stage Model for SDG-Aligned Literary Learning

The proposed model moves through four recurring stages: **remember, attend, compare, and act**. Beginning immediately with action can produce shallow campaigns; ending with interpretation can leave environmental learning detached from public responsibility. The sequence links cultural experience, close reading, contextual knowledge, and proportionate participation while preserving literature's distinctive demands.

Remember

Students identify the water memories and assumptions they already carry. A "personal water map" might mark rain, sea, bottled water, a tank, a farm, a mosque, a flood, a well, or an interruption in supply. A short narrative then distinguishes direct recollection from inherited family memory. The exercise avoids treating Saudi experience as homogeneous and makes visible the emotions—gratitude, fear, inconvenience, pleasure, shame, or entitlement—through which conservation messages are interpreted.

Attend

Close reading asks how a work makes water perceptible through form. Students may track Coleridge's repeated sounds, Eliot's fragments and allusions, Woolf's shifting perspective and pace, or Oswald's overlapping voices. Questions remain textually accountable: Which words create thirst? When does narration withdraw from human consciousness? Who speaks, and who is silent? What changes when water is saline, polluted, distant, moving, or alive? This stage keeps the unit centred on English literature rather than turning it into a general awareness campaign.

Compare

Students place a literary hydrology beside a Saudi context and a relevant SDG target. They might juxtapose the Mariner's sea with a desalination diagram, Eliot's river waste with wastewater treatment, Woolf's slow decay with a leakage audit, or *Dart* with a wadi or coastal ecosystem. Scientific and policy information should be carefully selected, and comparison must include dissimilarity. Rewarding learners for showing where an analogy fails protects both environmental accuracy and literary complexity.

Act

Students produce a modest, evidence-based response: a bilingual water-memory exhibit, a dramatic reading with commentary, a polyphonic poem based on ethically collected voices, a school water-use proposal, or a public message that avoids blame and exaggeration. Action must remain proportionate to students' power. Assigning them responsibility for structural water problems would be misleading. The goal is informed participation—the ability to communicate, collaborate, ask better questions, and make feasible changes while recognising institutional, technological, and policy responsibilities.

Table 1. Cultural hydroliteracy and SDG alignment

Stage	Core literary practice	Evidence of learning	Principal SDG connections
Remember	Reconstructing personal, family, and place-based water memories	Reflective narrative distinguishing memory, inheritance, and assumption	SDG 4.7; SDG 12.8
Attend	Close reading of image, sound, voice, perspective, genre, and temporal form	Interpretation supported by precise textual evidence	SDG 4.7
Compare	Relating literary hydrologies to Saudi environments, infrastructures, and policy	Comparative explanation identifying resonance, difference, and limits	SDG 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6; SDG 13.3
Act	Producing a feasible literary, communicative, or school-based response	Portfolio artefact with rationale, evidence, ethical reflection, and limits	SDG 4.7; SDG 6; SDG 12.8; SDG 13.3

A six-week unit could weave these stages together. Week one establishes water memory and SDG vocabulary. Weeks two to five centre on one primary work or a substantial extract, moving from formal analysis to Saudi comparison. Week six assembles a portfolio and public-facing presentation. The portfolio might include annotations, a comparative map, a revised creative piece, a conservation brief, and a reflection on how the learner's understanding changed.

Assessment should separate four outcomes. Literary understanding concerns whether an interpretation is grounded in form and evidence. Hydrological understanding requires learners to distinguish supply, quality, efficiency, ecosystems, and infrastructure rather than speaking vaguely of a "water problem." Intercultural understanding involves comparing British and Saudi environments without stereotyping either. Ethical-practical understanding asks whether a proposed action identifies responsibility, authority, feasibility, and limits. Portfolios, analytic rubrics, peer response, and oral defence can capture these outcomes more convincingly than a single attitude scale.

Literature's affective power must be handled carefully. A moving poem can produce sympathy, but emotional intensity is not durable behavioural change. Locally situated, participatory conservation programmes are strongest when knowledge is joined to community practice (Valenzuela-Morales et al., 2022). Literary study can deepen the attention and meanings that support such programmes; it should not claim to replace them. An evaluation of the unit should first examine interpretation, conceptual understanding, perceived agency, and the

quality of proposed actions. Longer-term claims about water use would require independent evidence.

Teachers also need support in ecocritical reading, basic water-system knowledge, culturally responsive comparison, and the facilitation of family or religious memories. Eco-critical language awareness can help teachers examine how apparently neutral expressions frame nature, consumption, and responsibility (Micalay-Hurtado & Poole, 2022). Collaboration with science, geography, and social-studies colleagues can prevent factual error while preserving literature's distinctive contribution. English teachers need not become hydrologists, but they should recognise when a powerful metaphor risks becoming a misleading explanation.

7. Discussion

The four works show why “water literature” cannot be reduced to a theme. Coleridge organises water through moral rupture and compulsive testimony; Eliot through dryness, contamination, and fragmented inheritance; Woolf through tidal perception and the labour of care; Oswald through polyphony and catchment interdependence. Their differences matter more than the general claim that water symbolises life. Cultural hydroliteracy begins when learners can distinguish these forms and ask what each allows, and prevents, them from perceiving.

The framework also clarifies the place of memory in conservation. Memory can preserve restraint, reverence, cooperation, and adaptation, but it can also idealise the past or conceal unequal access. Literature makes these tensions examinable because it shows remembrance being narrated rather than simply possessed. In Saudi classrooms, family and place-based memory can connect national priorities to lived experience, while English texts supply comparative distance. The interpretive movement is reciprocal: Saudi experience changes the reading of English literature just as literature makes local assumptions newly visible.

A further contribution is to replace SDG checklists with interpretive capacities. SDG 4 is advanced through critical, ethical, and intercultural learning; SDG 6 through differentiated attention to quality, efficiency, ecosystems, and management; SDG 12 through scrutiny of consumption and the narratives that normalise it; and SDG 13 through sensitivity to environmental time, uncertainty, and adaptation. The goals remain explicit, but literary works are not required to speak in policy language.

The study has clear limits. Its pedagogy has not been tested with Saudi students or teachers, so no causal claim can be made about conservation behaviour. Its corpus is British and largely canonical. Future work should include Saudi writing in English, translated Arabic literature, coastal and migrant narratives, children's literature, and women's environmental writing. Comparative units could pair English works with Arabic poetry of rain, wells, gardens, drought, flood, and sea travel, creating a fuller dialogue among ecocriticism, cultural memory, and Arabic literary traditions.

Empirical studies could pilot the model across regions and school types, using annotations, reflective writing, interviews, creative work, concept maps, and classroom observation. The most important outcome may not be an immediate reduction in household use but an improvement in public reasoning: the capacity to understand trade-offs, evaluate claims, recognise distributed responsibility, and participate intelligently in collective decisions. Conservation depends on behaviour, but environmental citizenship also depends on the quality of the meanings through which behaviour becomes thinkable.

8. Conclusion

Water conservation becomes culturally durable when it is connected to more than instruction. People are more likely to protect what they perceive as materially consequential, historically layered, ethically shared, and imaginatively alive. English literature can contribute to that perception when it is read in dialogue with Saudi environments rather than presented as a self-sufficient foreign canon.

Cultural hydroliteracy names this educational possibility. Coleridge reveals the difference between abundance and usability and the cost of broken relation. Eliot presents damaged water as a crisis of infrastructure and memory. Woolf makes environmental time and maintenance forms of care. Oswald teaches readers to hear a water system as a plurality of connected lives and knowledges. The sequence of remembering, attending, comparing, and acting then links these readings to SDGs 4, 6, 12, and 13 without reducing literature to advocacy. Literary study will not solve Saudi Arabia's water challenges, and no poem can substitute for governance, science, or efficient infrastructure. It can, however, alter the quality of attention brought to those challenges. It can make supply less invisible, consumption less innocent, memory less static, and responsibility less narrowly individual. “Water words” can thus become part of water stewardship—not because words command the world, but because societies act partly through the meanings by which they learn to see it.

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