

# Enhancing students' cultural understanding through analysis of archetypes and symbols in pre-colonial Philippine poetry

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## Abstract

The study examined the presence and significance of symbols and archetypes in pre-colonial Philippine poetry and determined how these elements enhanced the cultural awareness of Grade Seven students from the University of Baguio Science High School. It aimed to identify recurring symbols and archetypal patterns in selected narrative poems and explain their contribution to students' understanding of Filipino identity and cultural values. A qualitative-descriptive research design was used, and purposive sampling was applied in selecting twenty-four student participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and the data were analyzed through thematic analysis, content analysis, and cultural context analysis to capture both students' interpretations and the cultural meanings embedded in the poems. Results showed that natural symbols, communal imagery, and culturally grounded archetypes deepened students' appreciation of Filipino heritage by linking historical experiences with contemporary personal challenges. Students associated the symbols and archetypes with values such as unity, perseverance, sacrifice, courage, and faith, which strengthened their sense of cultural identity and pride. The findings revealed that engaging with pre-colonial poetry enabled students to recognize cultural continuity across generations and to relate these values to modern social situations. The study concluded that symbols and archetypes served as effective tools for fostering cultural literacy and strengthening students' connection to their heritage.

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## INTRODUCTION

Cultural understanding is central to fostering identity, belonging, and global citizenship, with literature serving as a vital medium for preserving heritage. Archetypes and symbols, as universal patterns, reveal values and beliefs across communities (McLeod, 2018). Globally, their analysis has been used to cultivate

intercultural awareness and critical thinking (Smith et al., 2020), while the inclusion of indigenous literatures in curricula promotes diversity and equity. Integrating indigenous narratives helps counter the marginalization of non-Western perspectives (Harrison & Greenfield, 2019), and in Southeast Asia, local myths and legends enhance regional identity and empathy (Pérez & Monterroza, 2021). These approaches show how

ancient traditions remain relevant, bridging cultural heritage with modern contexts.

In the Philippines, pre-colonial literature preserves myths, legends, and symbols that reflect communal and spiritual values. Archetypes such as the Hero, Nurturer, and Spiritual Leader (Villanueva, 2020), along with symbols like the *kalasag*, *banig*, and *babaylan* (Santos & Reyes, 2023), provide insights into indigenous worldviews. The Department of Education's Matatag Curriculum reinforces the importance of integrating these texts, particularly in Grade 7 English, where narrative poetry is used to uncover cultural values and shared experiences. Students are encouraged to analyze and create texts through multimodal learning, linking heritage to identity. Locally, studies affirm that analyzing archetypes and symbols fosters heritage appreciation and critical thinking (Cruz et al., 2019), while integrating them into language instruction preserves intangible cultural heritage and counters globalization's erosion of indigenous knowledge (Cabrera & de Guzman, 2020).

## Literature Review

### Heritage and Identity in Philippine Narrative Poetry

Understanding cultural heritage through literature is vital in enabling students to construct personal and collective identities. Villanueva (2020) argues that pre-colonial Philippine poetry, which includes epics like *Biag ni Lam-ang* and *Darangen*, embeds moral codes, historical consciousness, and societal norms. Cruz et al. (2019) support this by highlighting how indigenous narratives serve as cognitive and emotional bridges between learners' past and present, cultivating a deeper appreciation of their cultural lineage.

### Archetypal Analysis in Literary Education

Archetypal literary criticism, while traditionally rooted in Jungian theory, has been effectively localized in Philippine education through culturally relevant figures. Soriano (2021) proposes that the recurring presence of the *babaylan* (spiritual leader), *datu* (chieftain), *mandirigma* (warrior), and *ina ng bayan* (mother of the nation) in Philippine texts functions as cultural anchors that represent collective struggles, gender roles, and communal leadership.

This shift away from Western archetypes to localized, culturally-grounded figures is supported by Macalangay (2022), who emphasizes the pedagogical importance of using indigenous characters and symbols in fostering learners' critical engagement with texts. Pérez and Monterroza (2021) further demonstrate how the *mandirigma* archetype, found in Southeast Asian epics, symbolizes both personal valor and community responsibility, a recurring theme in pre-colonial and contemporary poetry.

### Symbolism and Cultural Literacy

Philippine narrative poems employ vivid symbolism rooted in nature, spirituality, and communal practices, serving as cultural signifiers rather than mere decoration. Santos and Reyes (2023) highlighted symbols such as the *kalasag* (shield), *banig* (woven mat), *ilog* (river), and *bundok* (mountain) as representations of protection, unity, and ancestral ties. Binbin et al. (2022) described these symbols as "mnemonic anchors" of cultural memory, showing that exposure to indigenous metaphors enhances learners' cultural literacy and interpretative skills. Likewise, Jaro (2021) found that incorporating native symbols in classroom storytelling fostered emotional resonance and identity development, particularly when students created and presented their own poems.

### Pedagogical Alignment with the Matatag Curriculum

Lauro (2023) highlights the value of teaching archetypal and symbolic content through audio-visual performances and collaborative projects like poetry slams, role-playing, and digital storytelling, aligning with curriculum goals of fostering Filipino identity. Similarly, Cabrera and de Guzman (2020) stress that heritage-based literature instruction enhances creativity and critical thinking, with contextualized approaches increasing student engagement through performances and reflections tied to real-life experiences. Protska et al. (2024) further affirm that understanding narrative archetypes in local contexts strengthens empathy, interpretation, and communication across cultures, complementing the curriculum's emphasis on cultural literacy and multiliteracies through diverse modes of reading, viewing, and text production.

### Significance of the Study

This study advanced cultural understanding, heritage preservation, and education through analyzing archetypes and symbols in pre-colonial Philippine literature. It strengthened students' cultural awareness, reinforced ancestral ties, and preserved intangible heritage central to Filipino identity. Educationally, it enriched the curriculum by integrating cultural literacy and literary analysis, aligning with the Matatag Curriculum's goals. For students, it fostered pride, belonging, and deeper engagement, while offering curriculum developers insights for inclusivity and relevance. Finally, it bridged cultural studies and literary education, underscoring literature's role in preserving identity and guiding innovation.

### Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to investigate the presence and significance of symbols and archetypes in pre-colonial Philippine poetry and their role in enhancing students' cultural awareness and understanding.

The following questions were addressed in this study:

1. What were the common symbols and archetypes identified in pre-colonial Philippine poetics?
2. How did these elements contribute to students' cultural awareness and understanding?

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study used a qualitative-descriptive design with purposive sampling to examine symbols and archetypes in pre-colonial Philippine poetics and their role in enhancing Grade 7 students' cultural awareness at the University of Baguio Science High School. Thematic, content, and cultural context analyses revealed recurring patterns, linking archetypes like the *mandirigma* (warrior) and *babaylan* (spiritual leader) to students' cultural identity and situating findings within the socio-historical framework of pre-colonial Philippines.

### Sample/Population of the Study

The study selected only authentic pre-colonial narrative poems, *Moonlight on Manila Bay*, *If You Want to Know What We Are*, and the six Categories of Proverbs, valued for their cultural richness and reflection of indigenous Filipino beliefs and traditions, while excluding works influenced by colonial or contemporary perspectives.

Participants were Grade 7 students from the University of Baguio Science High School, chosen based on classroom performance (low, average, and top-performing), willingness to participate, and parental consent. Two students from each category per section were included, resulting in 24 participants out of 111, with those not meeting criteria or declining participation respectfully excluded.

### Data Gathering Tools

The researcher designed a semi-structured interview aligned with the Matatag Curriculum to engage students with pre-colonial Philippine poetry. It encouraged analysis of symbols and archetypes—moon, river, trees, animals—reflecting Filipino values like bravery, kinship, respect for nature, and wisdom, while connecting themes to personal identity. By fostering critical thinking and reflection, the interviews linked students to their heritage. Guided discussions with Grade 7 participants, supported by thematic, content, and cultural analyses, highlighted how pre-colonial poetry shaped cultural awareness and appreciation of Filipino identity.

### Data Gathering Procedures

Data collection followed a structured, ethical process with clearance from the University of Baguio Ethics Committee and school approval. Consent from parents and assent from students ensured voluntary participation, with orientations explaining objectives and safeguards. Semi-structured interviews were conducted securely, recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, anonymized, and stored safely.

Analysis used thematic, content, and cultural context methods to identify patterns, symbols, and historical significance. Triangulation, consistent coding, and verbatim transcripts ensured validity and reliability, providing credible insights into how archetypes and symbols in pre-colonial poetry shaped students' cultural awareness and identity.

### Treatment of Data

The data underwent rigorous qualitative analysis to ensure validity and reliability. Interviews with Grade 7 students of the University of Baguio Science High School were transcribed, coded, and examined through thematic analysis to identify recurring archetypes and symbols in pre-colonial literature. Content analysis

organized insights into meaningful categories, while cultural context analysis interpreted deeper historical significance. This comprehensive approach highlighted how symbols resonated with students while preserving the integrity of their perspectives.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to strict ethical standards to protect participants' rights, privacy, and well-being. Consent from guardians and assent from students ensured voluntary participation, with confidentiality maintained through pseudonyms, secure storage, and record deletion. Approved by the University of Baguio's Ethics Committee, interviews were conducted safely with age-appropriate tools aligned to the Matatag Curriculum. The study posed no harm or financial burden, providing materials and ensuring respectful, safe, and compliant participation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Common Symbols and Archetypes in Pre-Colonial Philippine Poetry**

One of the objectives of the study is to identify recurring symbols and archetypes found in the selected poems that reflect Filipino cultural consciousness, specifically the Carlos Bulosan's "If You Want to Know What We Are", and Rafael Zulueta da Costa's "Moonlight on Manila Bay". These poems were written in the twentieth century where imagery and themes are deeply rooted in pre-colonial sensibilities. These include reverence for nature, collective struggles, and spiritual connection with celestial bodies. Additionally, the grade 7 students also discussed the six (6) categories of Proverbs (*Salawikain*) based on Damiana L. Eugenio's Discussion, which authentically embody pre-colonial oral wisdom and moral philosophy.

#### **The "Moonlight" as a symbol of Hope and Persistence**

*"The old moonlight, soft and still, Lies like a dream upon Manila Bay."*

Students identified moonlight as the central symbol, interpreting it as hope, guidance, and freedom amid darkness. This reflects Santos and Reyes' (2023) view of natural imagery as cultural memory, linking present

generations to ancestral endurance. Learners connected moonlight to historical consciousness and pre-colonial cosmology (Villanueva, 2020), while reflections tied it to maritime heritage and modern symbolic thought (Bautista, 2022).

They emphasized moonlight as resilience and freedom, an affective bridge of endurance (Cruz et al., 2019), and as cultural continuity preserving courage and communal identity (Dela Cruz & Abad, 2021). Linked to postcolonial hope and resistance (Reyes, 2023; San Juan, 2021), moonlight helped students internalize values of faith, endurance, and reverence for nature as witness to Filipino history.

### **Manila Bay as a Multivalent Symbol**

The poem reimagines Manila Bay as a living symbol of grief, sacrifice, and hope. Students saw it as a "silent witness" to battles and courage, embodying layered meanings of pain and healing (Santos & Reyes, 2023). Some viewed it as the "heart of the nation" or a sacred altar of sacrifice, echoing Navarro's (2021) study of ritual geography and indigenous cosmologies.

Beyond the bay, natural images like moonlight and sea symbolized resilience, guidance, and recovery, serving as mnemonic anchors of cultural identity (Binbin et al., 2022). These reflections align with Jaro (2021) and Macalangay (2022), showing how indigenous symbolism fosters empathy, identity, and critical reflection. Ultimately, students moved beyond textual analysis to cultural awareness, reclaiming identity through interpretive participation.

#### **If You Want to Know What We Are by Carlos Bulosan**

*"If you want to know what we are / who inhabit forests, mountain ranges, and plowed fields, / who labor in the deep and dark factories of the world"*

The opening line of the poem immediately describes the Filipino identity in the earth and labor, presenting "we" as a collective being forged by struggle and grounded in shared experience.

### “We” as Symbol of Collective Identity

The symbol of “we” in Bulosan’s poem embodies Filipino communal spirit, rooted in pre-colonial kinship and collective identity. Students saw the phrase “If you want to know what we are” as positioning Filipinos as active agents of resistance and nation-building, echoing Soriano’s (2021) view of *bayanihan* challenging Western individual heroism. They emphasized that “we” unites workers, farmers, and soldiers, resonating with Bulosan’s socialist vision of the *masa* as the nation’s core. By giving voice to the marginalized, “we” transforms silence into solidarity, aligning with Pérez and Monterroza’s (2021) claim that collective pronouns in resistance literature privilege communal over individual values.

### “The Nameless and the Voiceless” as Symbol of Marginalized Strength

In the lines,

*“We are the nameless and the voiceless, / the hungry and the dispossessed, / the millions who built the world’s cities with our hands,”*

Bulosan’s poem gives voice to those historically erased, transforming silence into strength and resilience. Students recognized that being “nameless” reflects humility and collective endurance rather than erasure, echoing pre-colonial governance systems rooted in consensus and community welfare. The “voiceless” speak through united struggle, embodying dignity in shared action rather than individual recognition. As Cruz et al. (2019) note, pre-colonial identity was defined by participation in communal rituals and labor, not rank or bloodline. Bulosan’s lines thus retrieve this indigenous notion of belonging, where identity and honor emerge from collective purpose and resistance.

### Identity Through Action

As this line from the poem states,

*“We are the living and the dead, / united in struggle; / we are the masses.”*

Students emphasized that Bulosan’s poem ties Filipino identity to active engagement and collective struggle.

Student 9 noted that fighting for the country defines who Filipinos are, while Student 15 highlighted that courage, unity, and love—not just weapons—connect past and present struggles for justice and equality. These reflections capture the poem’s moral essence: *to be Filipino is to struggle together for justice*. The pronoun “we” thus becomes a powerful symbol of solidarity, transforming identity into shared action. As Cabrera and de Guzman (2020) affirm, such collective imagery preserves intangible cultural heritage by helping learners internalize national identity through interpretive participation.

### The Soul of Filipino History as a Unified Symbol

*“We are the vision and the star, / the quiet and the striving, / we are the dream of tomorrow, the hope that never dies.”*

These closing lines encapsulate the resilience of a Filipino people who, despite war and colonization, continue to hope and rebuild. Like for instance, Student 15 insightfully described that “the poems’ symbols, like the moonlight, bay, and ‘we’, specifically carried the soul of Filipino history. During the war, these symbols gave people courage to continue fighting.” This perception from the students captures the poem’s layered symbolism, the “we” that unites, the “nameless” that endures, and the “hope that never dies.” Together, they form what Villanueva (2020) calls the symbolic architecture of Filipino identity. It is a cultural structure built from memory, struggle, and faith. Through Bulosan’s language, the Filipino becomes both subject and symbol, embodying the enduring spirit of the nation.

### Archetypal Patterns found in the Philippine Pre-Colonial Poetry

#### Moonlight on Manila Bay

#### The Resilient Community Archetype

The dominant archetype in the poem, “Moonlight on Manila Bay” is the Resilient Community. It is a collective entity that endures suffering while maintaining hope and cultural identity. This is vividly portrayed in the lines,

*“The moonlight on Manila Bay / Shines calm  
where once was thunder,”*

which juxtapose serenity and destruction, symbolizes how the Filipino people remained steadfast even after the devastations of war. Students highlighted perseverance as a central Filipino value embodied in the poems. Student 1 emphasized resilience in the face of war, hunger, and suffering, showing how Filipinos remained determined to protect their country. This persistence reflects Soriano's (2021) observation that survival in Filipino narratives comes not through conquest but through endurance, faith, and shared values, with moonlight symbolizing healing after chaos. Student 11 expanded this by noting that Maramag's moonlight inspires hope, while Bulosan's "we" emphasizes unity, both reinforcing perseverance through communal strength.

Their reflections align with Macalangay's (2022) claim that Filipino archetypes manifest collectively rather than individually, underscoring the power of unity in hardship. Da Costa's moonlight thus serves as a symbolic "mnemonic anchor" (Binbin et al., 2022), reminding Filipinos of their shared struggle and enduring spirit of resilience and solidarity.

### **The Spiritual Seeker**

The poet invokes this archetype through his use of personified natural imagery in the line;

*“Oh moonlight, tender moonlight, / That once  
was witness to despair,”*

where the moon becomes both a silent observer and a divine presence. Student 3 reflected this view through her statement, "Moonlight on Manila Bay" reflects spiritual faith. The poet used the beauty of the moon and the sea to express that even in sorrow, there is still something pure and divine to hold on to." This interpretation aligns with Villanueva's (2020) observation that pre-colonial Filipino spirituality perceived nature as sacred, where elements like the moon, water, and wind were seen as manifestations of divine will. The poem's "tender moonlight" thus recalls the babaylanic belief that natural phenomena serve as bridges between human suffering and divine assurance.

In addition, Student 7 emphasized that, "For Filipinos during the time of war, these symbols represented sacrifice, unity, and resilience. The moonlight symbolized their undying spirit." This "undying spirit" connects to the pre-colonial concept of *kaluluwa*, the enduring soul or essence that survives physical death, a notion that, as Villanueva (2020) suggests, reinforces collective spiritual continuity across generations. Da Costa captures this persistence in the lines;

*“There shall be peace where death once lay, /  
And love where fear has vanished.”*

These lines transform historical grief into spiritual transcendence, illustrating what Macalangay (2022) calls a Filipino spiritual archetype: one that redefines suffering as sacred endurance. Student 8 likewise reflected on this faith-driven perseverance, through his statement that, "The moonlight shining over Manila Bay could have reminded Filipinos of hope that never fades. Even if war brought destruction and sorrow, the light from the moon symbolized that their dream of independence was still alive and waiting to be realized." His interpretation supports Protska et al. (2024), who argue that when students recognize archetypal hope in national literature, they develop empathy and cultural consciousness, an essential outcome of archetypal literary study.

### **The Nurturing Homeland**

*“O lovely bay, O faithful sea, / You cradle now  
a nation's tears.”*

In the poem, the sea is both witness and comforter, embodying *Inang Bayan* (Mother Land). Student 9 noted that despite the nation's pain, the poet still finds beauty, echoing Macalangay's (2022) view of the homeland as a nurturing entity. The line "You cradle now a nation's tears" portrays the bay as a mother holding her children. Student 2 added that its peaceful beauty after war deepened appreciation for the country, reflecting Soriano's (2021) claim that patriotism arises through aesthetic empathy. The Nurturing Homeland archetype shows love of country as emotional, spiritual, and environmental, not just political.

## If You Want to Know What We Are

### The Communal Hero

*“If you want to know what we are / Who inhabit forests and cities,”*

Bulosan's poem situates Filipino identity in unity and solidarity, redefining heroism through *bayanihan*, the ethos of communal support. Students noted it elevates collective endurance over individual valor, as workers, farmers, and soldiers resisted oppression, echoing Soriano's (2021) view of heroism rooted in *kapwa* (shared self). They linked this strength to revolution, mirroring the pre-colonial *mandirigmang bayan* tradition of communal defense. Pérez and Monterroza (2021) likewise highlight Southeast Asian archetypes of collective purpose, which Bulosan reimagines in modern form. Students emphasized the democratization of heroism in “we,” valorizing ordinary citizens as defenders of national dignity and grounding Filipino identity in collective struggle.

### The Voice for the Voiceless

*“We are the nameless and the voiceless / We are the countless faces of the land.”*

Bulosan's poem turns silence into strength, showing that being “nameless and voiceless” reflects humility, courage, and resilience. Student 5 saw this as Filipinos continuing to fight for justice despite erasure, echoing the archetype of the *katutubong tagapagsalita* who voiced collective suffering. Student 11 added that “If you want to know what we are” empowered Filipinos, declaring them capable of rebuilding their nation. These insights align with Villanueva's (2020) view that Filipino texts transform silence into unity, with Bulosan's collective “we” reclaiming the moral authority of the oppressed and turning lament into declaration.

### The Revolutionary Transformer

*“We are the builders, the dreamers, the fighters for tomorrow,”*

The poem transforms hope into action, urging Filipinos to be agents of change. Student 2 saw it as inspiration to

build a better nation, while Student 5 emphasized continuing the fight for freedom dreamed of by ancestors. Unlike da Costa's focus on endurance, Bulosan highlights transformation and futurity, portraying identity through “builders” and “dreamers.” This reflects Cruz et al.'s (2019) view of personhood as communal action and the pre-colonial concept of *kasaysayan*, a living history shaped collectively. As Macalangay (2022) notes, Filipino narratives blur myth and movement, presenting heroism as intergenerational and ongoing.

### The Sacrificial Community

*“We are the witnesses to each other's wounds,”*

This line underscores *pagdamay* (shared suffering) and *pakikiramdam* (empathic solidarity), a core ethical values in pre-colonial Filipino life. Student 4 highlighted that, “The people who fought for freedom gave up their safety and comfort for the nation. It tells us that Filipinos in the past were selfless and willing to suffer for the next generation's peace.” Similarly, Student 6 added that, “The poem tells us that we have the chance to fight for our freedom and justice. It honors the Filipinos who sacrificed their lives during the war.” These interpretations align with Soriano's (2021) assertion that Filipino archetypes of sacrifice are rooted in communal ethics rather than martyrdom, where pain is collective, redemptive, and transformative.

### The Responsible Caretaker

*“We are the seeds of tomorrow's harvest,”*

This line articulates an intergenerational ethic, present sacrifice nurturing future liberation. Protska et al. (2024) argue that recognizing such archetypes in literature fosters empathy and civic awareness among learners, as it ties national identity to moral responsibility.

### Values as Archetypal Expressions

Beyond the archetypes of heroism, students have also identified values that act as moral archetypes that resonates with what Villanueva (2020) calls the “moral architecture of Filipino cultural identity.” These values are not static; they recur across time, shaping collective identity and cultural memory.

### **Perseverance (*Pagtitiis*) and Hope (*Pag-asa*)**

This value-archetype appeared most frequently in student responses. Student 1 said that, “Despite difficult times, we should always hold on to hope. It is what keeps us strong and helps us overcome challenges.” Da Costa’s “moonlight” and Bulosan’s collective “we” both embody this principle. As Student 7 also reflected, “There is always hope even in the midst of struggle and war. The poem reminds us that justice will come to those who fight for it.” According to Cabrera and de Guzman (2020), Filipino resilience is characterized by hope-filled persistence, a belief that struggle is temporary and transformation inevitable. This mirrors pre-colonial cosmologies where hardship was cyclical, not permanent; rain always follows drought.

### **Sacrifice (*Sakripisyo*) and Selflessness (*Pagkakawalangganari*)**

Student 10 emphasized the necessity of sacrifice by sharing that, “Sometimes, we must make sacrifices to achieve freedom. The poem shows that real independence comes with courage and selflessness.” This ethic aligns with *pakikipagkapwa*, shared humanity, as foundational to Filipino moral life. Similarly, Student 15 deepened this reflection, “The sacrifices of our ancestors were worth it because they helped our country gain freedom and justice.” Such insights echo Cabrera and de Guzman’s (2020) findings that intergenerational obligation is central to Filipino identity: every generation inherits the duty to safeguard the nation’s moral and social fabric.

### **Unity (*Pagkakaisa*) and Solidarity (*Pakikiisa*)**

Student 1 asserted that, “Unity helps us survive, just like how people help each other today during disasters. It made me realize that our strength as a people lies in unity and perseverance.” This echoes the ancient bayanihan spirit, communal labor and shared burden, which Pérez and Monterroza (2021) describe as an enduring archetype of Southeast Asian collectivism. Student 10 articulated this further through, “Bulosan’s ‘we’ symbolizes the Filipino masses working together for change. It made me realize that unity, not individualism, has always been central to our national identity.” Moreover, Soriano (2021) supports this

observation, emphasizing that Filipino archetypes are inherently communal, differing sharply from Western heroism’s focus on individuality.

### **Faith (*Pananampalataya*) and Spirituality (*Espirituwalidad*)**

Student 9 recognized the continuity of faith by saying that, “The poems showed me how Filipinos rely on faith and hope in tough times. That’s something I still see today in my family and community.” This interpretation shows that faith functions not as passivity but as empowerment. As, Lauro (2023) observes that Filipino literature integrates spirituality with activism, faith becomes a source of endurance and motivation for social action. Additionally, Student 3’s insight that “the beauty of the moon and sea expresses something pure and divine to hold on to” demonstrates this synthesis of aesthetic, spiritual, and ethical dimensions.

### **Courage (*Katapangan*) and Bravery (*Kagitingan*)**

Student 11 responded that, “We need to be brave and have the courage to face any challenge. The poem reminds us that bravery is part of who we are as Filipinos.” This idea of courage as identity, rather than behavior, aligns with the *mandirigma* (warrior) ethos described by Pérez and Monterroza (2021), where heroism is defined by moral purpose and community defense rather than conquest. Student 8 further noted, “True peace comes when we stand up and fight for what is right. Courage leads to harmony.” This understanding mirrors pre-colonial *kapayapaan*, peace as justice, not submission, underscoring how traditional values continue to shape Filipino moral imagination.

## **Contribution of Symbols and Archetypes to Cultural Awareness and Understanding**

### **Personal Connection to Cultural Heritage Through Symbols**

### **Bridging Historical and Personal Experience**

Students connected the poems’ symbolic language to their own lives, forming cognitive and emotional bridges (Cruz et al., 2019). Perseverance linked historical struggles to academic and athletic challenges, while sacrifice and betrayal mirrored collective history

through archetypes. These insights align with Binbin et al.'s (2022) view of symbols as mnemonic anchors, fostering empathy, resilience, and identity. Hope and guidance also appeared, with teachers as “moonlight” and celestial imagery tied to local myths, showing cultural literacy. Overall, poetry emerged as a conduit for transforming memory into moral guidance and sustaining Filipino values across generations.

### **Enhancement of Cultural Pride and Identity Through Archetypes**

#### **Strengthening Filipino Self-Concept**

The poems' archetypal patterns fostered Filipino pride and cultural selfhood, reflecting Villanueva's (2020) idea of identity through shared values and collective action. Students emphasized unity, bravery with gentleness, and the Resilient Community archetype, appreciating endurance alongside beauty and strength. They also highlighted continuity across generations, affirming courage, unity, and love as timeless. Overall, these reflections show how archetypal narratives cultivate pride, resilience, and awareness, enabling students to see themselves as part of the ongoing story of Filipino identity.

#### **Recognition of Cultural Continuity**

Students showed how Filipino cultural values persist across eras, reflecting historical consciousness and culture as a living tradition. Perseverance and faith in Bulosan's poem mirrored modern struggles (Student 4), while patriotism and sacrifice appeared in volunteerism (Student 11), embodying the *bayanihan* spirit. Student 13 stressed that unity, love for the homeland, and perseverance remain timeless, aligning with Cabrera and de Guzman's (2020) concept of intergenerational cultural transmission, where learners carry ancestral values into the future.

#### **Appreciation of Ancestral Sacrifice**

The archetypal theme of sacrifice in both poems fostered deep gratitude among students for ancestral contributions to present freedom, embodying the Filipino value of *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude). Reflections revealed a shift from historical knowledge to personal emotional investment: Student 6 expressed thankfulness for peace, while Student 18 urged to

“honor, embrace, and celebrate” ancestral bravery, showing active commitment to remembrance.

Students also articulated retrospective moral reasoning, affirming that past sacrifices were “worth it” for the freedom and justice enjoyed today (Student 15), and recognizing that without ancestral struggles, present liberty would not exist (Student 16). Student 14 sacralized Manila Bay as a sacred site where blood was shed for independence, transforming historical violence into sacred cultural memory. This mirrors pre-colonial practices of venerating places where ancestors defended the community, highlighting how sacrifice becomes both ethical and spiritual heritage across generations.

### **Development of Cultural Literacy Through Symbolic Interpretation**

#### **Understanding Historical Context Through Symbols**

Students showed that symbols and archetypes in the poems fostered what Lauro (2023) calls empathetic historical understanding—grasping both events and emotions. Literary symbolism helped them internalize history: Student 6 felt wartime pain, while Student 2 saw Manila Bay as a “silent witness,” reflecting Binbin et al.'s (2022) idea of symbols as mnemonic anchors. Moonlight symbolized hope and resilience, with Student 14 noting it reminded Filipinos never to give up, supporting Jaro's (2021) view of indigenous imagery shaping identity. Student 8 linked sacrifice and freedom to cultural empathy, reinforcing Lauro's (2023). Overall, poetry transformed historical memory into cultural awareness, sustaining resilience across generations.

#### **Developing Interpretive Skills**

Students showed growing skill in interpreting symbolic language, recognizing layered meanings in imagery like moonlight as hope and resilience, and the bay as peace and justice. These reflections demonstrate interpretive maturity and echo Cruz et al.'s (2019) idea of cognitive-emotional bridging. Their insights align with Lauro's (2023) concept of cultural continuity, where natural symbols embody historical endurance. By synthesizing meanings across poems, students constructed a narrative of national resilience, revealing how symbolic

interpretation fosters cultural awareness, identity, and deeper engagement with indigenous texts.

## Application of Values to Contemporary Life

### Relevance to Modern Challenges

Students recognized that the archetypal values in *Moonlight on Manila Bay* and *If You Want to Know What We Are*—unity, perseverance, compassion, and sacrifice—remain central to Filipino identity today. They connected poetic symbols to real-life contexts such as disaster response, poverty, and national solidarity, reflecting how ancestral wisdom informs modern behavior. These insights align with Cruz et al.'s (2019) view of indigenous narratives as bridges between past and present, and Pérez and Monterroza's (2021) notion of successful archetypal transmission across generations. Ultimately, learners saw patriotism, sacrifice, and collective struggle as enduring values, with Manila Bay's "light" and Bulosan's collective voice inspiring cultural continuity and active citizenship.

### Personal Ethical Development

The poems encouraged students to move from social understanding to personal moral reflection, seeing values as ethical guides for daily life. They emphasized active citizenship, moral courage, and collective responsibility, echoing Jaro's (2021) view of literature as character formation and Cabrera & de Guzman's (2020) idea of living heritage. Archetypal motifs like courage, compassion, and justice resonated deeply, while Student 18 highlighted collective dignity in nation-building. Overall, the reflections show how poetry empowers learners to turn inspiration into civic agency, linking cultural heritage with ethical responsibility.

### Intergenerational Responsibility

Students demonstrated an awareness of their responsibility to preserve and pass on Filipino values, embodying Lauro's (2023) concept of *temporal citizenship*—a moral continuum linking past, present, and future. They recognized values such as unity, love for the homeland, and perseverance as timeless, guiding principles for today's youth. This resonates with Cruz et al.'s (2019) view that cultural transmission relies on

emotional investment, as learners internalize ancestral values into their identity.

Reflections also revealed moral continuity, with symbols like moonlight in Da Costa's poem still guiding modern youth toward clarity and resilience. Student 5 emphasized that Bulosan's *If You Want to Know What We Are* conveys the ongoing struggle for freedom, echoing Pérez and Monterroza's (2021) claim that enduring archetypes ensure cultural continuity. Through these insights, students positioned themselves as part of an unfinished narrative of nation-building, carrying ancestral values into the future.

## Pedagogical Preferences for Cultural Learning

### Performative Learning Methods

Students highlighted role-playing, drama, and embodied performance as effective ways to internalize meaning in poetry. Student 2 noted that acting out emotions deepens understanding, echoing Bulosan's call to embody collective struggle and kinesthetic learning (Jaro, 2021). Student 6 added that role-playing "gives life to the characters," paralleling Maramag's moonlight as resilience, supported by Lauro's (2023) view of performative approaches animating cultural memory. Student 8 emphasized its dual role in growth and empathy, aligning with Jaro's (2021) on dramatization bridging cognitive and affective learning. Finally, Student 3's call to express emotions through movement recalls pre-colonial *sayaw*, showing how indigenous pedagogies mirror meaningful performative methods today.

### Creative Expression Methods

Students valued creative arts as a means of understanding poetry, with activities like brochures, posters, short videos, and drawings helping them visualize messages. This aligns with the Matatag Curriculum's emphasis on multimodal learning that integrates oral, visual, and digital expression. Lauro (2023) supports such approaches, noting they make literary study more engaging and culturally grounded. Student 12 emphasized that drawing or painting scenes, such as moonlight on Manila Bay or struggles for freedom, allows expression of both ancestral pain and

hope. Macalangay (2022) adds that creative visual expression fosters historical empathy by transforming abstract symbols into tangible art forms reflecting learners' emotional interpretations of history.

### **Collaborative Learning Methods**

Students highlighted group-oriented activities that embody Filipino communal values. Student 9 noted that video-making fosters teamwork in creatively presenting historical scenes, emotions, and symbols, reflecting the *bayanihan* principle in Bulosan's poem. Jaro (2021) similarly observed that collaborative projects cultivate cultural belonging by "rehearsing" unity through learning. Student 15 emphasized reading poems aloud to feel their passion and patriotism, reviving the oral tradition of communal recitation central to Filipino heritage. Lauro (2023) affirmed that such oral-performative methods strengthen both cultural retention and interpersonal solidarity.

### **Reflective and Narrative Methods**

Some students preferred introspective approaches like reflection and storytelling to deepen their engagement with the poems. Student 7 noted that storytelling helps retell Filipino experiences "just like passing down stories from one generation to another," highlighting awareness of intergenerational oral heritage and positioning learners as cultural transmitters. Similarly, Student 14 emphasized that journal reflections connect literature to personal life, showing how values such as courage, unity, and perseverance remain alive in communities today. These insights support Villanueva's (2020) view that cultural education must move beyond cognitive analysis to foster values internalization, with reflection transforming literary study into personal moral insight.

### **Thematic Analysis**

#### **Theme 1: Symbols as Temporal Bridges Connecting Past and Present**

Natural and social symbols in Philippine poetry, like Maramag's moonlight and Manila Bay and Bulosan's collective "we," acted as bridges to ancestral values, carrying cultural memory forward. Binbin et al. (2022) describe these as "mnemonic anchors," helping

students apply cultural values across contexts. Learners connected them to modern life—moonlight as hope in struggles, "we" as solidarity in volunteerism—echoing Cruz et al.'s (2019) view of indigenous narratives as bridges between memory and lived experience. Their relevance confirms the archetypal power of these symbols to embody endurance, unity, and transformation, with poetry sustaining cultural continuity across generations.

#### **Theme 2: Communal Archetypes Shaping Collective Identity Formation**

Students emphasized collective over individual heroes, identifying archetypes like the Communal Hero, Resilient Community, and Nurturing Homeland, rooted in Filipino values of *pakikipagkapwa*, *bayanihan*, and *kapwa-tao*. As one noted, "unity, not individualism, has always been central to our national identity," reflecting Soriano's (2021) concept of localized archetypal patterns. They stressed sacrifice, cooperation, and shared perseverance, affirming Cabrera and de Guzman's (2020) idea of intangible cultural heritage preservation. Through literature, students rediscovered Filipino identity as belonging not just to a nation but to one another within a collective narrative.

#### **Theme 3: Values as Living Cultural Heritage Applicable to Contemporary Life**

Students' responses showed that cultural values in the poems—perseverance, faith, unity, and sacrifice—remain living principles applied to modern challenges, supporting Villanueva's (2020) claim of pre-colonial literature's relevance. By linking these archetypal values to poverty, inequality, and civic participation, they demonstrated wisdom that evolves yet endures. They also recognized continuity across eras, from pre-colonial resilience to present struggles, reflecting advanced historical consciousness. As one noted, "our struggles today are part of a long history of resilience," echoing Macalangay's (2022) idea of values as "living heritage" reinterpreted through each generation.

#### **Theme 4: Emotional and Experiential Learning as Cultural Pedagogy**

Students showed that cultural understanding grows

through emotional engagement and embodied participation, not just analysis. Their preference for role-playing, dramatization, storytelling, and visual expression reflects pre-colonial learning rooted in ritual and communal storytelling. As one noted, role-playing “gives life to the characters,” emphasizing experiential connection. This supports Jaro’s (2021) view that creative methods foster identity and Lauro’s (2023) claim that performances bridge affective and cognitive learning. Such pedagogy reflects *karunungan* (embodied wisdom), turning teaching into a cultural act that embodies *bayanihan* and restores oral, performative traditions as ways of knowing.

### **Theme 5: Cultural Literacy as Foundation for National Consciousness and Intergenerational Responsibility**

As students decoded symbols and archetypes, they developed what Macalangay (2022) terms “cultural literacy for citizenship,” fostering awareness of national identity and heritage. This process of symbolic interpretation, historical awareness, and value internalization heightened national consciousness, with students recognizing values like unity, love for the homeland, and perseverance as timeless guiding principles. Such recognition marked a shift from passive appreciation to active stewardship, as learners began to see themselves as custodians of cultural memory, responsible for preserving and evolving Filipino identity.

This intergenerational responsibility aligns with Soriano’s (2021) concept of “temporal citizenship,” where identity honors the past while shaping the future. Through poetry, students not only learned about the Filipino spirit but also embodied it, carrying its values forward through their actions, creativity, and consciousness.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **Conclusion**

The findings show that symbols such as moonlight, Symbols like Manila Bay and the collective “we” serve as mnemonic anchors, linking learners to ancestral experiences and values while applying traditional wisdom to modern contexts. Archetypes such as the

Communal Hero, Resilient Community, Nurturing Homeland, Voice for the Voiceless, and Revolutionary Transformer emphasize collective strength, reflecting Filipino orientations toward *pakikipagkapwa*, *bayanihan*, and *kapwa-tao*. Students favored unity, cooperation, and perseverance over individual triumph.

The study also showed that values in pre-colonial poetry—perseverance, hope, sacrifice, unity, faith, and courage—remain relevant, guiding students in academics, family responsibilities, disaster response, and civic engagement. Cultural understanding was enriched through experiential learning, with students preferring collaborative and performative methods like role-playing, storytelling, dramatization, and visual arts, echoing indigenous modes of knowledge transmission. Ultimately, integrating archetypal and symbolic analysis within the Matatag Curriculum fosters cultural awareness and “cultural selfhood,” encouraging students to see themselves as custodians of Filipino identity for future generations.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are offered to various stakeholders in Philippine education:

1. The Department of Education may continue including pre-colonial Philippine poetry in the curriculum, allotting one to two sessions per quarter with rubric-based assessments to evaluate cultural understanding and interpretive skills.
2. Schools may organize monthly or quarterly cultural activities such as poetry readings, dramatizations, or art exhibits. Teachers can design student-led projects like poster-making or performances, assessed through creativity, cultural accuracy, and reflection on Filipino identity.
3. Localized learning resources such as annotated collections, student anthologies, or digital aids are encouraged. These should be grade-level appropriate, with glossaries, worksheets, and comprehension questions to strengthen students’ grasp of archetypes and symbols.
4. Future researchers are encouraged to explore other genres of pre-colonial and indigenous literature—epics, folk tales, riddles, oral narratives—to determine whether identified archetypes and

symbols consistently appear across forms.

- Schools may collaborate with heritage centers, cultural organizations, or indigenous communities through immersion programs, guest lectures, or workshops. Student learning can be assessed through reflective journals or portfolios documenting experiences and insights.

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## Declaration of Generative AI use in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the author utilized Microsoft Copilot to assist with generating initial drafts, refining the structure of the manuscript, checking grammar, and enhancing clarity of expression. All content produced with the aid of the tool was carefully reviewed, edited, and validated by the author to ensure accuracy and appropriateness. The author accepts full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the final manuscript.

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