

## **Struggle For Equality As Seen In Carol Ann Duffy's Poem "Little Red Cap"**

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**Abstract** : The objective of this research is to elucidate the portrayal of the battle for equality in the poem "Little Red Cap." The present study employed a qualitative research design as it focused on collecting data in the form of fully descriptive words. The data utilised in this analysis draws upon feminist literary theory. The primary source for this analysis is the poem "Little Red Cap" by Carol Ann Duffy. Additionally, various secondary sources, including books, journals, and other references, have been consulted to provide further support for this research. The findings of the study revealed the manifestation of women's pursuit for equal rights, as shown in Carol Ann Duffy's poem "Little Red Cap." The protagonist, "Little Red Cap," demonstrates her ability to resist and challenge patriarchal norms, ultimately achieving a significant triumph in affirming women's capacity to transcend patriarchal constraints and assert their ambitions and autonomy.

**Keywords:** *struggle, equality, women, patriarchy.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

As individuals engaged in the study of language and literature, we frequently come across various forms of literary works, including poetry, prose, and theatre. Furthermore, we have engaged in the examination of several literary works since our enrollment as students of language and literature. Upon conducting a more comprehensive analysis of literary works, one will discover that these works are crafted with the intention of portraying moral ideals inherent in the human experience. Regardless of whether the subject pertains to society, economy, religion, or culture, it holds no significance. In juxtaposition to the broader corpus of literary

works, Carol Ann Duffy's publication named "The World's Wife" made its initial debut in the year 1999. The literary work titled "Little Red Cap" explores narratives, mythologies, folklores, and personages prevalent in Western society, albeit from a female perspective. According to Laurence Perrine (1959: 3), literature can be categorised into two primary classes, which are determined by the writer's intended aim. According to the individual's perspective, literature can be categorised into two distinct classifications: literature that serves as a means of escapism and literature that facilitates the process of interpretation. Literature categorised as escape literature is primarily designed to entertain readers, offering a means of temporary respite from concerns and psychological disorders. Conversely, interpretive literature has the capacity to impart a deeper understanding of the complexities of existence, enabling individuals to grasp the underlying dynamics that shape the intricacies of human existence. Interpretive literature, specifically, is crafted with the intention of enhancing and broadening our understanding of life, while also providing a concentrated perspective. The process of imagination facilitates a transition from abstract concepts to concrete realities, hence enhancing our comprehension of many challenges. The comprehension of life's actuality can be facilitated by this phenomenon. Throughout the course of history and continuing into the present age, a significant portion of literary works have exhibited a patriarchal inclination, thereby offering a portrayal of the world predominantly through the lens of the masculine gender. The poem titled "Little Red Cap" is authored by Carol Ann Duffy, with the intention of addressing the historical marginalization and silencing of women. This is the primary motivation behind the writer's interest in conducting an analysis of the notion presented in the research paper titled "Struggle for Equality as Depicted in Carol Ann Duffy's Poem Little Red Cap". The primary concern addressed in this study pertains to the theme of striving for equality, as exemplified in the poem "Little Red Cap" by Carol Ann Duffy. All individuals possess fundamentally equal rights. There is a lack of distinction between males and females. Carol Ann Duffy's poem portrays the

protagonist, "Little Red Cap," as someone who possesses the ability to confront and resist the patriarchal influences ingrained in her upbringing. This is seen in her journey and subsequent encounter with the wolf. Based on the Statement of the Problem, the research question : How is Struggle for equality revealed carol ann duffy's poem "little red cap". Feminist critics argue that Western civilization is inherently patriarchal, resulting in a power imbalance that marginalizes women and their contributions. Parallel problems encompass the concept of heterosexual privilege and the consequent marginalization experienced by individuals identifying as homosexual, as well as the marginalization of their contributions within society. Their efforts are directed towards revealing and ultimately transforming such thinking, with the ultimate goal of enabling the complete recognition and valuation of every individual. According to Dobie (2002). The concept of the struggle for equality encompasses the continuous endeavor to attain equitable rights, opportunities, and treatment for everyone, irrespective of their color, gender, religion, sexuality, or other distinctive personal attributes. The aforementioned battle has served as a crucial concern within numerous social and political movements across historical contexts, encompassing the civil rights movement, feminist movement, and disability rights movement.

According to MacQueen (2015), the pursuit of gender equality encompasses more than just addressing the social status of women; it also involves acknowledging their efforts to create an environment that fosters their well-being. It might be asserted that confronting this struggle poses a formidable challenge. Furthermore, the pursuit of direct acknowledgment has significant complexity within societal contexts, particularly with regard to women. The constraints and uncertain consequences of this fight account for its influence. MacQueen (year) says that the examination of gender struggle constitutes a significant aspect within the realm of feminist writing. The primary objective of the examination of gender dynamics in literature is to identify instances where women exert influence on social relationships, particularly in connection to other genders, notably men. Hence, the acknowledgment

of the endeavors made by each woman can be observed within the framework that pertains to acknowledging others, thereby establishing a distinct manifestation of recognition.

These instances serve to underscore the persistent challenge for achieving equality and underscore the imperative for sustained endeavors to rectify gaps and foster equitable treatment and opportunity for every individual. The writer identified several elements present in the poem "Little Red Cap" by Carol Ann Duffy, which can be interpreted as a representation of the Struggle for Equality. In the given context, the poetry "Little Red Cap" portrays the protagonist's endeavor, aspiration, self-assurance, and bravery in advocating for parity in the context of wolves. The wolf character in the poem symbolically represents individuals who remain entrenched in patriarchal ideologies. The author advocates for the promotion of female autonomy, courage, and opposition to any factors that undermine one's self-worth. The gender gap refers to the disparity observed between women and men in several domains, including but not limited to social, political, intellectual, cultural, and economic achievements or perspectives. There exists a disparity between women and men in various domains, including their degrees of engagement, opportunities, entitlements, compensation, and advantages.

According to Schwab (2017), the Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, during the unveiling of the Global Gender Gap Report 2017. Despite the gradual and consistent advancements made towards achieving gender equality in the preceding decade, the year 2017 did not yield satisfactory results. Indeed, the disparity between males and females in various domains such as health, education, politics, and economics has experienced a notable increase, marking the first instance of such divergence since the commencement of record-keeping in 2006. According to Professor Schwab, it is crucial from both an economic and moral standpoint to address and overcome the biases, whether they are visible or not, that hinder the progress towards achieving gender equality.

The economic divide pertains to the disparities observed between genders in terms of remuneration, leadership positions, and workforce engagement. The concept of education comprises the provision of both fundamental and advanced levels of instruction, whereas health pertains to the analysis of life expectancy, and politics involves the examination of gender representation within decision-making institutions.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative research methodology. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research serves as a method for investigating and comprehending the significance that individuals or groups attribute to a social human situation. The study's research design can be characterized as a setup of conditions for the purpose of collecting and analyzing data derived from the poetry "Little Red Cap." The author conducted an analysis on the pursuit of equality. The primary data in this study consist of sentences, namely stanzas of the poem and the descriptions provided by the poet. The data utilized in this study were extracted from the poem titled "Little Red Cap" authored by Carol Ann Duffy. Secondary sources include various materials such as internet resources, books, and scholarly journals that extensively examine the topic of equality and its associated struggles. There exist various methodological approaches that might be employed in the analysis of a poem. This study employs a feminist literary theory framework to examine the aforementioned poetry. The feminist literary approach examines the portrayal of women's positions within a certain societal context as depicted in literary texts. The feminist literary method employs feminist theory as a framework for comprehending the societal position and portrayal of women (Meyer, 1997). In this instance, the author employs feminist liberal theory, which posits the pursuit of gender equality within a given society. According to Bonvillain (2007), the concept of gender equality pertains to the equitable treatment of men and women within their respective societies, ensuring

that they possess identical rights. Moreover, according to Bryson's (1992) feminist liberal perspective, the rejection of gender discrimination is emphasized, advocating for the unrestricted freedom and autonomy of women to engage in all spheres of societal existence. According to Valerie Bryson's book "Feminist Political Theory," feminist politics were not merely a reflection of applying liberal principles to women. Instead, they not only prompted numerous women to engage in political endeavors, but also offered a rationale for feminist demands rooted in the concept of sex difference, which deviates from traditional liberal ideals. The assertion made here posits that a crucial aspect of this distinction lies in the moral superiority of women, and that the unique qualities specific to women should be permitted to shape the realm of public affairs. Consequently, it becomes apparent that ostensibly liberal calls for equality in legal or political spheres frequently rely on theoretical assumptions that are not entirely aligned with liberal principles. The author use this theory because it examines the topic of women, adopts a women's perspective, and explores the challenges faced by women in their pursuit of equality. The poem "Little Red Cap" also demonstrates the protagonist's bravery and drive to establish a position of equality with the wolf. Despite the inherent challenges in subduing the wolf, the protagonist's courage enables her to assert control over her relationship with the wolf. Additionally, the poem is presented from the perspective of a female protagonist who unequivocally opposes the norms and values of a patriarchal society.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

"Little Red Cap," authored by Carol Ann Duffy, can be interpreted as a feminist literary work that explores the theme of men driven by want who exploit the vulnerable state of a young girl in order to fulfill their carnal appetites. The term "wolf" serves as a metaphorical representation for individuals of this nature. Furthermore, the attributes attributed to these creatures serve as a prime example that the poet's focus is not directed towards the entirety of the male population. She holds a

particular opposition to individuals who surreptitiously infiltrate a young woman's life, forcibly depriving her of her innocence and virginity. Furthermore, the literary persona's speech not only conveys her anguish but also exhibits unwavering bravery. The actions of the wolf have indeed contributed to her development of strength. The contemplation of the creature elicits profound frustration within her. In addition to this, the poem's choice of language and use of versification techniques deviates from the traditional phallogentric vocabulary. It serves as a prime illustration of "gyno-text," which effectively captures the experiences and perspectives of women. voice. Source [www.http://poemanalysis.com/carol-ann-duffy/little-red-cap/](http://poemanalysis.com/carol-ann-duffy/little-red-cap/).

### ***Struggle For Equality Through Education***

Education is commonly regarded as a significant factor in promoting equality, as it equips individuals with the requisite skills and information to thrive in various aspects of life. Nevertheless, in the context of the Struggle For Equality, it is important to acknowledge that education can inadvertently contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality, so hindering its intended goal of rectifying social injustices. Despite notable advancements in recent times, the persistent issue of gender inequality in education, commonly referred to as the Struggle For Equality, continues to prevail on a global scale. The field of education is confronted with notable obstacles, ranging from discrepancies in access and enrollment to prejudices present in the curriculum, such as the use of male-centric terminology in textbooks.

The challenges faced by "Little Red Cap" are readily apparent from the initial stanza. The poem commences with the phrase "At childhood's end," symbolically depicting childhood as a tangible location that the speaker willingly departs from prior to arriving at "the edge of the woods," a symbolic space that signifies the transitional phase between childhood and maturity. The speaker first observes the wolf at this location. Following the depiction of the speaker's fascination with the wolf, the poem accentuates the inquisitiveness and autonomy of the female protagonist in her youthful state.

The individual positioned himself within an open space, audibly reciting his poetic composition. The second stanza portrays the individual as possessing intellectual prowess and education, evident through the depiction of the individual's distinct vocal tone reminiscent of a wolf, as well as the presence of a paperback held within their hairy hand, symbolizing their status as a published author. This portrayal stands in stark contrast to the original characterization of the individual. The term "verse" typically refers to a written form of expression, as indicated by the mention of a "paperback." This observation implies that the individual employs a premeditated and rehearsed approach to engage in flirtatious interactions, with the intention of captivating numerous ladies.

The wolf is observed in an upright position, engaging in an activity that is not often associated with its species—engaging in the act of reading poetry. The individual is reciting their own poetic composition with an audible delivery, characterized by a very wolf-like tone. The item is enclosed within a paperback publication. The term "hairy paw" connotes a conspicuous manifestation of masculinity. Women occasionally use the term "pawed" to describe instances of unwelcome sexual approaches and physical contact. The paperback exhibits irony. Despite possessing an inclination for literature and having received formal education, he is also characterized by engaging in predatory sexual behavior.

In this particular scenario, it signifies that women possess the potential to achieve parity with men, contingent upon their attainment of equivalent levels of education. As an illustration, The phrase 'one chop' in stanza five exhibits a parallelism with the expression 'one bite'. This statement pertains to the demonstration of assertiveness in women and the articulation of a man's behavior. When presented in a live performance, this particular statement consistently elicits laughter from the audience. The tone evokes Duffy's poetry "Circe," which may be found in the same collection. In this poem, women who have experienced the exploitation of their hospitality and have been deceived and abandoned by men, express their disdain by symbolically dismembering and preparing a pig for consumption.



In the present context, however, Red Cap's motivation might be understood as stemming from curiosity and a refusal to accept masculine domination. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the incident that occurred in the United States in 1993 with Lorena Bobbitt, who resorted to severing her husband's penis as an act of retaliation after enduring prolonged episodes of domestic abuse. The source provided is an article from ABC News titled "25 Years After Cutting Off Her Husband."

In a reimagining of the traditional fairy tale, Duffy employs the symbolism of her grandmother's bones as a metaphorical representation of preceding generations of marginalized women, who have been figuratively devoured by the avarice inherent in a male-dominated societal structure. It is important to acknowledge that the relationship between virginity and the girl's grandma is fundamentally implausible. Consequently, via the act of eliminating the oppressive male figure, the female victims are able to restore their sense of honor. The utilization of the phrase 'glistening, virgin white' serves to underscore the inherent qualities of virtue and innocence associated with the protagonist's grandmother, while concurrently acknowledging her lack of virginity.

This narrative exemplifies the archetypal fairy tale structure, incorporating intertextual allusions, whereupon the demise of the wolf occurs. The woodsman is responsible for the wolf's demise and afterwards fills its stomach with stones. However, in this context, Duffy is expressing her feminist perspective by challenging traditional gender norms and empowering Red Cap to assert agency over her own destiny. Moreover, the protagonist is presently characterized as possessing a "old belly," which stands in stark contrast to the sexually alluring youthful wolf shown at the onset of the poem. The stones could serve as a comical allusion to the wolf's reproductive organs.

Furthermore, the seventh verse concludes with the phrase "I stitched him up." Emerging from the woodland, I arrive bearing a bouquet of blossoms, engaging in melodic expression, devoid of companionship.

The individual in question exhibits a semblance of naivety. The flowers symbolize aesthetic appeal, vitality, and development, embodying the untarnished optimism of youthful females. Additionally, she experiences a sense of accomplishment as she has successfully sought retribution for the woman who had fallen victim to the wolf prior to her. Furthermore, she has discovered her vocal prowess, resulting in a jubilant quality to her singing. Ultimately, she finds herself in a state of solitude, as she has reached a point when she no longer relies on a male counterpart and can embrace her autonomy.

initial image of Red Cap's triumph in the opening poetry of "The World's Wife" anthology is mirrored in the last poem, "Demeter," wherein Persephone emerges from the realm of the Underworld, adorned with flowers, as a symbol of her victory over Hades, a dominant male figure. The deliberate inclusion of circularity in this collection is not coincidental; it serves as a commemoration of women's emancipation from a patriarchal societal structure. According to Duffy (1999).

### ***Struggle Equality For Going "Self-worth"***

Maintaining a certain amount of self-worth is advantageous. The possession of self-worth is an essential and foundational element for the achievement of a positive and prosperous human existence. Conversely, the advancement of a favorable human existence, regardless of its conceptualization, is widely seen as a fundamental component of equality. This necessitates an investigation into the correlation between self-esteem and egalitarianism. Therefore, the examination of self-worth serves as a critical analysis of the pursuit of equality. However, the examination of self-worth and its connection to the pursuit of equality is primarily intriguing in its own right. The provided source is a scholarly publication available on the OpenEdition Books platform.

In the seventh stanza of Carol Ann Duffy's poem "Little Red Cap," a parallel might be drawn to the act of observing a willow tree and witnessing its expression of sorrow. I engaged in the act of severing a salmon with an axe. Subsequently, I emerged from

the woodland, carrying a bouquet of flowers, while engaging in a solitary vocal performance.

The reason behind her action of "taking an axe to a willow to see how it wept" can be attributed to the banality of their shared existence. This exemplifies her newfound ability to exert influence over the written language and the surrounding environment. She performed a similar action "on a salmon / to observe its jumping behavior".

The poem culminates in a poignant manner as the lady, now in her twenty-sixth year, decisively wields an axe to sever the wolf's body, from its testicles to its throat. This act symbolizes her emancipation from the wolf's influence and asserts her power within the relationship. The bones of her grandmother are contained within the stomach of the wolf, described as being of a "virgin white" color. Ultimately, she emulates the actions of the archetypal Little Red Riding Hood by proceeding to load the wolf's digestive tract with stones. The individual departs the setting in a tranquil and unrestrained manner, exhibiting complete autonomy over her own existence.

Duffy used the literary technique of enjambment to effectively guide the reader's transition from one stanza to the subsequent, so accentuating the significance of the axe as a symbol of Red Cap's aggressive nature and insatiable need for knowledge. Furthermore, she elucidates another prevailing stereotype, namely the notion of male dominance over females.

There exists a perception among certain individuals that women may lack the requisite level of assertiveness and resilience necessary to effectively navigate high-pressure roles. There exists an alternative perspective positing that women may derive greater benefit by adhering to the conventional gender role, which entails assuming responsibility for familial duties and domestic tasks. The current societal assumption is that men often contribute only twenty to thirty percent of the household chores. My perspective on the issue of women's mobility in society is particularly robust, as it is informed by my personal identity as a woman. I contend that women should be afforded equal possibilities as males, irrespective of societal expectations

dictating their behavior. Gender roles dictate that individuals are expected to exhibit qualities such as submissiveness, reticence, and compassion. Consequently, our capacity to assume a position of influence within society would be limited.

I have extensively reviewed numerous scholarly publications and written works pertaining to the subject matter of gender inequality and social mobility. Throughout my analysis, I have encountered a diverse array of anticipated and unanticipated findings. Previously, it was my belief that women were progressively challenging conventional gender roles and making advancements in social status. While this phenomenon is indeed occurring, the rate of progress remains relatively sluggish. The prevailing presence of men in positions of authority persists, albeit with some instances of women assuming these roles. Despite the increasing momentum of our pursuit for equality, its rate of progress has not met my initial expectations and aspirations.

The ongoing relevance of women's battle for equality as a global issue can be attributed to the persistent challenges faced by countries worldwide in achieving comprehensive gender equality. Contemporary women are resolute in their pursuit of advocating for their rights, which are perceived as important for the advancement of society. The pursuit of gender equality has been a persistent challenge faced by women throughout history. Throughout the annals of history, various societies have been subject to the authoritative dominance of male individuals, encompassing realms such as royal lineages, the laboring populace, and even domestic spheres. Gender inequality is prevalent in contemporary undeveloped nations, where women are often subjected to discriminatory treatment, resulting in their exclusion from enjoying equal rights as males. However, women have acknowledged this issue and are resolute in their endeavor to achieve equitable rights, regardless of whether it is in the United States or Africa. The demand for equality remains consistent across these regions.

The poem "Little Red Cap" depicts the protagonist's endeavor to establish a sense of equality within her relationship with the wolf, as she relinquishes her youth and

embarks on a transformative journey into the forest beside a wolf who possesses an affinity for poetry. She engaged in intimate relations with him, collaborated academically with him, and ultimately achieved a level of parity with him. The protagonist acquires knowledge pertaining to the natural world and the craft of writing through her interactions with the wolf. Ultimately, she becomes disinterested in the wolf's routine activities. Due to her perception that the wolf governs her existence, she experiences this sentiment. Ultimately, she arrived wielding an axe to confront the wolf and successfully terminated its existence.

Over the course of numerous decades, women have encountered persistent challenges in their pursuit of equality, encompassing both domestic and professional spheres. Women have made significant progress and are actively striving for gender equality; nonetheless, gender roles continue to hold considerable significance within our societal framework. Gender roles have acquired significance since birth, and societal forces persistently reinforce their prominence. The differential treatment of males and females has emerged as a significant concern, particularly from the perspective of gender analysis. This matter has garnered personal significance to me, given my identity as a woman. During childhood, individuals acquire and adjust to distinct gender roles, which subsequently become increasingly apparent and significant in shaping their societal roles as they mature. The female gender experiences significant levels of discrimination.

The poem proceeds to depict their initial sexual encounter as "lesson one ... the love poem," wherein the speaker actively engages and derives pleasure from the experience by "clinging till dawn to the wolf's thrashing fur." This further underscores the speaker's active involvement and enjoyment of the encounter. The involvement of the speaker in her affair with the wolf introduces complexity to the prevailing stereotype of a naive young girl being exploited by a seasoned older man. The protagonist actively pursues a sexual relationship with the wolf, cognizant of the fact that it will serve as a catalyst for her transition into a daunting yet exhilarating phase of existence, commonly referred to as adulthood. The decision made by the individual

in question was one that was based on a well-informed perspective. She expressed her understanding that the wolf would guide her into the depths of the forest, taking her away from her familiar surroundings and leading her to a dense and intricate area filled with darkness and thorns. The individual possesses an understanding of the potential risks associated with adult sexuality, yet remains enthusiastic about engaging in such exploration. In pursuit of this objective, the poem delineates the protagonist's initial experience of sexual intimacy as a challenging expedition: the protagonist is compelled to follow the wolf's path, enduring the tearing and relinquishing of her garments as she undergoes the loss of her naivety. The speaker, despite acknowledging the lack of gentleness in her experience, confidently asserts her achievement of reaching sexual maturity, displaying a strong desire to progress despite the presence of violence in her journey.

After achieving her desired outcome from the wolf, the speaker's interest in their relationship diminishes. Given that the speaker has also reached sexual maturity, it can be inferred that there is no further knowledge or wisdom to be gained from the wolf. After a decade of being in a relationship, she has developed a sense of disillusionment. The speaker wields an axe in the woods, symbolizing her adolescence, in order to observe the ensuing reactions. This implies that the speaker possesses a curiosity to explore the experience of exerting power firsthand. The source for analysis of the poem "Little Red Cap" by Carol Ann Duffy can be found at <https://poemanalysis.com>

Finally, the speaker murders the wolf with an axe, "one chop, scrotum to throat," ending his power over her. By taking control over their relationship, and brutally insisting on its conclusion, the speaker asserts her agency as a sexual being. The poem concludes with the speaker having completed her transition to adulthood on her own terms. No longer the child she was before entering the woods, she emerges from the forest independent and empowered.

Based on the empirical evidence, it can be inferred that the pursuit of gender equality by women holds significant significance. The prevalence of patriarchal themes in

literature across several historical periods, including the contemporary age, has resulted in a predominantly male-centric portrayal of the world. A small red cap poem designed by Carol Ann Duffy to set that right, to underline the fact that women have long been neglected or silenced. In the poem "Little Red Cap" by Carol Ann Duffy, the patriarchal society often perceives women as weak and imposes limitations on them, suggesting that they are incapable of achieving significant accomplishments. Paradoxically, these societal expectations serve to fuel Little Red Cap's determination to strive for equality within her relationship with the wolf, as well as to assert control in her interpersonal connections. Ultimately, Little Red Cap's act of killing the wolf symbolizes her resolute resistance against patriarchal norms, signifying her struggle and rejection of the prevailing power dynamics.

Ultimately, the pursuit of gender equality serves to cultivate women's consciousness regarding the profound significance of actively advocating for equal rights. Individuals possess the capacity to exercise unrestricted agency, devoid of external societal constraints.

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