

The illustration features a stack of three books on the left. The top book is grey with a white bookmark, the middle is brown with a light yellow bookmark, and the bottom is grey with a white bookmark. A pair of round, yellow-tinted glasses with black frames sits on the bottom book. Three white plus signs are placed around the books: one to the left of the top book, one above it, and one to the right of the bottom book. The background is a light beige color with three large, irregular watercolor splashes in shades of brown and tan. The entire scene is framed by a thin, light brown border with rounded corners.

An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum

About the poet

About the poet

Stephen Spender (1909-1995) was an English poet and an essayist. He left University College, Oxford without taking a degree and went to Berlin in 1930. Spender took a keen interest in politics and declared himself to be a socialist and pacifist.



About the poet

Books by Spender include Poems of Dedication, The Edge of Being, The Creative Element, The Struggle of the Modern and an autobiography, World Within World. In, An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum, he has concentrated on themes of social injustice and class inequalities.



Sudden brief
rush of wind

A weak dull face

Hinderance of
growth due to
Malnourishment

A person who legally
receives the ancestral
property

full of knots and
twists.

Far far from **gusty waves**
these children's faces.
Like rootless weeds, the hair
torn round their **pallor**:
The tall girl with her
weighed-down head.
The paper- seeming boy, with
rat's eyes.
The **stunted**, unlucky **heir** Of
twisted bones, reciting a
father's **gnarled** disease,
His lesson, from his desk. At
back of the dim class

**At back of the dim class
One unnoted, sweet and
Young, One unnoted, sweet and
young. His eyes live in a dream,
Of squirrel's game, in tree room,
Other than this.**





**The first ray of light
before morning**

**hemispherical roof
or ceiling.**

**On sour cream walls,
donations.**

**Shakespeare's head,
Cloudless at **dawn**, civilized
dome riding all cities.**

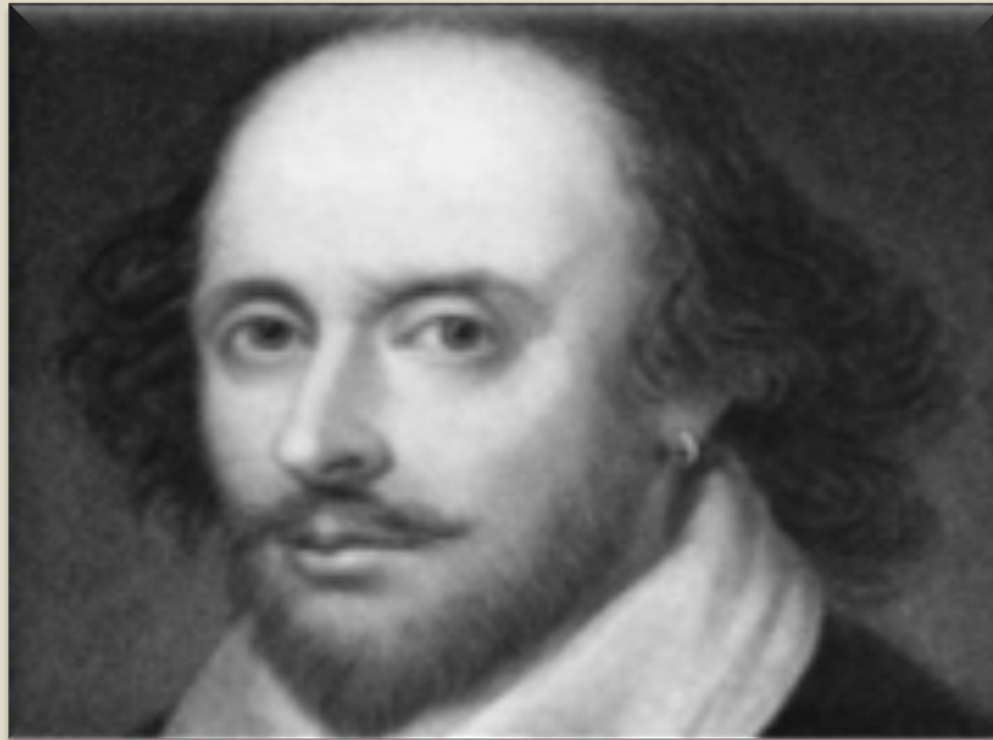
**Belled, flowery, Tyrolese
valley.**

**Open-handed map Awarding
the world its world.**

**And yet, for these Children,
these windows, not this
map, their world,**

**Where all their future's painted
with a fog,**







**Pieces of land
Coming out of sea**

- ❖ **A narrow street sealed in with
a lead sky Far far from rivers,
capes, and stars of words.**






Morally bad

**Cleverly
Hideously**

❖ Surely, Shakespeare is **wicked**, the map a bad example, With ships and sun and love tempting them to steal— For lives that **slyly** turn in their cramped holes From fog to endless night?





Repaired

- On their slag heap, these children Wear skins peeped through by bones and spectacles of steel With **mended** glass, like bottle bits on stones.
- All of their time and space are foggy slum.



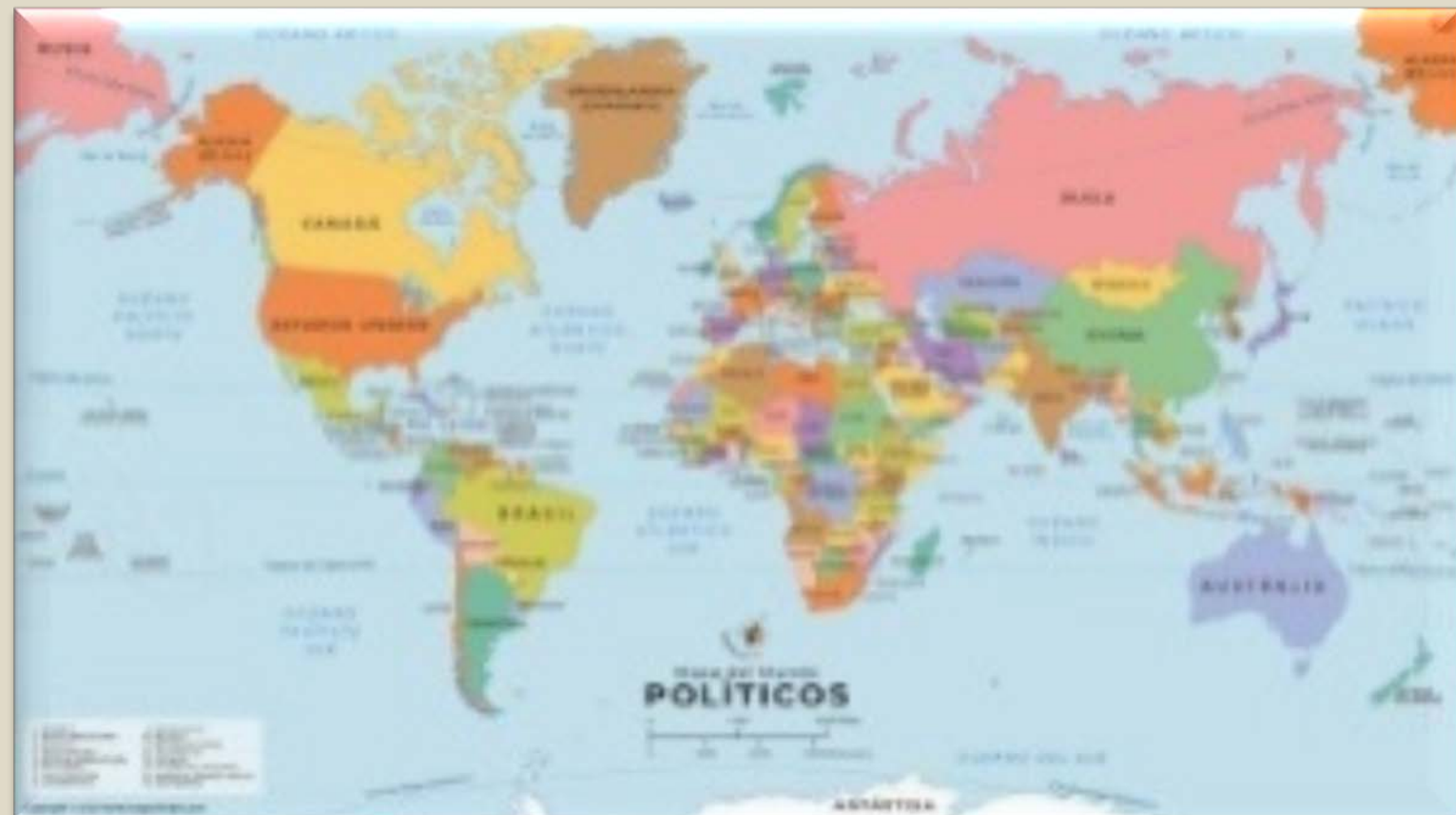
**A mark of
Reproach**

Death, ruin

**Under ground tunnel or
chamber for burial**

So **blot** their maps with slums
as big as **doom**.

Unless, governor, inspector,
visitor, This map becomes their
window and these windows
That shut upon their lives like
catacombs,



**Bright blue
cloudless sky**

**Energy, Height,
Success**

**Break O break open till they
break the town And show the
children to green fields, and
make their world Run **azure** on
gold sands, and let their
tongues Run naked into books
the white and green leaves open
History theirs whose language
is the **sun**.**

