

'Power and Conflict' Poetry Anthology Knowledge Organiser

'Ozymandias' by Percy Bysshe Shelley

Overview of the Poem and Context: Written in 1817 after Shelley saw Egyptian statues retrieved from the desert. Shelley was a Romantic poet, writing about the power of nature and the depth of human emotion. The narrator meets a traveller who tells him about a statue standing in the middle of the desert in Egypt. The statue is of a king and the inscription brags about how powerful he was when alive. The statue has now tumbled down and is half buried in the sand.

Key Language Features: The language is often powerful and angry, showing the aggression of the king/pharaoh: 'sneer of cold command'. Irony is used to show how the king's bold words mean nothing in the face of nature – the inscription is juxtaposed against the 'decay of the colossal wreck'.

Key Structural Features: The poem is a sonnet in structure. It has a turning point (volta) at line 9. The enormity of the desert rounds off the poem, showcasing the power of nature.

Key Quotations: 'a shatter'd visage', 'sneer of cold command', 'colossal wreck, boundless and bare'

Potential Links/Themes: Power of nature/humans, pride. The power of nature can also be found in 'The Prelude', 'Exposure' and 'Storm on the Island'. Pride is also expressed in Browning's 'My Last Duchess'.

'London' by William Blake

Overview of the Poem and Context: Published in 1794; Blake held radical social views for the time. He believed that all people should have equality. The narrator describes a walk he takes around London. Everywhere he goes he is met with despair. The people in power (the Church, the aristocracy, etc.) do nothing to help the people he sees.

Key Language Features: The poet's journey around the city is described using all the senses. There is a use of contrast between the youth he describes and the lack of innocence: 'youthful harlot's curse'. The descriptions are powerful and emotive. The range of people described and the repeated use of 'every' shows the sheer number of people affected. 'Mind-forged manacles' indicates that the people are (in part) trapped by their own attitudes.

Key Structural Features: Set up as a monologue, the first person perspective gives us a very personal view. The rhyme scheme (ABAB) continues throughout the poem and shows us the relentlessness of the misery and corruption of the city.

Key Quotations: 'each chartered street', 'marks of woe', 'mind-forged manacles', 'blights with plagues'

Potential Links/Themes: Human power of some over others, anger and individual experiences. Other experiences of places are found in 'The Emigrée' and 'The Prelude'.

'The Prelude: Stealing the Boat' by William Wordsworth

Overview of the Poem and Context: Published shortly before Wordsworth's death in 1850, 'The Prelude' is an autobiographical poem and explores key moments in the poet's life. In this extract, he finds a boat and rows it out onto a lake. He enjoys the scenery until a mountain appears on the horizon and the narrator finds its appearance terrifying. He hastily returns to the shore but his impressions of nature are changed for good.

Key Language Features: The story begins with a pastoral, almost fairy-like impression of the nature around him. This contrasts with the later, more dramatic language and personification as the poet finds the mountain threatening: the mountain 'Upreared its head' and seemed to 'strove after' him. The poet's initial confidence in nature is lost by the poem's end.

Key Structural Features: First person narrative, in line with an autobiography. The regular rhythm and use of blank verse make the poem sound like natural speech. The poem is organised into three sections: the fairy-tale like opening, the darker tone when the mountain appears and the final reflection on the effect of the experience.

Key Quotations: 'act of stealth/And troubled pleasure', 'an elfin pinnacle', 'a huge peak, black and huge', 'Upreared its head'

Potential Links/Themes: Power of nature and personal experience. These themes can be found in 'Exposure' and 'Storm on the Island'.

'My Last Duchess' by Robert Browning

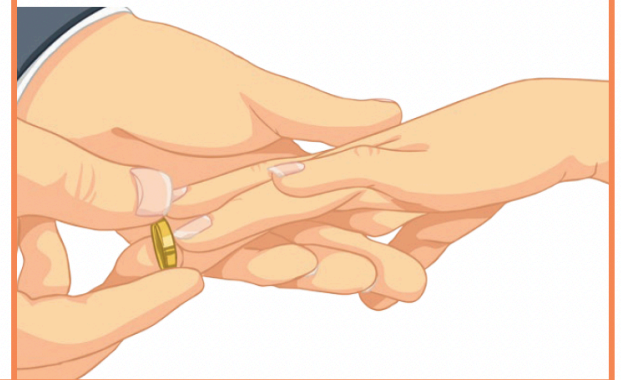
Overview of the Poem and Context: 'My Last Duchess' is one of Robert Browning's poems in dramatic monologue form. It was published in 1842 and is set during the 15th century in Italy. It relays the imagined conversation of the Duke of Ferrara with an envoy who has visited to arrange the Duke's next marriage. In the course of the discussions, the Duke shows the envoy a picture of his previous wife and indicates that he had her killed.

Key Language Features: The language conveys the power and control the duke used over his first wife. He saw her as one of his possessions - her picture's place in the gallery with the rest of his paintings is fitting. The way the duke speaks to the envoy appears innocent at first; the reader must read between the lines to understand what he means by 'I gave commands' etc.

Key Structural Features: A dramatic monologue – the speaker is the duke himself. The rhyming couplets and iambic pentameter show the Duke's control but the use of enjambment shows his loss of control when angered. The poem begins with the pair looking at the image of the Duchess and ends as they walk away and look at other art works.

Key Quotations: 'my last Duchess', 'none puts by the curtain', 'My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name', 'I choose / Never to stoop'

Potential Links/Themes: Power of humans, pride and control – craving for power and abuse of power is also shown in 'Ozymandias' and 'Checking Out Me History'



'The Charge of the Light Brigade' by Alfred Tennyson

Overview of the Poem and Context: Written in 1854 in response to newspaper reports about the war in the Crimea, the poem works as a tribute to the cavalry officers who died in a tragic charge against the Russian forces. The group (Light Brigade) had been ordered to advance into a valley even though it was surrounded by enemy soldiers.

Key Language Features: The poem uses heroic language such as 'Boldly', 'glory' and 'honour'. The words 'six hundred' appear at the end of each stanza, reminding us of the numbers involved in the charge. The 'valley of Death' references Psalm 23 of the Bible. The language becomes increasingly violent as the poem progresses: 'volley'd and thunder'd'. Death and Hell are personified with the mention of 'jaws' and 'mouth'.

Key Structural Features: The poem is a narration in third person; the narrator clearly values the contributions and bravery of the soldiers. The regular rhythm helps create the impression of charging cavalry men while some lines are rhyming couplets and triplets. These drive the poem forward while the overall lack of a rhyme scheme mimics the chaos of the battle.

Key Quotations: 'the six hundred', 'valley of Death', 'Theirs not to reason why', 'All the world wonder'd'

Potential Links/Themes: The realism of war is also focussed on in 'Exposure' and 'Bayonet Charge' and these compare well to Tennyson's glorification of the troops.

'Exposure' by Wilfred Owen

Overview of the Poem and Context: Wilfred Owen is known as one of the foremost 'War Poets' who wrote during the period of the First World War. Owen wrote this poem from the trenches in 1917-1918. He had quickly become disillusioned with the war and his anger at the huge loss of life is clear in his poems. Here, he concentrates on the horrific conditions in which the men lived for months on end.

Key Language Features: The language throughout is bleak as the weather and the pain the men are in is explored. Both snowflakes and the Dawn are personified, Dawn appearing as an army ready for attack. It highlights the sense that nature is also out to attack the men. Sibilance and assonance are used to show the whistling sound of bullets and the extended painful journey.

Key Structural Features: First person narrative in present tense, makes the action seem universal with words such as 'we' and 'our'. Each of the eight stanzas ends with a short half line, many of which are similar – the monotony of trench life is felt by the lack of action. Owen uses rhetorical questions to ponder the point of the war and the suffering of the men.

Key Quotations: 'east winds that knife us', 'But nothing happens', 'Dawn massing in the east', 'Sudden successive flights', 'All their eyes are ice'

Potential Links/Themes: Power of nature, personal experience and realities of war. Nature is discussed in 'Storm on the Island' while a loss of hope also occurs in 'London'.

'Storm on the Island' by Seamus Heaney

Overview of the Poem and Context: Heaney was a Northern Irish poet who died in 2013. He often wrote about childhood and nature. This poem refers to a storm on an island but might be seen also as a metaphor for the troubles in Northern Ireland at the time. The first eight letters of the title create the name 'Stormont' – the home of the Irish National Assembly.

Key Language Features: The poem concentrates on the fear and violence of the storm. Nature is personified as a 'tragic chorus' and a boxer. Metaphor and simile are also used to describe the storm as it attacks the island. Onomatopoeic words such as 'blast', 'exploding' and 'spit' are also used to reflect the noises of the sea and wind.

Key Structural Features: First person narrative in which the narrator speaks directly to the reader. The text is inclusive, as if 'we' are part of the action. While the opening of the poem shows absolute confidence in the villagers safety, the later part of the poem shows the fear caused by the 'huge nothing' of the storm. The blank verse gives the poem the feeling of a conversation.

Key Quotations: 'We are prepared', 'tragic chorus', 'spits like a tame cat/ Turned savage', 'Space is a salvo', 'It is a huge nothing that we fear'.

Potential Links/Themes: Power of nature and personal experience of a place. Compares well with 'London', 'The Emigrée' or 'Exposure' as well as 'The Prelude'.

'Bayonet Charge' by Ted Hughes

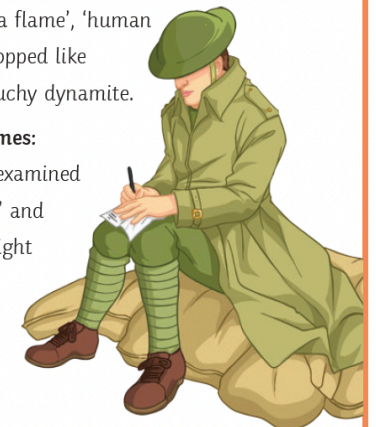
Overview of the Poem and Context: Although published in 1957, the poem concentrates on the battles of World War One. In the poem, Hughes centres on the feelings of one soldier as he goes 'over the top' to charge towards the enemy trenches. His initial feelings of patriotism are replaced as he charges with an overriding sense of fear.

Key Language Features: Hughes attempts to show the juxtaposition between the events and the surroundings as he mentions the pastoral 'green hedge' and the 'yellow hare'. The pain of the soldier and his youth and inexperience are indicated by words like 'raw' and 'bewilderment'. Similes are used to express the hare's flight and the irrationality of the soldier. 'Cold clockwork' indicates the soldier's lack of control and small place in the much bigger machinery of war.

Key Structural Features: The lines are uneven and there is much use of enjambment and caesura to create an irregular rhythm to reflect the soldier's panic. The soldier begins with feelings of pride and patriotism but these are quickly replaced with fear. Written in third person, the soldier is merely 'he; anyone on the battlefield.

Key Quotations: 'Bullets smacking the belly out of the air', 'patriotic tear', 'cold clockwork of the stars and the nations', 'rolled like a flame', 'human dignity, etcetera/ Dropped like luxuries', 'terror's touchy dynamite.'

Potential Links/Themes: Realities of war are examined here as in: 'Exposure' and 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'. Fear is also reflected upon.



'Remains' by Simon Armitage

Overview of the Poem and Context: This poem comes from Armitage's 2008 collection of poems about the effects of war on ex-soldiers. Here he reflects on the account of a British soldier who had served in Iraq. The story centres on the killing of a man who had looted a bank. The soldier isn't sure whether the looter had a weapon and was going to shoot him or not.

Key Language Features: The language is colloquial, as though written by the soldier himself. The death is described in stark detail as the bullet 'rips through his life'. There is a disturbing matter-of-factness to the way the friend 'tosses his guts back into his body'. The use of 'blood-shadow' foreshadows the death haunting the soldier. The references to 'bloody life' and 'bloody hand's may refer to Lady Macbeth's imagined bloody hands as she battles with guilt over the death of King Duncan.

Key Structural Features: There is no rhyme scheme or regular line length to the poem and it seems more like a story than poem. The tone quickly changes from one of soldierly anecdote to one of deeply concerning confession (almost like a therapy session overheard). This occurs at the phrase 'But I blink'.

Key Quotations: 'legs it up the road', 'Three of a kind all letting fly', 'sort of inside out', 'blood-shadow stays on the street', 'dug in behind enemy lines', 'near to the knuckle, here and now'

Potential Links/Themes: The poem explores the effects of conflict, as do 'Bayonet Charge' and 'War Photographer'.

'War Photographer' by Carol Ann Duffy

Overview of the Poem and Context: Carol Ann Duffy made history in 2009 when she became the first woman to hold the post of Poet Laureate. The poem discusses the effects of trauma on those photographers who take pictures of famine and war. It reflects the practice of preparing real film in a darkroom. The image at the end of stanza two may be a reference to an important photo from the Vietnam War.

Key Language Features: The poem is full of emotive language. The film is 'spools of suffering' and the photos are 'a hundred agonies'. The pictures contrast with the 'Rural England' he has returned to and there is a sense that the readers of the newspaper supplement where his pictures will appear are apathetic to the issues shown in the photos. Religious imagery makes us see the seriousness of the photographer's work.

Key Structural Features: The poem is set out in four stanzas, equal in length and follows a regular rhyme scheme. This reflects the 'ordered rows' of his photos in the dark room as he waits for his pictures to develop. At 'Something is happening' in stanza three, a clear volta occurs. The photos begin to develop and the focus shifts to individual images.

Key Quotations: 'spools of suffering', 'He has a job to do', 'between the bath and pre-lunch beers', 'they do not care'

Potential Links/Themes: Personal experience and the effects of war – also found in 'Remains' and 'Bayonet Charge'.

'Tissue' by Imtiaz Dharker

Overview of the Poem and Context: Imtiaz Dharker is a Pakistani-born Scottish poet. She wrote 'Tissue' as part of her collection about how well we know the people who live around us, published in 2006. The poem concentrates on the importance of paper which, although fragile, can still control human lives. 'Tissue' refers, not only to paper, but to human tissue.

Key Language Features: The poem opens with two sentences reminding us of the importance of paper. Light is mentioned throughout: 'sun shines through their borderlines' and pages of the Koran are 'turned transparent'. The simile at line 24 references how human life can be controlled by money and bills. When referring to an architect's work, the word 'over' is repeated to show the layering and building up of paper or buildings.

Key Structural Features: There is no rhyme scheme or regular line length, giving the poem a sense of freedom. The short stanzas seem to reflect the thin sheets of paper referenced in it. The poem moves through various ways in which paper influences our lives before moving on to talking about living tissue.

Key Quotations: 'this is what could alter things', 'pages smoothed and stroked and turned', 'sun shines through their borderlines', 'might fly our lives like paper kites', 'a grand design with living tissue'

Potential Links/Themes: Family identity is found in this poem, alongside 'Poppies'. The power of humans and nature can be seen in 'Ozymandias' and 'Storm on the Island'.

'Poppies' by Jane Weir

Overview of the Poem and Context: Jane Weir wrote 'Poppies' as part of a collection of modern war poems commissioned by the Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy in 2009. Weir took Susan Owen, the mother of Wilfred Owen, as her inspiration for the poem while imagining sending one of her own sons off to war. Weir is also a textile artist and the language of textiles is seen throughout the poem.

Key Language Features: The language juxtaposes the words of war: 'blockade', 'war graves', 'memorial' and 'reinforcements' with the words of textile production: 'yellow bias binding', 'tucks, darts, pleats' etc. This creates a comparison of the quite domestic environment of home with the cruel realities of death in war. Images of mothering ('smoothed down your shirt') show the mother's wish to return her son to early, protected childhood while the young man sees the world 'overflowing like a treasure chest'.

Key Structural Features: First-person narrative helps us to feel the mother's emotions. The lack of regular rhyme or rhythm emphasises the poem as memory or thoughts. Although the story follows the preparation and leaving of the son, we are unsure when the events took place and whether the son is still alive or has died in battle.

Key Quotations: 'spasms of paper red', 'I was brave', 'you were away, intoxicated', 'my stomach busy making tucks, darts, pleats', 'an ornamental stitch'.

Potential Links/Themes: Loss is felt in 'The Emigrée' and the effects of conflict are shown in 'War Photographer'.

'The Emigrée' by Carol Rumens

Overview of the Poem and Context: Carol Rumens is an English poet and translator. This poem was published in 1993 and discusses the feelings of someone who had to leave her own country as a child. Her home is under attack and she cannot return. She remembers the city with longing, even though an unknown entity ('they') threatens it.

Key Language Features: The poem begins like a fairy tale, reminding us that this is a set of memories. The language relates to sunlight and the glow of her city. References to the problems in her home city are made with 'sick with tyrants', 'banned by the state' and 'they mutter death'. The city is personified in her memories. It comes to her 'in its own white plane'.

Key Structural Features: There is no regular rhyme scheme or rhythm in the poem making it feel like the speaker's disjointed memories. The use of caesura and end stops in the final stanza may reflect the city walls or the closed nature of the borders of her home city. Each stanza ends with phrases about 'sunlight' reflecting her positive view of the city and her summertime memories of the place.

Key Quotations: 'There once was a country ...', 'sick with tyrants', 'time rolls its tanks', 'my city comes to me in its own white plane', 'They accuse me of absence'.

Potential Links/Themes: The poem explores the power of memory as in 'The Prelude', 'Poppies' or 'Remains'.

Key Vocabulary for Poetry Analysis

simile	repetition
metaphor	rhyme
personification	rhythm
alliteration	assonance
caesura	couplet
enjambment	free verse
iambic pentameter	half rhyme
dramatic monologue	narrative
sonnet	

'Kamikaze' by Beatrice Garland

Overview of the Poem and Context: Beatrice Garland is a British poet living in London who also works for the NHS as a researcher. This poem deals with the repercussions of a World War Two Kamikaze pilot from Japan changing his mind while on his suicide mission. The Kamikaze pilots were seen as honouring their families and Japan by sacrificing themselves in suicidal plummets into Allied war ships in the Pacific. In this poem, the pilot looks at the sea beneath him, remembers pleasant memories from his childhood and decides to return back to his base rather than die for his country.

Key Language Features: There are references to the samurai tradition: the pilot's 'sword' and 'shaven head' and the 'powerful incantations' make his actions seem spellbound. The majority of the poem deals with the view from the plane. Simile and metaphor are used to describe the fishing boats and fish he sees.

Key Structural Features: The first five stanzas are actually one sentence showing us the fluidness of memory and recounts. Most of the poem is seen from the perspective of the pilot's daughter. Her own voice becomes clear in the later part of the poem as it switches to first person. The pilot's voice is missing, showing how he has become isolate from society.

Key Quotations: 'full of powerful incantations', 'a one-way journey into history', 'strung out like bunting', the dark prince'.

Potential Links/Themes: The poem looks at nature. Memories are also explored in 'Poppies' and 'The Emigrée'.



'Checking Out Me History' by John Agard

Overview of the Poem and Context: John Agard is a Guyanese poet who moved to Britain in 1977. He often looks at black cultural history in his poetry. This poem deals with how the Guyanese education system taught him about British History but not about his own heritage. At the end of the poem, Agard determines to learn about his own heritage and create an individual identity.

Key Language Features: The poet uses the colloquial Caribbean accent throughout the poem. 'Dem' and 'me' shows the separateness of the poet and the British education he received. Language related to blindness or partial sight appears throughout the poem, reminding us of how his education hid the truth from Agard. Agard's references to black culture are contrasting in their references to light.

Key Structural Features: The poem focuses on the contrasts between European historical figures and Caribbean cultural icons. The Caribbean figures are dealt with in significantly more detail. The British stanzas sound childish and reference nursery rhyme figures alongside real historical individuals. Oral poetry and story-telling traditions are used throughout the poem (repetition, chanting, steady rhythm). These remind us of the oral traditions of the Caribbean.

Key Quotations: 'Dem tell me', 'Bandage up me eye', 'no dem never tell me bout dat', 'see-far woman', 'I checking out me own history / I carving out me identity'.

Potential Links/Themes: National identity can also be found in 'Kamikaze' and the anger of the narrator can also be seen in 'London'.