



# POETRY

Mr S Cox

## POWER AND CONFLICT

# POEM: OZYMANDIAS

## Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

Percy Bysshe Shelly

Antique suggests the place is old and steeped in history, but also it may be out of date and old fashioned.

The statue is barely standing, the rest is ruined and missing. Suggesting that it is being eaten away by time and the desert, a **futile** struggle to survive where nobody is around to care.

Shattered visage:- Broken face, it is **unrecognisable**, a statue to someone and we can no longer tell who, has no purpose anymore.

Cold command, sneer: suggests Ozymandias' character as powerful and arrogant ironic now there is nothing left. **Synaesthesia**.

'Mock' as in to make a model of, but also to make fun of, this is a **Pun** because of the double meaning.

The **tone**, indicated by the **exclamation** is strong and authoritative, irony is that nobody is listening.

Colossal, meaning vast or huge, is a **metaphor** for his ego rather than the statue.

The lone and level sands outlast the statue, **juxtaposed** to the power and ego of the statue.

Sands are also **iconic** of time.

### If you want to help your understanding you could:

- Look up more information about Ozymandias and the statue of Ramesses II.
- Read the poem aloud and consider the different tones in the poem.



## Context:

Written by Shelly in a collection in 1819, it was inspired by the recent unearthing of part of a large statue of the Egyptian Pharaoh, Ramesses II. The Egyptian Pharaohs like Ramesses believed themselves to be gods in mortal form and that their legacy would last forever. The reference to the stone statue is likely a direct reference to the statues and sculptures like the one which was unearthed, which the ancient Egyptians made.

On the base of the statue is written (translated) "*King of Kings am I, Ozymandias. If anyone would know how great I am and where I lie, let him surpass one of my works.*"

The Statue of Ramesses which now sits in the London Museum



## Themes:

Looking at power and conflict we can imagine Ozymandias as a powerful ruler who sees himself as a 'king of kings', perhaps a great warrior and one of the most powerful men in the world.

The poem is almost being ironic, pointing out that now all that remains is an arrogant boast on a ruined statue. Perhaps the poet feels sorry for him or is laughing at his expense. Either way it looks about the inevitable downfall of all rulers and tyrants, and how nothing, not even power, lasts forever.

## Allegory:

The statue in the poem, broken and falling apart in the desert with nobody to care is an allegory of Ozymandias and of every powerful man or woman, the idea that they will also drift away until they are just another grain of sand.

**Structure:** Written in a **sonnet** with loose iambic pentameter. **Iambic pentameter** is pairs (iamb, of sounds *da-dum*) with 5 (pentameter, think of pent like in pentagon) in a line making 10 syllables overall.

**Sonnets** were generally popular romantic or love poems, perhaps this being a love poem about Ozymandias, a joke about the ruler's ego. Or simply to capture the romantic and exotic tone of a lost legend.

The Rhyme scheme is irregular, perhaps symbolic of the broken statue itself, no longer perfect.

## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

- The poem is a ironic memorial to the ego of a ancient Pharaoh
- The statue is an allegory for the eventual end of power that everyone must suffer, especially the proud
- Power, like the statue is lost to the sands which in turn represent time

### LOWER MARKS

- The poem is about the statue of a long dead king
- The statue is breaking down, this shows how people are forgetting the dead king
- Power does not last forever

## Space for your notes:



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# POEM: LONDON



## London

I wander through each chartered street  
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

Chartered is something which is listed and regulated, the streets are clearly controlled but it suggests the Thames, the river likewise is controlled, nature controlled by man.

Blake is suggesting that everyone is without power and in misery, a powerful statement indeed. The term mark can be a **metaphor** for a brand, as if these people don't like look tired, but are branded with this look to show their place in society.

In every cry of every Man,  
In every Infants cry of fear,  
In every voice: in every ban,  
The mind-forged manacles I hear:

**Repetition** of 'in every' used to show scale of suffering.

**Alliteration** of mind/manacles helps draw our attention to the **metaphor**, Blake is showing that these people are not physically held back, but their belief in their own weakness holds them back.

How the Chimney-sweepers cry  
Every black'ning Church appalls,  
And the hapless Soldiers sigh  
Runs in blood down Palace walls .

The **juxtaposition** but also connection between the cries of children made to sweep chimneys and therefore from the rooftops, and church bells which ring out is striking. Blake saw religion as a tool to keep the people down and therefore was wrong '**blackening**'.

This contrasts the cries of the innocent dirty children with the supposedly clean but corrupt church.

This draws on the link to war at this time. The blood running down palace walls signifies their sacrifice to protect the power of those who live in the palaces. It is a **symbolic metaphor**.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful Harlots curse  
Blasts the new-born Infants tear,  
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

Harlots is **slang** for prostitutes or low class women. Blake is corrupting the idea of childbirth with sexual exploitation and hate 'curse'. The new born infant is born into a broken world.

**Oxymoron** which **juxtaposes** the joy of marriage with the misery of death. Blake is suggesting that society has destroyed all the good things in life.

William Blake

Note how the poem uses **Quatrains** with **alternate rhyme** *abab* to create the **rhythm** of the narrator walking.

### If you want to help your understanding you could:

- Look up more information about the conditions of life in Georgian/Victorian England.
- Read the poem aloud and consider the different tones in the poem.



## Context:

William Blake was a poet in Victorian/Georgian England, he wrote a selection of poems in his anthologies songs of innocence and experience, most of those poems had a counterpart. The Experience poems were often more bitter or cynical whereas the innocence poems were often naïve and simple. London is one of the few without a counterpart.

The poem is set during a time in England where there was poverty, child labour and a horrific war with France. Women had no rights, death rates from disease and malnutrition were high and the industrial revolution has resulted in many large oppressive factories. Blake's poems often railed against these and how London, arguably the greatest city in the world at that time, was so dirty and corrupt.

Blake's anthology containing both sets of



## Themes:

Looking at power and conflict this is a poem which is more about the lack of power and abuse of power. The poem is set in the capital of the most powerful country in the world and yet words like 'manacles' suggest slavery while the soldiers sigh 'runs in blood down palace walls' a clear contrast between those with power and those without.



## Revolution and People Power:

During this time France had thrown off and executed their king. The People's revolution was meant to show that all men are equal and have power. In Britain, a country with an old monarchy and aristocracy, this was scary. Blake is perhaps supporting revolution, asking people to throw off the 'manacles' of their belief that they should be told what to do.

**Structure:** Written in four stanzas with an regular alternate scheme. This may reflect the regular walking pace of the narrator as he walks around London. The last line in each stanza tends to deliver a powerful statement which sums up the rest of the stanza. Stanza 1 focusses on misery, Stanza 2 on peoples refusal to stand tall, Stanza 3 about the way people are sacrificed for the rich and powerful, Stanza 4 how all this poverty is corrupting everything good about family and life.

## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

- The poem is an ironic look at misery in the greatest city in the world.
- Blake's views are revolutionary for the time, challenging the idea that man is worth more than slavery.
- Blake challenges the establishment in their 'palaces' and 'churches' which are marked by the blood and blackening of good people.

### LOWER MARKS

- The poem is about the misery of life in London.
- The poet is upset at the loss of joy and innocence.
- People in power are living on the pain of others.



## Space for your notes:

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# POEM: EXTRACT FROM THE PREDULDE

One summer evening (led by her) I found  
A little boat tied to a willow tree  
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.  
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in  
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth  
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice  
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;  
Leaving behind her still, on either side,  
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,  
Until they melted all into one track  
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,  
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point  
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view  
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,  
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above  
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.  
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily  
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,  
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat  
Went heaving through the water like a swan;  
When, from behind that craggy steep till then  
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,  
As if with voluntary power instinct,  
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again  
And growing still in stature the grim shape  
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,  
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own  
And measured motion like a living thing,  
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,  
And through the silent water stole my way  
Back to the covert of the willow tree;  
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—  
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave  
And serious mood; but after I had seen  
That spectacle, for many days, my brain  
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense  
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts  
There hung a darkness, call it solitude  
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes  
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,  
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;  
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live  
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind  
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

William Wordsworth

The boat is a **metaphor** of man's influence, still anchored by the tree representing nature.

Loosening the chain and pushing from shore represents the poet as mankind moving to stand on its own two feet.

Wordsworth creates an idyllic and peaceful scene with **language semantically peaceful**.

The mood changed with the craggy ridge and horizons boundary represents nature, limiting the progress of the poet.

The term 'elfin pinnace' could be translated as 'fairy boat', a **metaphor** for the now heated mood of the poet. Elves were often viewed as sexual and lustful.

The **simile** reminds us that anything man tries to produce is merely imitating (copying) nature which does it better.

The Horizon marks the shift in tone, the language becomes darker and dangerous. The peak, mountain, is **personified** "with purpose of its own", nature shown as aggressive.

Use of 'trembling' **connotes** the fear and vulnerability of the poet, he is shown like a wounded animal, hiding away.

Meadows, usually peaceful and joyful and **juxtaposed** to the 'grave and serious mood'.

The darkness hanging over him represents his change to a darker mood at the end of the journey. The words all carry a dark and sinister tone, more morbid and melancholy. He is reflecting on the **conflict** in his mind of the juxtaposed peaceful side of nature and the harsh extremes it also contains "big and mighty forms".

The poem changes from **Euphony** (pleasant sounding words) to a **Cacophony** (harsh and rough sounding words.)

## If you want to help your understanding you could:

- Look up the romantic poets, what was their influence.
- Look at the rest of the poem (or a summary) see how this fits into the work as a whole.



## Context:

William Wordsworth was a romantic poet, we don't mean he wrote love poems, but he wrote poems about the world we live in which challenged people and the way they thought at the time. During this time 'epic' poems of large length were common, as were poems which looked at the world and man's place within it. This extract is from a much larger poem, it looks at the spiritual and moral development of a man growing up.

## Themes:

The poem is quite hard to relate to conflict and power. However there is a sense of conflict between man and nature where nature is eventually shown to be more powerful in the end.

## Boating along:

During the poem the setting is of a journey in a boat. The journey represents a more spiritual journey and it becomes more rough and hostile along the way. At first, nature is shown at peace with the poet, later as it gets darker and he tries to reach the horizon it becomes harsh and predatory, putting man back in his place.



**Structure:** Written as part of a much larger piece. This section is 44 lines in blank verse (no real structure). The work is in iambic pentameter to give it a consistent pace.

As the poem progresses the journey the poet is on becomes rougher and words like 'and' are repeated to give it a breathless pace and feel.



## Mountain:

*"a huge peak, black and huge, As if with voluntary power instinct, Upreared its head."*  
The mountain is shown in the poem like a great angry entity and represents the full might and power of nature. It seems to take offense at the poet going too far or too 'lustily'. You could imagine it like a game of 'chicken' where the poet is rowing toward the mountain, the closer he gets the more menacing it appears before he backs away.

## HIGHER MARKS

- The poem symbolically uses the journey on the river to mirror the poet's own spiritual journey of reflection.
- The poet is structured to show the contrast of the serene and peaceful start where he works with nature, to the dark and disturbing battle with nature shown from when he tries to control his journey through rowing.
- The conflict between man and nature is caused by man's attempt to manipulate nature, nature still contains a power and majesty beyond mankind's ability to command.

## LOWER MARKS

- The poem is about a journey on the river.
- The poet is at peace but by the end of the journey he becomes troubled.
- The journey helps show how mankind is a part of nature but does not rule over it.

## Space for your notes:



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# POEM: MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said  
"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek; perhaps  
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat." Such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace—all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked  
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech—which I have not—to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—  
E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your master's known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretense  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Robert Browning

**Possessive pronoun** the speaker is laying claim to her as a possession, she is used to better show off his control and power.

He is making an **allusion** to a famous artist of the time. The suggestion is that he values the name of the artist more than the Duchess it is a painting of.

He is showing his power in the **bracketed aside** by suggesting that he is giving the messenger a rare privilege to see the Duchess in this way, exercising his control. In fact the **irony** is that he needs to show off.

If they 'durst': If they dare, he is showing off his power again and how others fear him.

He **implies** that people believed it was not only him who could make her happy (though he couldn't) the 'spot' is a **pun** between a mark, showing her face had some joy in it, but also spot as in a small amount, she was not happy. Hints he was jealous.

**Sinister tone**, 'dies along her throat' the words are also **semantically linked** to murder 'die' and 'throat'.

He is trying to be polite, using a **rhetorical question** to indicate a lighter tone to the conversation, in fact he is trying to avoid showing his jealousy and rage, at conflict with himself.

He is angry that she would find the same level of joy in the expensive gifts he bought her and the cheap or simple gifts of the poor or nature. Angry at his lack of control. He juxtaposes the two things though the irony is that his are without sincerity.

**Exclamation** and change of structure, the verse is broken with **caesuras** to show his rising anger. He is losing control, his personality now angry when it was calm.

The poet is **ironically mocking** how vain the Duke is, he cares more about his heritage and cannot understand that she did not see that as important.

Here he clearly states how even if he was good with words and could ask her to stop giving everyone else so much attention, he would choose never to stoop so low. He is showing his believed power as above asking for things from women. **Ironically** she is in control.

The use of **semicolons** gives a sense of finality to the statements. It is suggesting she was killed on his request. This is the culmination of the **conflict** in the relationship. Euphemism to suggest the fact she was killed?

Her in a painting satisfies him as much as she did in real life, as a possession. The question shows a change of **tone** to return to the civil and polite way in the start. This helps give the poem a circular structure.

Dowry, money paid by the brides parents. Suggests he is more interested in the money than his planned future bride. It is sinister as is again suggests a repeat in his actions. Munificence means generosity. He is counting on being given the money.

As with the start he uses an **allusion** to another famous artist in order to show off his wealth and power. It is used to show how he quickly forgets about his dead wife who he was previously claimed to be so devoted to. Ironic as he has just also been talking about how devoted he will be to his new wife. Gives the poem a circular structure.



The portrait above, largely believed to be the last Duchess.



## Context:

Robert Browning was a poet in the 19th century. The son of a wealthy bank clerk, he didn't fit in as much in London society, he left the country and went to Italy to marry fellow poet Elizabeth Barrett because of her over protective father. As a result they were both familiar with over controlling patriarchs in the family as well as Italy itself.

The poem is loosely based on the Duke of Ferrara and is written from his perspective, talking to a messenger about arranging his next marriage. The assumption being that he was dissatisfied with his former wife and had her killed.

Alfonso Duke of Ferrara



## Themes:

The idea of Power and Conflict is shown in the way the speaker (the Duke of Ferrara) is showing off his power and also suggesting the control he had over the Duchess's life. There is also conflict between who he presents or wants himself to be and who he really is as a character.

## Structure:

The poem is an example of **dramatic monologue** (a speech given by one character). It uses a large number of pauses (**caesuras**) in the poem along with lines that flow into one another (**enjambment**) in order to try and capture the tone of the speaker talking away to the messenger and adding in tangents (small opinions and asides). The poem uses **rhyming couplets** and **iambic pentameter** this reflects the style of **romantic poets** at the time, despite how this poem is much more sinister and dark. It is another façade for the Duke of Ferrara's character. You will note he is the only character that speaks despite the fact he is talking to someone, he never lets them speak.

## If you want to help your understanding you could:

- Look up a bit more information on Duke Alfonso of Ferrara, see if it helps you understand the character.
- The poem is better as a speech, imagine yourself as a self centred rich man, how does it sound to read it aloud.



## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

- The poem is a dramatic monologue with the Duke of Ferrara arranging his new marriage but getting swept up talking about his former wife.
- The change in tone is used to show the sinister undertones and power struggle in the relationship, he is the only one truly at conflict here.
- The poet ironically shows that his man is rich and educated yet a fool in matters of love and honesty, both powerful and

### LOWER MARKS

- The poem is spoken by a Duke and talks about his last wife.
- He is normally polite but the more talks about her, the more he becomes jealous.
- We see that he is a powerful rich man but was in fact he could not control his wife, he was at conflict even though she was not trying to anger him.

## Space for your notes:



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# POEM: CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

League is about 3 miles, shows how far they have on their journey. Also can show quality, that they are not up to the challenge ahead. **Double meaning.**

Valley of Death is a biblical **allusion** to show the horror of what they now face, connotation of hell.

**Repetition** to build the **tension** and drag out the charge.

**Repetition** of 'theirs' and 'six hundred' objectifies them as a symbol rather than just men. Also helps **tone** becomes more solemn to show impending doom.

Cannon **link to war and conflict**, demonstrate how the odds are against them. **Repetition** to show scale of guns against them.

'Boldly' **contrast** with the scale of odds against them, emphasises futility. **Sibilance** to imply the swiftness of the charge.

**Personifies** death, used to exaggerate the futility and bravery of soldiers that they are going to die, but do so boldly.

**Sabres:** swords, the flash is the sun shining off the metal but also a metaphor for the glory they showed in their bravery which, like a flash, is short.

Exaggerate (**hyperbole**) the scale of the mistake.

Cossack and Russian, the enemy. Here the poet is showing how the enemy were not the equal of the British, however there were more of them. Consonance to shattered and sundered '-ered' to emphasise devastation.

Changes the tone by **inserting** the word 'not' implies the six hundred have mostly died.

I  
Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.  
"Forward, the Light Brigade!  
Charge for the guns!" he said.  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

II  
"Forward, the Light Brigade!"  
Was there a man dismayed?  
Not though the soldier knew  
Someone had blundered.  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die.  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

III  
Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon in front of them  
Volleyed and thundered;  
Stormed at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode and well,  
Into the jaws of Death,  
Into the mouth of hell  
Rode the six hundred.

IV  
Flashed all their sabres bare,  
Flashed as they turned in air  
Sabring the gunners there,  
Charging an army, while  
All the world wondered.  
Plunged in the battery-smoke  
Right through the line they broke;  
Cossack and Russian  
Reeled from the sabre stroke  
Shattered and sundered.  
Then they rode back, but not  
Not the six hundred.

V  
Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon behind them  
Volleyed and thundered;  
Stormed at with shot and shell,  
While horse and hero fell.  
They that had fought so well  
Came through the jaws of Death,  
Back from the mouth of hell,  
All that was left of them,  
Left of six hundred.  
VI  
When can their glory fade?  
O the wild charge they made!  
All the world wondered.  
Honour the charge they made!  
Honour the Light Brigade,  
Noble six hundred!

Alfred Lord Tennyson

**Repetition** from before, gives the poem a **parallel** to mirror the charge, now they are running away.

**Glorify** the poet make the men more like symbols of bravery than real men.

**Mirrors** the third stanza to emphasise the bravery and loss.

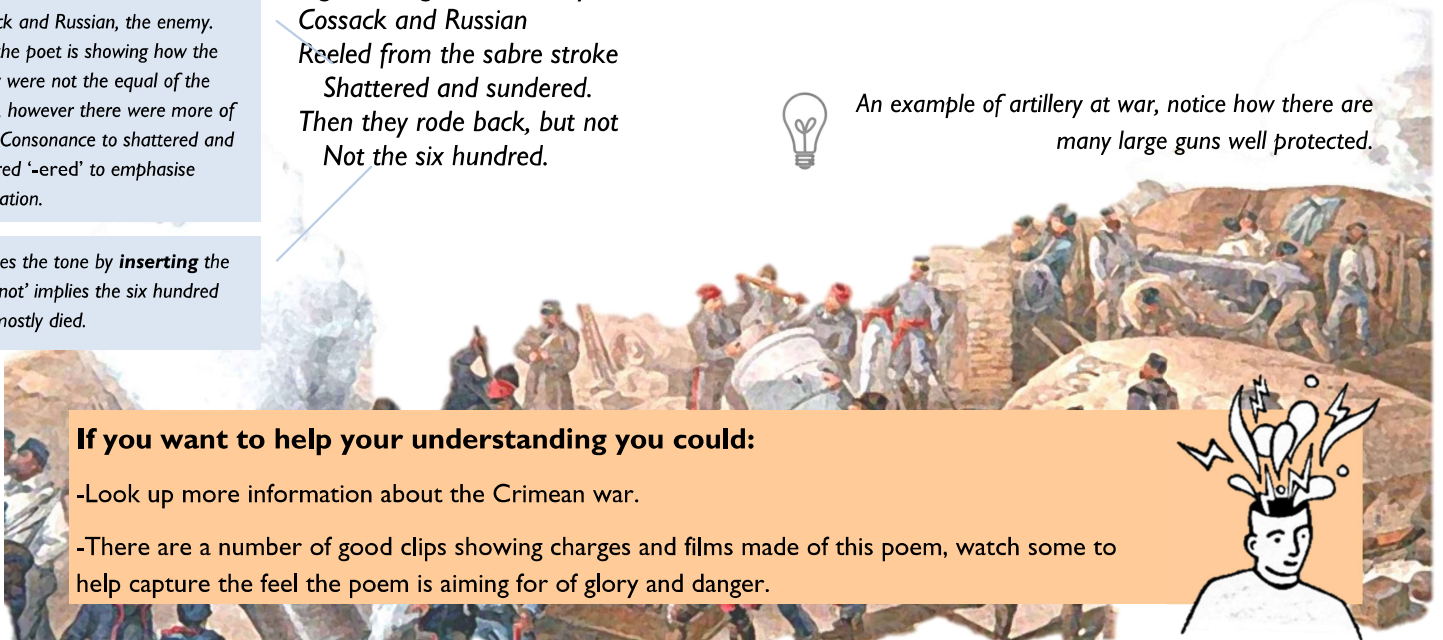
**Rhetorical question.** The poet does not seem sad that these men died but rather is more concerned with their glory.

The **imperative**, ordering people to give their respect when many questioned the charge. The Poet is showing how the soldiers themselves should be honoured, even if the decision to charge may have been wrong.

The poem suggesting that hero's have been made from this conflict. He is clear to show their bravery and strength (power) by escaping the clutches of death and 'jaws of hell'.



An example of artillery at war, notice how there are many large guns well protected.



## If you want to help your understanding you could:

- Look up more information about the Crimean war.
- There are a number of good clips showing charges and films made of this poem, watch some to help capture the feel the poem is aiming for of glory and danger.



## Context:

The Crimean war saw British troops fighting in Russia. At this time, while there were basic guns and cannons, people would still also fight on horses, to rush in and attack before they could reload or stop them. However the light brigade were very lightly equipped, more for scouting or attacking from the back or sides rather than charging straight in.

During a battle, a miscommunication sent the light brigade charging head first into the cannons of the other side, it was a huge catastrophe and many died. It showed to the British that even mistakes can happen. The men were respected for following orders, even though they knew they may be wrong. Some however have criticised the way they blindly followed orders. Lord Tennyson was the poet who was asked to write about their glorious sacrifice.

Painting of the light brigade



## Themes:

The poem is about war, life and death, sacrifice and folly. It naturally links to conflict and is effective at showing peoples views on war of the time. The poem also contains a lot of reference to biblical/religious ideas as well as bravery and fear.

**Structure:** Written in **dimeter** and **dactylic**. Basically that means there are two (di-) stresses in each line, that means two beats or syllables which you read with a bit more force. The syllables after are then unstressed. So when there are six syllables you would read it ONE-two-three, ONE-two-three. The drop in stress is perhaps to show the sudden charge and then collapse, or the sound of horses galloping.

The poem is divided into 6 stanzas and uses a lot of repetition. Some of this is to show the different stages of the battle but also give it a structure. It has a very military rhyme and can be similar to the sound of marching drums or horse hooves. This is used to reflect the military nature of the conflict in the poem.

## Valley of Death:

The Christian prayer, 'The Lords Prayer' contains the line "though I may walk through the valley of death". This phrase being used in the poem is used to show the scale of importance and give the poem an epic quality.



## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

-The repetition within the poem helps capture the galloping military rhythm. This indicates the conflict and power building through the poem itself.

-The poet is clearly distinguishing between the bravery of the men and the foolish 'blunder' of the orders and suggests the six hundred should be seen as heroes.

-The military language is mixed with religious allusion to suggest an epic scale, emphasising the risk and bravery.

### LOWER MARKS

-The poem repeats a lot to remind us the charge and then the retreat.

-The poet thinks the men are brave calling them 'heros'

-The poem is full of violence shown through the use of language like 'sabres' and 'cannons.'

## Space for your notes:



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# POEM: EXPOSURE

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knife us...  
Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent...  
Low drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient...  
Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,  
But nothing happens.

Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire.  
Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.  
Northward incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,  
Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.  
What are we doing here?

The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow...  
We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.  
Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army  
Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of gray,  
But nothing happens.

Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence.  
Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,  
With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause and renew,  
We watch them wandering up and down the wind's nonchalance,  
But nothing happens.

Pale flakes with lingering stealth come feeling for our faces -  
We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare, snow-dazed,  
Deep into grassier ditches. So we drowse, sun-dozed,  
Littered with blossoms trickling where the blackbird fusses.  
Is it that we are dying?

Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires glowed  
With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;  
For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;  
Shutters and doors all closed: on us the doors are closed -  
We turn back to our dying.

Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;  
Now ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit.  
For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;  
Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were born,  
For love of God seems dying.

To-night, His frost will fasten on this mud and us,  
Shrivelling many hands and puckering foreheads crisp.  
The burying-party, picks and shovels in their shaking grasp,  
Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,  
But nothing happens.

Wilfred Owen

**Personification** of the weather described as 'merciless' and attacking them 'knife us' this is unexpected as we expect the fight to be between soldiers.

**Sibilance** the hissing s sound capture the noise of wind, it sounds both lonely but also biting.

The man made weapons are likened through **metaphor** to natural objects, showing mans war is a cheap **imitation** of nature.

**Rhetorical question** highlights the hopelessness of soldiers and war.

**Contrast/oxymoron**, dawn is meant to be hopeful and positive, not miserable.

Now the rain is **personified**, nothing happens repeated to emphasise the helplessness of the soldiers who are beyond help.

Harsh **assonance** and **consonance** of s and t sounds link weather with gunfire and therefore conflict and pain.

Now the snow is described with **alliteration** to emphasise the f sounds and highlight the cold heavy blanketing of the weather. The wind's 'nonchalance' implies the weather sees the soldiers as beneath it and weak.

Man is **animalised**, likened to scared animals, rabbits in holes. Showing that before nature man is just an animal.

**Rhetorical Question** shows the confusion of soldiers. Conditions are so bad they can no longer tell what is normal anymore.

**Metaphor** frozen blood described as jewels, poet sees men's lives as valuable and ultimately wasted.

So broken and hurt are the men that they feel abandoned and lose faith in God "our love is made afraid". **Contrasts/juxtaposes** the battlefield with garden of Eden. **Tone** is one of betrayal and despair.

Use of **scattered punctuation** slows the pace, we can imagine the soldier finally succumbing to exposure and dyeing.

**Metaphor** ice as in cold and dead but also dead and empty, without soul.

**Repetition** final line emphasises the process doesn't end, the soldiers are frozen in time and hell.

An example of trench war, consider how exposed the soldiers are, imagine living there.

## If you want to help your understanding you could:

- Look at some of Owen's other poems or the work of Sassoon, how do they talk of war?
- Do some research into trench conditions, see if you can find how many died from disease and cold.



## Context:

Wilfred Owen was a soldier and officers in World War I. He died before the end of the war but during his time he saw the full horror of conditions on the front line. He wrote a number of poems about this, published after the war with the help from fellow poet Siegfried Sassoon.

The war itself was often criticised because of a huge loss of life for very little gain. During the Somme over 60,000 British soldiers died in one day, and in all they only gained 6 miles by the end of the war. Owen's poems were often angry that the soldiers were in muddy dangerous trenches while the generals behind the lines were living in comfort. Owen's poems tried to show the truth of conditions to people back home. He was no against fighting, but was angry about the conditions soldiers had to live with in order to do so.

Wilfred Owen



## Themes:

The poem itself is based on war and so links to conflict. The poem itself is about the weather and conditions of living in the trenches rather than any fighting. It is more a poem about the **conflict between man and nature**. This is extremely relevant because man has created machines that can launch explosive shells for miles and destroy the landscape, and yet, nature can still do more harm than any of it.

Trench conditions WWI



**Structure:** The poem uses a large amount of **ellipses**, **caesuras** and **repetition** to create an on-going sense of waiting and boredom. The poem is made of **eight stanzas** with a consistent use of a half line to end. This reinforces the sense of stasis or sameness throughout the poem that nothing is happening. There is use of **para-rhyme** showing words which appear to rhyme yet sound wrong when read to create the sense of unsettledness in the poem the soldiers are feeling. Owen also uses a huge amount of **onomatopoeia** and **alliteration** in the poem to emphasise the atmosphere and the sound of weather.

**Man v Nature:** Written about soldiers in a trench we expect to see a large amount of military language, however most of this is used to describe and **personify** the weather as if it were an army attacking them. The poem ends with the fear of tonight and the people who will lose lives and how none of this will change anything. Within the poem it is the weather that is represented as merciless and triumphant.

## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

- The poem defies the convention of war and looks at the weather assaulting the soldiers, not another army. This is to highlight the unknown horrors of war to people at home.
- The poet uses repetition and a consistent structure to create the static tone of the poem. The lack of change adds to the tone of despair.
- The alliteration is used to create a sense of atmosphere to the weather and to draw parallels to the violence of war and weather.

### LOWER MARKS

- The poem talks about soldiers suffering in bad weather.
- The poet feels sadness and helplessness that these men are without hope and nothing is changing.
- The poet uses a lot of alliteration and pauses in the poem to make it drag out and help us imagine the weather conditions.

## Space for your notes:



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# POEM: STORM ON THE ISLAND

We are prepared: we build our houses squat,  
Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate.  
The wizened earth had never troubled us  
With hay, so as you can see, there are no stacks  
Or stooks that can be lost. Nor are there trees  
Which might prove company when it blows full  
Blast: you know what I mean - leaves and branches  
Can raise a chorus in a gale  
So that you can listen to the thing you fear  
Forgetting that it pummels your house too.  
But there are no trees, no natural shelter.  
You might think that the sea is company,  
Exploding comfortably down on the cliffs  
But no: when it begins, the flung spray hits  
The very windows, spits like a tame cat  
Turned savage. We just sit tight while wind dives  
And strafes invisibly. Space is a salvo.  
We are bombarded by the empty air.  
Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear.

Seamus Heaney

The language is rough and rural, giving the speaker a more agricultural tone.

The poet describes the earth almost like an old friend. **Personifying** it like an old wrinkled man.

The poet has a slightly **ironic tone** saying that because the ground has not been very arable they don't have to worry about looking after any crops or trees blowing over.

The poet talks about much of nature with the same **semantics** as if it were a neighbour 'company'.

**Aside** gives a very personal conversational tone using a **generic phrase**.

**Personified** the weather, suggesting it is singing.

**Direct address** using the word 'you' and talking about fear creates a friendly intimacy with the speaker.

**Violent language** suggests the power of the weather as dominant over man.

**Oxymoron**, exploding is quite a violent term contrasting with comfortably, the poet is suggesting that because the violence is far off you feel more secure.

**Simile** the poet uses a very familiar image to describe something that is powerful and majestic, this undermines the strength of the weather, suggesting it is only scary if we choose to let it.

**Military metaphors** salvo, strafe, bombardment relate to air attacks. The poet is drawing comparisons with the wind and human aircraft, suggesting that they are only what we make them.

**Oxymoron** the poet suggests that our fear is a **paradox**, there is nothing to fear or that we fear the nothingness of the invisible wind.

## If you want to help your understanding you could:

-Listen next time to the weather on a stormy or windy day. When you are inside how much of the weather is real to you and how much is just noise and views from a window, is the weather truly mighty?



## Context:

Seamus Heaney was a poet in Ireland, he grew up in a farming community and many of his poems were about very normal and homely subjects. He uses a large number of agricultural and natural images in his work as metaphors for human nature..

The poem is set around a story of a small isolated cottage near the sea in a storm and the exposure to the elements.

Small isolate cottage



## Themes:

The poem looks at the conflict between nature and man and peoples fear of the weather. However the poet also points out that the fears are really rather small in the grand scheme. There is also a hint of war and conflict in the way the weather is described with “bombardment” and “salvo”.

**Structure:** The poem is in blank verse with 19 lines. There are 5 feet (10 syllables) in each line. The verses are unrhymed and it gives it a very conversational tone. This is added to by the use of asides ‘you know what I mean’. The poem is in present tense to suggest the storm is occurring at the time. The poem uses a great deal of enjambment to help add to the conversational tone.

## Fear:

The poem ends with “it is a huge nothing that we fear”, the suggestion is not just about the weather but also potentially many things. As a Irish Catholic, religion is a big element in Heaney’s life. He humbles the weather into very human terms unlike other poems which fear it’s might. In many ways he is also humbling the idea of God. Reducing his power into a ‘huge nothing’. The suggestion of fear is that power is only there if you let the other thing scare you. Behind his walls and well prepared, he doesn’t need to fear and so the weather (and god) lose power.

## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

*-The cottage represents safety and calm and behind its walls the violence of the weather is undermined. It reflects a conflict between nature and man.*

*-The poet is able to communicate a sense of calm friendliness using asides and very recognisable imagery to describe the attack of the weather.*

*-The poets suggestion of fear challenges the allocation of power, that we only give power top what we fear if we let it.*

### LOWER MARKS

*-The poem is about a cottage in a storm being attacked by the weather.*

*-The poet is friendly and speaking in a very calm conversational way to the reader.*

*-The poet shows that sometimes what we fear is not worth being afraid of.*

## Space for your notes:



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# POEM: BAYONET CHARGE

Suddenly he awoke and was running- raw  
In raw-seamed hot khaki, his sweat heavy,  
Stumbling across a field of clods towards a green hedge  
That dazzled with rifle fire, hearing  
Bullets smacking the belly out of the air -  
He lugged a rifle numb as a smashed arm;  
The patriotic tear that had brimmed in his eye  
Sweating like molten iron from the centre of his chest, -

**Alliteration** of R and H sounds gives sense of hard work heavy breathing.

**Contrast** between warzone and the 'green hedge' which is quite a peaceful rural image.

**Enjambment** adds to the chaos of the battlefield.

**Personified** bullets and **semantic** body parts with 'belly' and 'smashed arm' blurs the line between weapon and man by **dehumanising** the soldier and personifying the weapons.

**Juxtaposed** ideas of patriotic tear, a beautiful and noble thing full of emotion contrasted with 'sweating like molten iron' which further **dehumanises** the soldier and likens him more to a tank or machine.

In bewilderment then he almost stopped -  
In what cold clockwork of the stars and the nations  
Was he the hand pointing that second? He was running  
Like a man who has jumped up in the dark and runs  
Listening between his footfalls for the reason  
Of his still running, and his foot hung like  
Statuary in mid-stride. Then the shot-slashed furrows

**Clockwork**, A metaphor for his actions as being more like a clockwork machine than human. **Trivialises** war to a game of toy clockwork soldiers between nations.

**Rhetorical Question**, marks the change of pace, it is as if this is happening in slow motion or the soldier has stopped as he thinks on what he has become.

**Enjambment**, over four verses implies he has suddenly come to some realisation and this both seems to drag on but also all happen at once.

Threw up a yellow hare that rolled like a flame  
And crawled in a threshing circle, its mouth wide  
Open silent, its eyes standing out.  
He plunged past with his bayonet toward the green hedge,

**Metaphor**, is it a real hare? Maybe a coward? Yellow is the colour of fear and hares are prey. Natural and frightened image **juxtaposed** with his own machine like nature. Possible that the hare is another soldier shot and scared, trying to escape. **Dehumanised**.

'**plunges**' implies diving in too deep or cannot return. He has made his decision to carry on and there is no turning back.

King, honour, human dignity, etcetera  
Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm  
To get out of that blue crackling air  
His terror's touchy dynamite.

**Listing** of the key motivations for war emphasises that here and now they are second to the rush of battle.

**Atmospheric** description, similar to 'the air was electric', the word 'crackling' gives an element of danger to the verse.

**Metaphor** and **Consonance** of T sounds emphasises adrenaline rush and almost animal like reactions (Think of a cat that is prepared to fight or flee).

Ted Hughes

## If you want to help your understanding you could:

-See if you can find some good clips about charging into a fight, although it is not the same war 'Saving Private Ryan' really captures the pace and confusion (warning it is very violent).

-Consider how animalistic or mechanical the soldier is described, he is torn between man and nature, put the relevant quotes into a table.





## Context:

The poem is about a nameless soldier going over the top in the trenches. Soldiers would have bayonets attached to the end of their rifles and would use them to stab enemy soldiers. The nameless soldier in the poem seems to become more a weapon than a man, rushing toward the enemy. It is not clear at the end whether he dies but there is definitely a change in him. His actions are very raw and primal, much like an animal, suddenly pausing, preparing to react. The poet, Ted Hughes, was a former RAF serviceman and includes a great amount of natural and historical ideas in his poems and he often looks at man's impact on nature.

Soldiers bayonet training



## Themes:

The poem clearly is set around conflict in that it is a soldier rushing out of the trenches on the attack. However the poem also looks at ideas like transformation, humanity and nature (in the form of the yellow hare and green hedge). In the poem the soldier is almost more machine or animal than human and this is reflected in the power themed words used to describe him.

**Structure:** There are **three stanzas** and the work is largely **blank verse** with no set structure. In part the different lines help show the pace of the charge, sometimes fast, sometimes stumbling. Towards the end it picks up speed, perhaps as he approaches his destination or doom. The poet uses a lot of **enjambment** and **caesuras** to give a bizarre and erratic speed to the poem. This helps again give a structure to the speed of the charge but also the confusion and intensity of the battle with explosions and gunfire as well as the jumbled thoughts of the soldier.

## Man or Mouse (Hare?):

There are parts of this poem which make us think more of a hunt or animals than humanity. The charge to the 'green hedge' seems to be more the action of an animal bolting in a field rather than soldiers charging a trench. The inclusion of the yellow hare is also powerful, we see the soldier in a moment of confusion, not sure why he is there and what he is doing, the hare seems to spur him on, either because he does not want to be a coward or because it reflects a brief moment of man and nature connecting before war once again breaks it.

A Hare



## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

- The poem explores a soldier's charge through a mix of physical and emotional exploration.
- The language of the poem seems to juxtapose natural animal images and human machine, they are at conflict.
- The mix of caesura and enjambment in the poem adds a chaotic tone to show the confusion of war and the inner turmoil of the soldier.

### LOWER MARKS

- The poem is about a soldier going over the trenches to attack.
- There is a mix of language which talks about the soldier as a machine but also being quite like an animal.
- The structure of the poem is a mix of fast and slow to show the confusion of fighting.

## Space for your notes:



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# POEM: REMAINS

On another occasion, we got sent out  
to tackle looters raiding a bank.  
And one of them legs it up the road,  
probably armed, possibly not.

**Anecdotal language**, matter of fact tone, suggests this is one of many events.

**Colloquialism**, slang 'legs it'=run off. Used to give realistic tone to the voice of the speaker.

Well myself and somebody else and somebody else  
are all of the same mind,  
so all three of us open fire.  
Three of a kind all letting fly, and I swear

**Aside** 'possibly not' undermines severity of the statement, if he was not armed should he have been shot? He has the power to decide.

**Analogy**, soldiers described as cards in Poker, a game of luck. Emphasis that everything about this was just chance.

I see every round as it rips through his life –  
I see broad daylight on the other side.  
So we've hit this looter a dozen times  
and he's there on the ground, sort of inside out,

**Graphic Hyperbole** used to demonstrate the lack of glory or honour in this killing, it is not pretty but still very matter of fact..

**Dehumanised** 'looter' 'sort of inside out' makes the victim appear more of an object than what was moments ago a living breathing person.

pain itself, the image of agony.  
One of my mates goes by  
and tosses his guts back into his body.  
Then he's carted off in the back of a lorry.

**Colloquialism**, 'mate' almost makes this appear like a night out with the lads, like a social event.

The nature of what is happening, a violent killing is **juxtaposed** to the relaxed way he talks about the event.

End of story, except not really.  
His blood-shadow stays on the street, and out on patrol  
I walk right over it week after week.  
Then I'm home on leave. But I blink

**Metaphor** for the memory of the man and events. Blood connotes death, shadow connoting lingering memory.

and he bursts again through the doors of the bank.  
Sleep, and he's probably armed, and possibly not.  
Dream, and he's torn apart by a dozen rounds.  
And the drink and the drugs won't flush him out –

**Repetition** from the start to show that this is the thought replaying in his mind and he is racked with guilt. He now feels powerless.

**Cliché** 'flush' common term to get rid of something unwanted, this is no longer a matter of war but everyday life.

he's here in my head when I close my eyes,  
dug in behind enemy lines,  
not left for dead in some distant, sun-stunned, sand-  
smothered land  
or six-feet-under in desert sand,

**Analogy**, describes the memory like a hostile soldier in his mind, where he cannot get him.

**Sibilance**, smothered, six, sand: gives the impression of a sinister dream/nightmare like state.

but near to the knuckle, here and now,  
his bloody life in my bloody hands.

**Pun**, bitter/dark humour bloody meaning covered in blood but also an expression of anger/hate. The soldier is at conflict with this dead man, but more with his own mind. Ends the poem with a sense of despair and open ended., no resolution.

Simon Armitage

## If you want to help your understanding you could:

-Look up PTSD (Post traumatic stress disorder), what are some of the stories and experiences of sufferers, how has it changed their life and how can this be related to the speaker in the poem?

-Go through the poem and highlight the words and phrases which help show the speakers tone.



## Context:

The poem is written from the perspective of a soldier stationed in Iraq or Afghanistan (or any warzone really). They are on patrol and fire on some bank robbers. One of the looters appeared to possibly have a gun so they open fire. The rest of the poem is looking at the fact the soldier, even long after this event, cannot leave the memory behind and carries this dead man with him in his mind.

Post traumatic stress and mental illness is very common in soldiers who struggle to come to terms with some part of their duty, normally a horrific memory of killing or being in danger which gives them nightmares and panic attacks as well as depression and sometimes suicidal tendencies.

Simon Armitage is a famous UK poet who is known for being very direct in his work. His recent poems have looked at the experiences of war and soldiers.



## Themes:

The poem is originally set in a warzone and naturally looks at conflict in a direct way. However it also looks heavily at the after effects of conflict and the long term effects it has on the people involved. Power is partly shown in this as well, firstly the soldiers power over life and death but later the power over their own memory and experiences. Mental health and morality are also key in this.

**Structure:** The poem is written in 8 stanzas, the last of which is a couplet which leaves the poem on a dramatic end note. It does not rhyme and the poem is a monologue, using very conversational **asides** and **syntax** to structure the sentences into a very conversational tone “end of story, not really”. There is also a lot of **enjambment** and **caesura** used to emphasises the natural speech patterns of the speaker. Another key factor in this poem is the use of **colloquialism** (slang) and **personal pronouns** to give it a sense of **realism**, “One of my mates,”.

There is a loose set of rhymes in the poem, often internal and used to give an almost childish aspect to the horror of the warzone. It perhaps suggests how numb this soldier is to what is happening.

## Numb:

The speaker in the poem (the soldier) appears to be numb to the horror of the experience of war, most of the horrific images of death and killing are juxtaposed to the casual nature of the way the soldier speaks, using slang and clichés. In part this reflects a conflict in himself, the way he sees these events and how they affect him, but also his way of trying to maintain control, by trivialising the whole experience.

## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

-The poem explores the events in a soldier's life which in turn trigger PTSD, it is worth noting the memory hurts him more than the event itself.

-The **colloquial** nature of the speaker's voice is used to create a sense of **heightened realism** to the piece.

-The poet suggests a conflict in the speaker's mind, an avoidance of the reality of what happened which haunts him.

### LOWER MARKS

-The poem looks at the experiences of a soldier at war and how he suffers from the memory.

-The poem uses a lot of slang to show the tone of the speaker.

-The way he talks about what happened and the actual content of what happened don't seem to match up.

## Space for your notes:



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# POEM: POPPIES

Three days before Armistice Sunday  
and poppies had already been placed  
on individual war graves. Before you left,  
I pinned one onto your lapel, crimped petals,  
spasms of paper red, disrupting a blockade  
of yellow bias binding around your blazer.

**Symbolism** The poppy has symbolic links to violence, death and memory. It is quite foreboding in this poem.

**Pronouns** "I" and "Your" used to emphasises the intimacy and closely of the speaker and subject.

**Blockade** Military reference to blocking, perhaps of emotion. **Alliteration** also used with bias, binding, blunder emphasise bustle, mothering over her son.

Sellotape bandaged around my hand,  
I rounded up as many white cat hairs  
as I could, smoothed down your shirt's  
upturned collar, steeled the softening  
of my face. I wanted to graze my nose  
across the tip of your nose, play at  
being Eskimos like we did when  
you were little. I resisted the impulse  
to run my fingers through the gelled  
blackthorns of your hair. All my words  
flattened, rolled, turned into felt,

**Familiar noun/military metaphor** The reference to sellotape is quite a familiar homely image, 'bandaged' can be used to imply wound or injury/harm.

**Sibilance**, The words 'steeled, shirt, softening' etc. gives a calm tone to the scene described in the poem.

**Aside**, the personal **anecdote** creates a sense of intimacy and human realism in the speakers voice. **Juxtaposed** with the military side of her son.

**Metaphor**, a reference to the shortened hair stubble required in the military and how aggressive it makes her son appear to her.

**Power of three**, reflects the way the mother is tongue tied and doesn't know what to say, she is proud of her son but also doesn't want him to go.

**Symbolic**, idea of throwing the door open and setting her son free. The door **represents** her own acceptance of his choice.

**Simile**, suggests how attractive the world appears to her son and also her aspiration for him to have opportunities.

**Metaphor**, connotes that he is like a beautiful caged creature and needs to be set free. Implies that she understands this includes free to make mistakes and be harmed.

slowly melting. I was brave, as I walked  
with you, to the front door, threw  
it open, the world overflowing  
like a treasure chest. A split second  
and you were away, intoxicated.  
After you'd gone I went into your bedroom,  
released a song bird from its cage.  
Later a single dove flew from the pear tree,  
and this is where it has led me,  
skirting the church yard walls, my stomach busy  
making tucks, darts, pleats, hat-less, without  
a winter coat or reinforcements of scarf, gloves.

**Vague Pronoun**, contains **double meaning**, this as in the location but also the situation, suggests that 'this' is her sons death, she cannot bear to speak the words. Implies pain.

**Listing**, implies the awkward feeling of the mother, trying to distract herself from grief.

On reaching the top of the hill I traced  
the inscriptions on the war memorial,  
leaned against it like a wishbone.  
The dove pulled freely against the sky,  
an ornamental stitch. I listened, hoping to hear  
your playground voice catching on the wind.

**Physical senses**, implies the intimacy between mother and son, **connotes** the tactile hypersensitivity and jumbled emotions.

**Caesura**, breaking down the verses, implies the choking back tears.

Jane Weir

## If you want to help your understanding you could:

-Look at the work and background of the Royal Legion and Poppy appeal, what impact have they had on people?



## Context:

The poem looks at a mother of a son who has grown up and gone to war. The poem contains many clues that this is a more modern conflict, however the poem ends at the memorial, suggesting the son died at war or has at least not yet returned home and is now missed by the mother who fears the worst.

The poem is based very heavily around the idea of Poppies as memorials and therefore the idea of memory. The poem flashes back to key moments of the life of the mother and son.

The poem also contains a range of emotions. There is genuine sadness but also pride. The poem doesn't seem to comment heavily on the war itself.

Poppy appeal poppy badges



## Themes:

The poem looks partially at conflict because of the nature of the son going to war, however it looks at conflict more from the perspective of those it leaves behind and the emotions of families. It is a behind the scenes view of conflict rather than addressing the conflict itself. There is also a level of conflict in the mothers emotions, pride, fear, sadness.

**Structure:** Written as a monologue in 4 stanzas and no rhyme scheme. The stanzas are structured along events in the life of mother and child. 1st the mother looks back at remembrance day and the idea of the poppy which has helped trigger the memory. 2nd the mother talks about helping her son get ready and seeing him off. 3rd the poem explores the emptiness that is left in his absence, finally the mother feels drawn to a war memorial bringing the story back to where it started, yet now with no son around. The suggestion of the dove being that he has died. The poem uses a lot of enjambment and familiar nouns to enhance the idea of natural tone and the mothers voice.

## War and Peace:

There is a huge contrast with some of the imagery of the poem, sometimes linking to violence “blackthorns of your hair”/”Blockade” and the more peaceful homely images “released a song bird”/”play at being Eskimos”. This contrast emphasises the conflicting emotions in the mother.

## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

-The relationship in the poem provides a deeper level of empathy and the conflict between what was and what now is the relationship.

-The poem uses a range of devices to capture the speakers sad and reflective tone.

-The poems uses contrasting language and ideas to emphasise the conflict and turmoil of the Mother.

### LOWER MARKS

-The poem looks at the relationship of Mother and Son.

-The poem uses very natural monologue style to give it a very easy to understand tone.

-The poem mixes language to do with war along with those that create a sense of home life.

## Space for your notes:



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# POEM: WAR PHOTOGRAPHER

In his dark room he is finally alone

**Finally**, suggests he is constantly haunted by his experiences., this allows him escape.

with spools of suffering set out in ordered rows.

**Sibilance**, emphasises the dark nature of the photos and their content.

The only light is red and softly glows,

**Connotations** with blood and violence, the red light and glow can also symbolise a womblike safe place.

as though this were a church and he

a priest preparing to intone a Mass.

**Juxtapose** the idea of church with the warzones **listed**, this also emphasises scale of horror he has seen.

Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh. All flesh is grass.

**Metaphor** emphasises the scale of death and fragility of life, suggests that this life is as meaningless to people at home as mowing the lawn.

He has a job to do. Solutions slop in trays

beneath his hands, which did not tremble then

**Irony** he had a steady hand taking the photos, in danger. But now at home in safety he trembles. Hints that he is suffering PTSD.

though seem to now. Rural England. Home again

to ordinary pain which simple weather can dispel,

**Stereotyping** the typical British highlight of weather, contrasting with the events in warzone. Juxtaposes the dull stability of home.

to fields which don't explode beneath the feet

of running children in a nightmare heat.

**Couplet** places emphasises on the vulnerability and danger.

**Caesura** changes tone and builds tension.

Something is happening. A stranger's features

faintly start to twist before his eyes,

**Double meaning** the photo itself is taking form, however the subject themselves may have been in pain, twisting.

a half-formed ghost. He remembers the cries

of this man's wife, how he sought approval

**Metaphor** shows the still faint origins of the photo but also implies that the subject may well now be dead.

without words to do what someone must

and how the blood stained into foreign dust.

**Personal Pronoun** 'he' emphasises a namelessness, that he is one of many, but also a sense of detachment and guilt in the tone.

A hundred agonies in black and white

from which his editor will pick out five or six

for Sunday's supplement. The reader's eyeballs prick

with tears between the bath and pre-lunch beers.

**Adjective** emphasis on the fact it is far away, can be read bitterly, as though why should the fact it is foreign make a difference.

**Pun** dark humour, bitter. Black and white in the newspapers but also emphasis on the morality, war is black and white.

**Juxtaposes** 'tears' with the very comfortable images of 'bath' and 'pre lunch beers'. Can be read almost angrily, their tears are meaningless and this is a small pause in their life, not of worth to them.

From the aeroplane he stares impassively at where

he earns his living and they do not care.

**'Impassive'** without emotion, he feels numb/helpless.

Carol Ann Duffy

**Collective pronoun** creates accusation-like tone. Final lines emphasise his resentment.

## If you want to help your understanding you could:

-Look at a range of war photography and photographers, see if you can get an insight into the kind of people they are and the work they do, also look at photo developing in dark rooms.



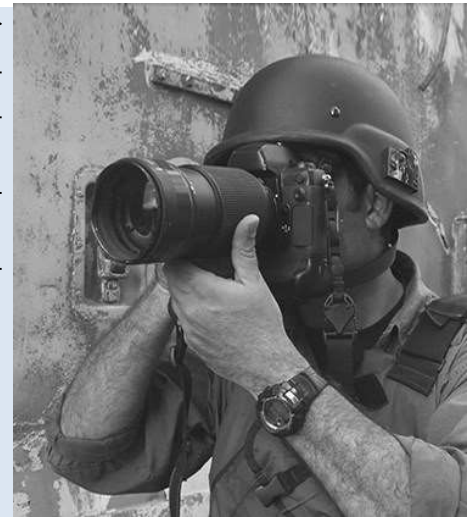
## Context:

The poem is written about a war photographer who has returned home and is developing his photos. The process of developing old style film photos is rather unusual for many to understand today. Old style film is very sensitive to light, so it must be done in a dark room lit with red light. The photo itself is developed using chemicals which slowly bring out the photo, it is then hung to dry. All of this can create quite a sinister atmosphere, red light, surrounding by hanging photos and chemical smells.

The poem is also looking at the contrast between the war zones and safety of being back home and the way people just do not understand the truth, after all a single photo cannot show everything.

War photographers do a very dangerous job, many are killed and injured as they must get in harms way to get the photos they are after.

A modern day war photographer.



## Themes:

The poem looks at conflict in the sense that he has taken photos of war and fighting. However there is also conflict between the warzone and 'Rural England', the poet is trying to emphasise how out of touch people are about the truth of war, as well as how it is more a business or bit of gossip rather than life changing and destructive.

**Structure:** Written in 4 stanzas the poem features rhyming couplets interspaced with non rhyming lines. The regular structure can represent the order he is giving to the chaos in his photos, perhaps also the almost mechanical process he is going through and putting that distance between himself and the context.

The poem is written as a narrative, leading us through the act of the photographer processing his photos, this again helps create a sense of detachment or even cynicism about what this action reflects, that people suffer and lose lives and the end result to us is a few pictures chosen for the newspapers.

## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

- The poem contrasts rural England with warzones to emphasise the gulf between the public and the warzones, thus emphasising their detachment and his.
- Bitterness and regret is conveyed in key rhyming couplets and sections to highlight his difficulty dealing with the experiences.
- The ordered structure reflects the precision of his job which contrasts strongly with the chaos of his experiences.

### LOWER MARKS

- The poem talks about a man back in England thinking about the photos he took in warzones.
- The man in the poem is bitter about how people see war.
- The poem uses structure to show how he tries to make sense of his experiences.

## Space for your notes:



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# POEM: TISSUE

**Metaphor/Double meaning** Tissue both as paper but also living tissue and skin.

**Enjambment**, creates on-going monologue tone.

Paper that lets the light

**Symbolic**, suggest hope, positive tone.

shine through, this

**Tactile**, language, suggests a very familiar concept.

is what could alter things.

**Koran**, symbolic of culture and religion and also emphasising a major conflict in modern society and the perceived war on Islam.

Paper thinned by age or touching,

the kind you find in well-used books,

the back of the Koran, where a hand

has written in the names and histories,

who was born to whom,

the height and weight, who

died where and how, on which sepia date,

pages smoothed and stroked and turned

transparent with attention.

If buildings were paper, I might

feel their drift, see how easily

they fall away on a sigh, a shift

in the direction of the wind.

Maps too. The sun shines through

their borderlines, the marks

that rivers make, roads,

railtracks, mountainfolds,

Fine slips from grocery shops

that say how much was sold

and what was paid by credit card

might fly our lives like paper kites.

An architect could use all this,

place layer over layer, luminous

script over numbers over line,

and never wish to build again with brick

or block, but let the daylight break

through capitals and monoliths,

through the shapes that pride can make,

find a way to trace a grand design

with living tissue, raise a structure

never meant to last,

of paper smoothed and stroked

and thinned to be transparent,

turned into your skin.

**Metaphor** the familiar and everyday image of groceries represent larger scale socio economics. Our reliance on money and material wealth.

**Flying Kites** connotes a childlike innocence and ease. Suggesting perhaps that if we changed our approach to material ownership we would regain that childhood peace of mind.

**Symbolic** not just of someone who designs buildings but also anyone who makes anything. **Metaphor** for us all.

**Enjambment**, and semantics of written script listed here gives a tone of excitement and exploration.

**Pathetic fallacy**, gives the hopeful aspect to the message of the poem through the reuse of light and shining.

**Personify**, pride given a form, suggestion that we, or society as a whole is this 'pride'.

**Biblical reference**, suggestive of the bigger picture and a sense of spiritual fulfilment. Suggests that we could be building things that improve our life, not hold us back.

**Metaphor**, for people or society.

**Ominous**, can be an **allusion** to the horrors of war and terrorism. 9/11, Berlin wall?

**Repetition from stanza 3**, reminding us of the tactile intimacy of the book but now on a larger scale.

**Direct address**, suggesting that instead of being at conflict with the world around us we create a sense of ownership and shared identity.

Imtiaz Dharker

## If you want to help your understanding you could:

"Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors, we borrow it from our Children."- Consider this quote in relation to the poem.





## Context:

Imtiaz Dharker is a poet and film maker, she has Pakistani origins and was raised in Glasgow. A great number of her poems look at issues such as religion, terrorism and global politics/identity. As a result her work can be difficult to grasp.

The poem is written from the point of view of someone today looking out at the conflict and troubles of the modern world; destruction, war and politics, money and wealth as well as issues like terrorism and identity. The poem remarks how nothing is meant to last, that it would be better not to hold too tightly to that and instead we should be willing to let go and pass things on in their time to be remade.

In short, that the world would be better if it shared more qualities with 'tissue'.

Imtiaz Dharker - Poet and Film Maker



## Themes:

The poem looks at conflict in terms of destruction and politics particularly, it hints that we make our own conflict by holding on too tight to power and control and actually the need to relax and remember we are all human.

## Koran, Buildings, Maps and Grocery slips:

These objects are symbols of wider issues in the world, notably religion, structures of power like the twin towers but also the major cities and landmarks of various nations, maps represent borders of countries and the divides in politics and culture while grocery slips could represent the influence of money and wealth on society, for better or worse. The poet wonders what would the world be like if these things were more like the tissue.

**Structure:** The poem is written as an on-going monologue with some internal rhyme through the poem (though with no real pattern to it). It uses enjambment to create a very human and calm tone. The poem starts looking at the joy of simple things like well used paper and wonders what the world would be like if it had the same qualities. The final part of the poem is both hopeful and a warning. Against pride but in favour of growth and acceptance.

## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

- The poet explores the characteristics of tissue and applies it to a world at conflict with the people who have made it.
- The poet addresses some of the larger issues; greed, pride etc and how we have built our world around them, at odds with our own existence.
- The poem is a parable in nature as it suggests there is a spiritual fulfilment in passing on ownership and letting things pass when they have filled their purpose.

### LOWER MARKS

- The poet looks at how the world would be different if it had more shared qualities with tissues.
- The poet looks at some of the big problems in the world through metaphors.
- The poem is hopeful and often talks about sun and shining to give it a positive tone despite asking people to let go of things.

## Space for your notes:



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# POEM: THE ÉMIGRÉE

There once was a country... I left it as a child  
but my memory of it is sunlight-clear  
for it seems I never saw it in that November  
which, I am told, comes to the mildest city.  
The worst news I receive of it cannot break  
my original view, the bright, filled paperweight.  
It may be at war, it may be sick with tyrants,  
but I am branded by an impression of sunlight.

**Elipses**, creates a **caesura**, indicating flashback or exploration of past memories..

**Pathetic Fallacy**, this concept of sunlight creates a positive image which **juxtaposes** her understanding as an adult.

**Aside**, draws distinction between experience and what the speaker has heard.

**Metaphor**, the idea of the city as a souvenir, shiny and unrealistic. Shallow as her childhood memories.

**Personify** the city to create the sense that it has been infected but can recover, almost hopeful yet deluded idea.

**Connotation** branded often conveys sense of marked for wrongness, **repetition** of sunlight..

The white streets of that city, the graceful slopes  
glow even clearer as time rolls its tanks  
and the frontiers rise between us, close like waves.  
That child's vocabulary I carried here  
like a hollow doll, opens and spills a grammar.  
Soon I shall have every coloured molecule of it.  
It may by now be a lie, banned by the state  
but I can't get it off my tongue. it tastes of sunlight.

**Connotation**, of innocence and purity.

**Personify**, time to emphasises its relentless and destructive nature..

**Juxtaposes**, aggressive imagery 'frontiers' with the purity of nature 'waves'.

**Metaphor**, linking the memory of the city with tiny traces, to emphasise the value and preciousness of the memory.

**Synaesthesia**, the blur between taste and vision, the jumbling of senses in order to show the confusion of memories and emphasises with **repetition** the clearly flawed but joyous nature of the memory.

**Personify**, expanding the metaphor, perhaps suggesting that others have also fled, bringing with them the culture of her 'city' the 'white' links to this surreal and innocent quality.

I have no passport, there's no way back at all  
but my city comes to me in its own white plane.

**Metaphor**, emphasises the open and emptiness but also the vulnerability.

It lies down in front of me, docile as paper;  
I comb its hair and love its shining eyes.  
My city takes me dancing through the city

**Personify**, she treats the memory with almost child like tenderness, reflects her own memories of childhood linked to the city.

of walls. They accuse me of absence, they circle me.  
They accuse me of being dark in their free city.  
My city hides behind me. They mutter death,  
and my shadow falls as evidence of sunlight.

The reconciling with her past memory and current understanding, though her past she tries to view the present. Her past city identified as 'dancing' the modern one as with 'walls' **Juxtaposing** identities.

**Repetition**, of 'accuse' gives a sinister identity to the oppression of the new city

Carol Rumens

**Contrast**, of darkness and light used to show the speaker coming to terms with the two separate identities.

## If you want to help your understanding you could:

-Look at the description of the city and divide examples into the modern and memory city. What are the differences and how must it feel for the speaker to try and fit both those identities together?



## Context:

The poem explores the memory of the poet and their experiences in a far off city they spent time in as a child. The poet is looking at this city through the eyes of a child and the happy memories she had, she compares these to the truths she knows as an adult which is much harsher.

Emigree relates to the word emigrate, the idea that a person goes and settles in another country, sometimes not feeling welcome to return.

The poet bases many of the ideas on modern examples of emigration from countries like Russia or the Middle East where people are fleeing corruption and tyranny, or those countries change in their absence to some form of dictatorship.

A modern day war photographer.



## Themes:

The poem has a deep sense of conflict in terms of emotions and memory, the poet is torn between her childhood memory and her adult understanding. This also reflects in the form of the city itself today which has become a hostile totalitarian place. The concept of a city can be a metaphor for memories and growth in general, progression from childhood to maturity.

## Structure:

The poem follows a three stanza structure with repetitive elements such as the idea of 'sunlight'. The opening of the poem seems to encompass the speaker trying to capture the memory, the second stanza builds on the details of this, fleshing out the city in her mind, finally the poem seems to veer towards an idea of facing up to the modern dark place her city of memory has become. A large amount of imagery is used within the poem to try and capture the concept of the city, including personification, though much of this is deliberately vague.

The poem does not have a particularly consistent structure or any use of rhyme, this perhaps encapsulate the still uncertain understanding of the speaker about her city, this is further enhanced by some of the unusual and unnatural links between ideas and choice of metaphors. The poem uses enjambment to create a flowing pace to the work of a narrative speaker.

## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

- The speakers view of the city is idyllic and with confused metaphors linked with positive natural images.
- The speaker is struggling to reconcile the two identities of the city, however this causes conflict within the speaker.
- The city is personified as reflects the nature of herself, her own personality and growth.

### LOWER MARKS

- The poem looks at a childhood memory of a city
- The speaker struggles to understand how the city has changed.
- The city can represent growth and change in identity with all people.

## Space for your notes:



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# POEM: CHECKING OUT ME HISTORY

**Repetition,** suggests constant barrage of learning by rote without insight.

Dem tell me  
Dem tell me  
Wha dem want to tell me

**Restrictive verbs,** create idea that the version of events given to them is harmful.

Bandage up me eye with me own history  
Blind me to me own identity

**Mixing,** fact and fiction in order to create sense of confusion.

Dem tell me bout I 066 and all dat  
dem tell me bout Dick Whittington and he cat  
But Toussaint L'Ouverture  
no dem never tell me bout dat

**Pronoun,** 'dem' to represent a faceless body, general dislike of authority.

Toussaint  
a slave

**Short verse and irregular rhyme** creates an almost drum beat. This can reflect the Caribbean traditions of music and verbal passing on of stories.

with vision  
lick back  
Napoleon  
battalion  
and first Black

The stanza also looks at a conflict orientated character indicated by words such as 'battalion', 'thorn' and 'revolution'.

Republic born  
Toussaint de thorn  
to de French  
Toussaint de beacon  
of de Haitian Revolution

**Juxtaposed** myth v reality to indicate in part that fact or fiction, they all have the same relevance to the speaker because they do not reflect their culture or heritage.

Dem tell me bout de man who discover de balloon  
and de cow who jump over de moon  
Dem tell me bout de dish ran away with de spoon  
but dem never tell me bout Nanny de maroon

**Rhyme** helps build the sense of rhythm and pace, in part as if the poet is getting riled up the further he goes.

Nanny  
see-far woman  
of mountain dream  
fire-woman struggle  
hopeful stream  
to freedom river

**Natural imagery** suggests the power of this figure and also the very different ways we look at figures, perhaps suggesting a cultural emphasises with environment we lack in our own history.

Dem tell me bout Lord Nelson and Waterloo  
but dem never tell me bout Shaka de great Zulu  
Dem tell me bout Columbus and I 492  
but what happen to de Caribs and de Arawaks too

**Contrast** famous white ethnic figures with ethnic minority contemporaries. Emphasises the one sided nature of our education, draws in conflict.

Dem tell me bout Florence Nightingale and she lamp  
and how Robin Hood used to camp  
Dem tell me bout ole King Cole was a merry ole soul  
but dem never tell me bout Mary Seacole

**Inaccurate** terms being used in order to emphasise the lack of interest in the history 'dem' tell the poet.

From Jamaica  
she travel far  
to the Crimean War  
she volunteer to go  
and even when de British said no  
she still brave the Russian snow  
a bealing star  
among the wounded  
a yellow sunrise  
to the dying

**Natural imagery** metaphors 'healing star' to create an almost mythological character. Reinforces the idea of oral rote learning and passing down of history and culture.

The way these historical characters are described is also more vivid and passionate.

Dem tell me  
Dem tell me wha dem want to tell me  
But now I checking out me own history  
I carving out me identity

**Violent** metaphor. Expresses the resistance and need to create something which cannot be removed/ wont fade.

John Agard

**Repetition** of 'dem' also a monosyllabic pronoun, almost a drum beat. Highlights the conflict between 'dem' and 'I'.

## If you want to help your understanding you could:

- Explore the background of these characters and their legacy related to conflict.
- Look at oral traditions of history around the world.
- Read the poem out with a drum beat (table?) to capture the rhythm.



## Context:

The poem looks through the voice and experiences of the poet at our understanding of identity through history. We look at how history is taught and the conflict between fact and truths which is sometimes obscured by race or gender.

The poem gives examples of powerful black figures from history, often involved in conflicts themselves in one way or another.

Noticeably the poet emphasises how we often celebrate our national or cultural history, without looking at the history and culture of those we were in conflict with.



Mary Seacole, one of the many figures named in the poem.

## Themes:

Racial identity and history are important to the poem and the poet writes with a phonetic style to capture their voice and create tone emphasising his Caribbean origins. Conflict occurs when we see the contrast with what we are taught and what we are not, the nature of the characters and history involved being 'conflict' and the conflict of the victor (whom we remember) and those we don't. The poet is also at conflict with 'dem' or with fact and fiction to emphasise the conflict in his own identity.

## Structure:

Written in irregular rhyme and with short mixed enjambment in verses the work creates the tone of a man speaking out and angry/frustrated. It also however captures the accent and rhythm of the Caribbean ethnicity of the poet and the parts of the work in italic are almost song like with a rhythm that seems to suggest stories passed down in song or to a beat. This is done to emphasise that not just the history, but the way it is passed on is very much a part of the poets identity and draws on his own Caribbean background, at conflict with the repetitive names and dates he was apparently being taught at English schools.

## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

*-The poet shows the conflict between cultures and the need to forge his own identity by embracing his Caribbean heritage, even if it is not encouraged by authority.*

*-The poet looks, not just at his own ethnicity, but all those groups who are overlooked in favour of the 'white British' contemporaries. Highlighting the conflict in these 'false' history.*

*-The poet uses structure to build in rhyme and rhythm and portray an oral tradition of stories.*

### LOWER MARKS

*-The poet is at conflict with the way he is taught history and his own background.*

*-The poet explores the background of different ethnicities*

*-The poet writes in a way so as to show his accent and the way he talks to the reader.*

## Space for your notes:



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# POEM: KAMIKAZE

**Imagery**, Japan was also known as the land of the rising sun, linking the character to his culture and duty.

**Listing**, creates a sense of intimacy with the pilot of simplicity which juxtaposes the **metaphorical** 'journey into history' of his flight.

**Aside**, used to give a sense of individualism to this nameless pilot and relaxed tone to the piece, contrasts the conflict of the context.

**Simile**, emphasises the attractive temptation of the life below him. Contrasts with his 'journey into history', symbolises his inner conflict.

**Symbolic** Figure of 8 ∞ the infinity symbol, repetitive cycle and feeling trapped by his destiny.

The fish represent the aircraft, the 'flash of silver' **metaphor** for their honour and glory.

**Symbolic** of death and remembrance.

**Represents** inner turmoil and conflict, questioning the strength to defy fate and the pressure on him to do his duty.

Her father embarked at sunrise  
with a flask of water, a samurai sword  
in the cockpit, a shaven head  
full of powerful incantations  
and enough fuel for a one-way  
journey into history

but half way there, she thought,  
recounting it later to her children,  
he must have looked far down  
at the little fishing boats  
strung out like bunting  
on a green-blue translucent sea

and beneath them, arcing in swathes  
like a huge flag waved first one way  
then the other in a figure of eight,  
the dark shoals of fishes  
flashing silver as their bellies  
swivelled towards the sun

and remembered how he  
and his brothers waiting on the shore  
built cairns of pearl-grey pebbles  
to see whose withstood longest  
the turbulent inrush of breakers  
bringing their father's boat safe

**The fish represent** the pilots and his fate is linked with theirs, eventually they will be caught.  
**Ambiguity.**

**Futility** people, like the sand, will eventually succumb to fate/nature,, but he seeks to hang on for as long as he can, but what is the point?

– yes, grandfather's boat – safe  
to the shore, salt-sodden, awash  
with cloud-marked mackerel,  
black crabs, feathery prawns,  
the loose silver of whitebait and once  
a tuna, the dark prince, muscular, dangerous.

And though he came back  
my mother never spoke again  
in his presence, nor did she meet his eyes  
and the neighbours too, they treated him  
as though he no longer existed,  
only we children still chattered and laughed

till gradually we too learned  
to be silent, to live as though  
he had never returned, that this  
was no longer the father we loved.

And sometimes, she said, he must have wondered  
which had been the better way to die.

Beatrice Garland

**Aside** changes font to suggest the daughter, speaking to the children, emphasise individual/personal account of history, at odds with our views of these nameless pilots.

**Sibilance** shows the ocean wave sounds. Symbolic of the tide, which like him, returns.

**Listing** of the catch on the boat connotes the childhood joys and innocence which are darkened by the events of the pilot's life. The inclusion of the tuna and the metaphor forebodes the darker end to the poem.

**Pronoun** leaves him nameless as though ashamed or difficult to name him.

**Aside** undermines the enormity of the event with matter of fact tone.

**Learned** implies the behaviour is not natural and was forced upon her, that she now realises and regrets this.

**Punctuation** used the dramatically emphasise the 'loved' and created empathy.

**Highlights conflict**, emphasises that he died in the eyes of his family. There is a tone of regret and sympathy at his situation, he had no way out.

**The fish represent** people like the pilot, they are caught in the net of mankind but even without it they are stuck in their same old patterns, emphasises futility.

## If you want to help your understanding you could:

-Look at the history behind pearl harbour and the Japanese code of Bushido, see how they link contextually to the poem.



## Context:

The poem is set around the events of a kamikaze pilot flying to war and then turning back before it was too late. Kamikaze pilots were expected to use up all their weapons and then suicide by flying into their targets as a final act of destruction. It was considered a great honour in Japan to die for your country. The pilot in this poem returns home and is rejected by his family forever after, his own wife refusing to speak to him.

The poem is written both from a narrator and the daughter of the pilot. The narrator explains the events, almost translating the story, while the speaker gives a first person account of how they excluded her father.

The poet questions at the end which death would have been better, to die as a kamikaze pilot young or to grow old with a family who shut you out.

Kamikaze pilot before mission.



## Themes:

The poem is set in a time and topic of conflict, however the real conflict is between the rules of a society 'honour' in Japanese culture, and the will to survive and return to a family. The conflict is particularly profound because there appears to be no right answer and the pilot dies, one way or another, in the eyes of his family, if not in body, the poem explores the futility of trying to avoid your own fate/destiny.

**Structure:** The poem changes to italic/font during the penultimate stanzas and a previous line to indicate the change of speaker, from the narrator/translator to the daughter it appears as if the daughter is passing on the story to her own children and the narrator is explaining this process.

The final couplet hits home the themes of the poem quite dramatically in a very sombre tone but does not offer opinion, challenging the reader to come to their own decision.

The consistent structure uses quite regular syllable patterns drifting up and down in length, this gives the poem a tone of nostalgia, but also the rhythm of the waves which can represent a helplessness, that things will happen, whatever you do, he will still 'die' in one way or another. The use of asides and calm rural language juxtaposes the setting of war, giving the poem a much more personal scope on a major event.

## BY THE END OF THIS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

### HIGHER MARKS

- The poem contrasts the narrator and daughters voices in order to build a more personal and human tone to the poem as well as the pilots story.
- The poem explores the futility of trying to avoid ones own origins and roots, be it natural or man made.
- The use of rural fishing imagery contrasts the war based context and links the pilot to the fish inevitably caught and subject to fate.

### LOWER MARKS

- The poem changes between the voice of the narrator ad the daughter of the pilot.
- The poem shows the pilots hope to avoid death, only to be 'dead' to his family.
- The poem uses a range of fishing and sea like language to show the conflict between nature and man, and how he tries to fight this.

## Space for your notes:



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