

English Literature: Paper 2

Poetry

Power and Conflict



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GLOSSARY OF DEVICES

- Alliteration** – Words beginning with same letter sounds to create a notable emphasis on words “dark dreary dreams”
- Assonance** - Like alliteration, the sound of assonance come from within the word rather than the start “Fearful tears of misery” (emphasis on the e-a-s sounds)
- Consonance** – Consonant sounds at the end of words “wet set of regrets”
- Cacophony** – Harsh sounds in order to make a discordant sound. “dark knuckles wrapping across bricks” (often Ks, Ts, Cks)
- Onomatopoeia** – Words that sound like the effect they describe “splash, slap, crack”
- Repetition** – Repeating words over a verse, stanza or poem to draw focus and add emphasis.
- Rhyme** – Words with similar ending sounds creating a music like effect or flow “theme/stream/dream”
- Rhythm** – Organisation of words to create a noticeable sound or pace, not necessarily musical but with a clear ‘beat’. Can include the structure of the work and is often measured in syllables.
- Allegory** – Something symbolic, an allegory can often be a story that represents larger things, like the tortoise and the hare.
- Allusion** – Referring to something well known, nowadays that could be a celebrity but it could be anything that fits the context of the poem (Shakespeare will make very old allusions we don’t understand).
- Ambiguity/Ambiguous** – A word or idea meaning more than one thing to provoke thought.
- Analogy** – Compare something unfamiliar with something familiar to help people understand.
- Cliché** – Something which is used a great amount and becomes expected or even cheesy, “raining cats and dogs”.
- Connotation/Connote** – The associations with a word e.g. Rose – Love and Passion.
- Contrast** – Closely placed ideas which are opposites or very different. ‘He had cold eyes but a warm heart’

Verse – A line or poem, need not be a complete sentence.

Stanza – A collection of verses similar to a paragraph, separated from other stanzas.

Rhetorical Question – A question intended to provoke thought without expecting an answer.

Rhyme Scheme – Regular or irregular (does it follow a pattern or not) popular examples are alternate rhymes abab, cross rhyme abba, or couplets aabb.

Enjambment – A sentence or on-going piece of text carried over verses or stanzas to continue the spoken effect without pause.

Form – Open (no real pattern or rhyme or length), closed (follows a specific form or pattern), couplets (pairs of rhyming lines), quatrains (stanza of 4 lines, often rhyming), blank verse (iambic pentameter with not consistent rhyme).

Fixed Forms – Some examples include **Sonnets** (3 quatrains and a couplet), **Ballads** (large poems in quatrains often telling a story)

Pathetic Fallacy – Using weather or environment to reflect the themes and contexts of the poem, e.g. a horror genre may involve a dark stormy night, joyful poems may use a sunny meadow.

Foreshadowing – Content in the poem which gives an indication of the direction the poem will take, allows people to guess what will happen or the poet to prepare the reader.

Tone/Mood – The way a poem or speaker is intended to sound, often suggested by the topic, content and structure. This can be very subjective and is often determined by looking at the poem in its entirety.

Denotation/Denote – The literal definition of something without reading too deeply into it.

Euphemism – Where something distasteful is said in a more acceptable way ‘she is at peace’ – she is dead

Hyperbole – An over the top exaggeration for effect.

Metaphor – Direct comparison of two things. States one thing is or acts as another **without** using words ‘like’ or ‘as’

Oxymoron – Two words placed together with differing meanings to create a new meaning ‘bitter sweet’

Paradox – A situation or statement which contradicts itself. ‘the taller I get the shorter I become’.

Personification – Describing an inanimate object or animal with human qualities.

Pun – using words with multiple meanings while intending both, often used for comic effect.

Simile – Comparing two or more objects with words ‘like’ or ‘as’

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 shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd 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 SHELLEY



Structure – Written in a sonnet with loose *iambic pentameter*. Iambic pentameter is pairs (iamb, of sound do –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 rulers ego. Or simply to capture the romantic and exotic tone of a legend. The rhyme scheme is irregular, perhaps symbolic of the broken statue itself, no longer perfect.

Themes – Looking at power and conflict we can imagine Ozymandias as a powerful ruler who sees himself as '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.

The use of the plaque is hugely *ironic*, in that the message Ozymandias wanted to leave as his legacy to the world is precisely opposite to the message the world receives. The 'despair' may be more as a result of the realisation that power illusory and temporary, rather than 'despair' that nobody could ever hope to compete with Ozymandias' glory.

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 Egyptians 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."

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.

In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear:

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning church appalls,
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.

But most through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

William Blake

Context – William Blake was a poet in Victorian/Georgian England, he wrote a selection of poems in his anthologies songs of innocence from experience, most of those poems had a counterpart. The experience poems were often more bitter and cynical whereas the innocence poems were often naïve and simple. London is one of 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.

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.

Structure: Written in four stanzas with a 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 people's refusal to stand tall, Stanza 3 the way people are sacrificed for the rich and the powerful, Stanza 4 how all this poverty is corrupting everything good about family life.

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.

Extract from the Prelude

Extract from, The Prelude

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cove, 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.

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.

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 the 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.

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: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
'Frà 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
Frà Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint



Context – Robert Browning (1812-1889) was a master of the dramatic monologue, a form using a persona who speaks directly to an imagined listener, thereby dramatising the speaker's words and allowing us to judge the persona's character. 'My Last Duchess' (1842) is based on real figures: The Duchess is thought to be the first wife of the Duke of Ferrara, who died three years into their marriage. Browning was a great admirer of the works of Shelley, and this poem displays a similar critique of autocratic rule – in this case the nobility of the Italian Renaissance.

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.

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 his 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.

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 pretence
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

Charge 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 people's views on war of the time. The poem also contains a lot of reference to biblical/religious ideas as well as bravery and fear.

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.



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.

The Charge of the Light Brigade

1.

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.

2.

'Forward, the Light Brigade!'
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:
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.

3.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

4.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turn'd in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wonder'd:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

5.

Cannon to right of them,²⁷
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

6.

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder'd.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

Exposure

Context - Owen was an English poet whose work was characterised by his anger at the cruelty and waste of war, which he experienced during service on the Western Front.

Wilfred Edward Salter Owen was born 18 March 1893 in Oswestry, Shropshire. He began writing poetry as a teenager. In 1915 he enlisted in the army and was commissioned into the Manchester Regiment. After spending the remainder of the year training in England, he left for the western front early in January 1917. After experiencing heavy fighting, he was diagnosed with shellshock. He was evacuated to England and arrived at Craiglockhart War Hospital near Edinburgh in June. He returned to France in August 1918 and in October was awarded the Military Cross for bravery. On 4 November 1918 he was killed while attempting to lead his men across the Sambre canal at Ors. The news of his death reached his parents on 11 November, Armistice Day

Themes: The poem itself is based on war and so links to conflict. The poem itself is about the weather 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 explosives shells for miles and destroy the landscape and yet, nature can still do more harm than any of it.



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 the end. This reinforces the sense of stasis or sameness throughout the poem that nothing is happening. There is use of *para-rhyme* showing words that appears 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 the weather.

Exposure

1.

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.

2.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Someone had blunder'd:
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.

3.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

4.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turn'd in air,
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wonder'd:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the sabre stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

5.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

6.

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honor the charge they made,
Honor the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred.

Storm on the Island

Storm on the Island

We are prepared: we build our houses squat,
Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate.
This wizened earth has never troubled us
With hay, so, as you 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 tragic 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.

Images of terrorist violence can be found throughout the poem. Such as 'blast, exploding, fear and bombarded describe the literal term but also represents the storm of violence happening in 'Northern Ireland' during the Troubles.

First eight letters of the title spell out the word '**STORMONT**' the name of the Government buildings in Northern Ireland. The word Island also has a phonetic similarity to Ireland. Therefore the poem works on two levels: as a description of the storm and as an extended **metaphor** for the political situation in Northern Ireland.

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 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 a very controversial 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 controversial tone.

Context: Seamus Heaney was born in Northern Ireland in 1939, the eldest child in what was to become a family of nine children. Much of Heaney's poetry is centred on the countryside and farm life that he knew as a boy. He won a scholarship to the Catholic boarding school, St Columb's College, Derry. In the 1960s he belonged to a group of poets who, he said, used to talk poetry day after day. He has written many collections of poetry, the first of which was published in 1966. He was appointed Professor of Poetry at Oxford University in 1989 and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995.

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

Bayonet Charge

Context: The poem is about a nameless soldier going over the top in the trenches. Soldiers would have bayonets attached to 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.

Vocabulary choice – Hughes uses onomatopoeia, alliteration and assonance and the senses to bring the images to life. 'Stumbling across...' is an awkward line to read, evoking the sensation of running across a muddy field. 'Bullets smacking the belly' is a violent image emphasised by sound and alliteration. The assonance of 'lugged' and 'numb' draws attention to the simile and its meaning.

Themes: The poem 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 the 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 erratic speed to the poem. This helps again give a structure to the charge but also the confusion and intensity of the battle with explosions and gunfire as well as the jumbled thoughts of the soldier.

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, –

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

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,
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.



Remains

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 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, 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 U.K 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 memory and experiences. Mental health and morality are also key in this.

Structure: The poem is written in *eight 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 controversial *asides* and *syntax* to structure the sentences into a very controversial tone “end of story, not really”. There is also a lot of *enjambment* and *caesura* used to emphasise 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 suggests how numb this soldier is to what is happening.

Remains

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

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
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,

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.

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

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

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,

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

Poppies

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 to key moments of the life of the mother and son.

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

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 the 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 a mother and child. First the mother looks back at Remembrance Day and the idea of the poppy which has helped trigger the memory. Secondly the mother talks about helping her son get ready and seeing him off. Thirdly 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

Imagery- The poem is dense with imagery. Textiles feature strongly, with the central metaphor of felt, indicative of the woman's compressed compacted feelings. The 'tucks, darts, pleats' hint at the swooping, gut-wrenching lurch of her emotions and link with the 'ornamental stitch' at the end – it is also, perhaps, an umbilical image connecting mother and son.



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.

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,

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.

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.

JANE WEIR

War Photographer

In his darkroom he is finally alone
with spools of suffering set out in ordered rows.
The only light is red and softly glows,
as though this were a church and he
a priest preparing to intone a Mass.
Belfast. Beirut. Phnom Penh. All flesh is grass.

He has a job to do. Solutions slop in trays
beneath his hands, which did not tremble then
though seem to now. Rural England. Home again
to ordinary pain which simple weather can dispel,
to fields which don't explode beneath the feet
of running children in a nightmare heat.

Something is happening. A stranger's features
faintly start to twist before his eyes,
a half-formed ghost. He remembers the cries
of this man's wife, how he sought approval
without words to do what someone must
and how the blood stained into foreign dust.

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.
From the aeroplane he stares impassively at where
he earns his living and they do not care.

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 the 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 zone 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 photo they are after.

Structure: Written in 4 stanzas the poem featuring 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.

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 war zone and 'Rural England' the poet is trying to emphasise how out of touch people are about truth of war, as well as how it is more business or bit of gossip rather than life changing and destructive.

Imtiaz Dharker is a contemporary Scottish poet and film-maker. She was born in Pakistan and her family moved to Glasgow in 1950's when she was still a baby. Her background and experience of different cultures provide the themes of her poetry: cultural identity, exile, travel, freedom and conflict. This is quite a mysterious poem. Like the material we call tissue, the poem seems light and insubstantial. However, there is a conflict with the poem (and perhaps, though we can never be sure) within the poet.

Structure: The poem is written as an ongoing 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 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.

The speaker in this poem uses tissue paper as an extended metaphor for life. She considers how paper can 'alter things' and refers to the soft thin paper of religious books, in particular the Qur'an.

There are also real life references to other lasting uses we have for paper in our lives such as maps, receipts and architect drawings. Each of these items is connected to important aspects of life: journeys, money and home. These examples demonstrate how important but also how fragile paper is.

In the final stages of the poem, the poet links the idea of a building being made from paper to human skin, using the words 'living tissue' and then 'your skin'. This is quite a complex idea, and the meaning is open to interpretation. She may be suggesting that the significance of human life will outlast the records we make of it on paper or in buildings. There is also a sense of the fragility of human life, and the fact that not everything can last

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.

Tissue

Paper that lets the light
shine through, this
is what could alter things.

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 loves 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,
or paper smoothed and stroked
and thinned to be transparent,

turned into your skin.

The Emigree

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 harder.

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.

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.

The poem does not have a particularly consistent structure or any use of rhyme, this perhaps encapsulates 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.

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.

The Emigree

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.

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.

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

Checking Out Me History

Context: The poem looks through the voice and experiences of the poet at our understanding of identity through history. We look at our history is taught and the conflict between fact and truths which is sometimes obscured between 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.

Themes: Racial identity and history are important to the poem and the poet write 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 of his own identity.

Structure: Written in irregular rhymes 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.



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

Bandage up me eye with me own history
Blind me to me own identity
Dem tell me bout 1066 and all dat
Dem tell me bout Dick Whittington and he cat
But Toussaint L'Ouverture
No dem never tell me bout dat

Toussaint
A slave
With vision
Lick back
Napoleon
Battalion
And first Black
Republic born
Toussaint de thorn
To de French
Toussaint de beacon
Of de Haitian Revolution

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

Nanny
See-far woman

Of mountain dream
Fire-woman struggle
Hopeful stream
To freedom river

Dem tell me bout Lord Nelson and Waterloo
But dem never tell me bout Shaka de great Zulu
Dem tell me bout Columbus and 1492
But what happen to de Caribs and de Arawaks too

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

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 healing star
Among the wounded
A yellow sunrise
To the dying

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

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.

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 an 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.

Kamikaze

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
- 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 this⁴¹
was no longer the father we loved.
And sometimes, she said, he must have wondered
which had been the better way to die.