

OCR GCSE Poetry Guide:

Conflict Anthology

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A Poison Tree by William Blake

Language

- The poem relies upon the extended metaphor of the apple tree as a representation of the narrator's anger.
- The growing tree symbolizes the growing anger that the narrator harbours for his foe.
- Tending the tree with '**fears**' and '**tears**' symbolizes the narrator's obsessive thoughts about the enemy and the pain caused by the discord.
- The '**apple bright**' could represent a moment of triumph where the narrator is victorious over his foe. Maybe some of his '**deceitful wiles**' have engineered a situation that elevates him and debases the enemy.
- The enemy '**knew that it was**' the narrator who was the cause of his disgrace, he seeks revenge on the narrator, but in doing so, gets hurt in the process when he eats the apple.
- The metaphor '**water'd it in fears**' is used to show that fear is an underlying cause of anger.
- Blake uses sibilance in line 7 with the phrase '**sunned it with smiles**' in order to enhance the growing threat of the festering anger.
- The image of the apple is an allusion to the fruit eaten by Adam and Eve.
- Just like Adam and Eve, the foe steals forbidden fruit and suffers dire consequences as a result. Blake is gently reminding the reader to heed The Bible.
- The language in the last line is ambiguous. The reader is told that the foe lies '**outstretch'd beneath the tree**', but cannot be certain whether he is suffering from the poison or actually dead. This language serves to keep the reader thinking about what really happened, and what could happen next, thus keeping the poem alive in their imagination.

Form

- The poem consists of four quatrains. This gives an illusion of regularity that is at odds with the highly irregular content of the poem. Blake uses this form to make his poem as accessible as possible, so that its message can reach a large audience.
- Blake uses rhyming couplets to create a consistent rhyme scheme that runs throughout the poem. This gives it a 'sing-song' quality, and makes

it sound almost like a nursery rhyme. Nursery rhymes are used to teach children about the world, and this poem also carries advice for its readers, both young and old.

Structure

- The poem introduces a volta after the first two lines, when the focus switches from anger between friends, to anger between enemies.
- The fact that the scenario where the anger between friends can be dealt with in two lines shows that the situation was simple to remedy and that the action of communicating the anger was the right way. After the volta, the remaining 14 lines deal with the complicated and destructive results of harbouring anger.
- A second volta appears at the beginning of line 15 when the narrator reveals the shocking fact that he is '**glad**' his foe has been poisoned. After this turning point, the reader finds it hard to identify with the narrator as his reaction is ugly in its celebration of unhappiness.
- 14 out of 16 lines are end-stopped, giving the poem a measured quality with the impression that the story is being recounted in a precise way so that the moral can be easily perceived.
- Line 12 into 13 uses enjambment. Here, the foe is invading the narrator's garden, and as he transgresses boundaries, so too does the language, suddenly breaking the structure to flow into the next line.

Context

- William Blake was interested in his own literary heritage, loved the works of Shakespeare and produced many illustrations inspired by Shakespeare's plays.
- We may also see some Shakespearean influences within *A Poison Tree*.
- In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, 'fair is foul, and foul is fair' meaning that which looks innocent and wholesome, is actually dangerous. Blake takes up this imagery in his own poem, so the '**apple bright**' looks tempting but is actually poisonous.
- When Macbeth hears that Duncan isn't going to make him king, he says 'Stars, hide your fires; Let not light see my black and deep desires.' This scene is reflected in *A Poison Tree* as the foe waits until the '**night had veil'd the pole**' star, before he goes to steal the '**apple bright**'. In both instances, the characters need the cover of darkness in order to perpetrate their actions because they know that they are doing wrong.
- Blake had a great interest in social reform and used his poetry to try and improve the lives of all people. This poem seeks to teach people that communication is the key to avoiding feelings of anger and fear.

Envy by Mary Lamb

Language

- Lamb characterises the flowers with words such as '**fair**', '**sweet**' and '**pretty**', this enhances the idea that they are a model for the reader.
- In contrast, the human emotions that Lamb refers to are '**discontent**', '**fret**' and '**envious**' showing that people often struggle with negative feelings.
- The rose is personified as Lamb applies emotions such as '**discontent**' and '**fret**' to the plant, this is done in order to draw a comparison between the flower and humans.
- The '**pretty flower**' in line 17 is a metaphor that describes the talents and qualities hidden within a person. It's interesting that here, Lamb uses the generic word '**flower**' rather than naming a particular plant; this reflects the fact that there are as many good and varied qualities to be found as there are species of flower.
- The specific flowers that the narrator does name have distinct qualities attached to them: red roses symbolise love and passion, violets signify loyalty and devotion, while lilies stand for purity. In this way, Lamb subtly uses the language of flowers to introduce a number of desirable qualities into the subtext of the poem.
- The poem makes a pun of the word '**vain**' to suggest the idea that trying to change oneself is futile, as well as the idea that people can become self-absorbed into making themselves better when there is actually no need.
- Lamb's language often makes an appeal to the senses, for example, the reader is given the beautiful image of the '**red-rose**' as well as the sensation of the '**rose's scent**'. Such sensory language gives the poem a tangible feel.
- Lamb uses alliteration in the phrase '**care and culture**' in order to slow the pace, which in turn suggests that self-reflection takes time.
- Lamb presents a very hopeful tone, saying that '**all may find**' their inner worth if only they take a little time to look.

Form

- The poem takes the form of a lesson, as the narrator gives the reader food for thought.
- It comprises of three stanzas each with 6 lines, and a consistent rhyme scheme; these elements give the poem a steady tone that is in keeping with its instructive content.

Structure

- The poem is structured around a logical argument that builds up step by step, using the extended metaphor of the rose-tree.
- In the opening three lines, the narrator reminds the reader that a rose **'is not made to bear'** any other kinds of flowers.
- In the next three lines, this argument is developed as the narrator points out that the rose would strive **'in vain'** if it did try and change its **'natural bent'**. It simply isn't possible for a rose to grow other flowers.
- Stanza two then adds another layer to the logic. Here, the narrator says that if a rose were to try and change, they could only conclude that it had never been able to appreciate the different ways in which it is beautiful.
- The final stanza draws the logic together, saying that **'envious persons'** shouldn't attempt the futile task of becoming something they are not, instead, they should look within and take time to appreciate the qualities they already have.
- The poem finishes by saying that the talents found within will be **'rare'**, this leaves the reader feeling that if they do look at themselves they will be rewarded with a realisation that they are unique and special.

Context

- Mary Lamb, and her brother Charles collaborated on many literary works that were written for children, including their noted *Tales from Shakespeare* and *Poetry for Children*.
- Indeed, *Envy* is the very first poem in the *Poetry for Children* anthology.
- Although *Envy* was written for children, its message is applicable to people of all ages. In the modern world, surrounded by images of airbrushed celebrities, and polished social media profiles, it can be easy to lose sight of true inner qualities.
- Both Mary and her brother were friends with famous Romantic writers such as William and Dorothy Wordsworth.
- The use of nature was a dominant characteristic of Romantic literature and Lamb picks up this trend in *Envy* through her use of the rose tree as an extended metaphor for human emotions.
- Mary Lamb struggled with mental illness, and in 1796 she stabbed her own mother to death. There was an inquest and the coroner returned a verdict of 'lunacy'. For the remainder of her life Lamb was cared for by family members as well as spending periods of time inside asylums.

Boat Stealing by William Wordsworth

Language

- Although set at night, this poem is initially filled with references to light. The '**moon was up**' and the lake is '**shining clear**'. As he rows, the moonlight continues to glitter on the water, and when the narrator looks up he can see the '**stars**' in the sky. Such descriptions of light create a beautiful scene, and it's easy for the reader to understand why the narrator risks stealing the boat in order to immerse himself in nature's sublime glory.
- However, the narrator finds himself cut off from the light and beauty after the encounter with the '**huge cliff**'. On line 31 it '**Rose up between me and the stars**' and this emphasizes the profound effect the experience has upon the narrator.
- The atmosphere of gloom continues to haunt the narrator afterwards, his thoughts become '**dim**' and he feels a '**darkness**', showing that the experience will have lasting effects.
- Wordsworth uses the oxymoron, '**troubled pleasure**' to show that stealing the boat fills him with conflicting emotions and suggests that he is half expecting to encounter the '**huge cliff**' during his venture.
- Wordsworth uses the natural scenery to create an extended metaphor in order to explore the theme of innocence and experience. The narrator initially believes that he understands the world, and that he can see the '**bound of the horizon**'. However, this is an illusion, because behind the '**rocky steep**' lurks the '**huge cliff**'. This new geographical feature represents a growing awareness of the world, and the narrator is shaken by the realisation that life is a lot more complicated than he initially thought.
- Wordsworth personifies the mountain when he says it '**Upreared its head**'. He develops this idea saying it '**Strode after me**'. Through this personification, Wordsworth conveys the sense of threat he suddenly experiences out on the lake.
- The simile '**like a living thing**' shows that he knows this peak isn't a real threat, but that he has come to understand that the world does have threats.

Form

- This poem is written in blank verse and uses iambic pentameter, the meter most commonly associated with this form.
- The unrhymed lines and iambic pentameter mean that the poem sounds naturalistic, and this suits the content, as the poet is sharing a private moment with the reader and doesn't want his thoughts overshadowed by elaborate verse.
- *Boat Stealing* is only a small section from *The Prelude*, a work of epic length.

Structure

- In the first half of the poem there is a sense of exhilaration but the volta on line 26 marks the change from '**troubled pleasure**' to pure horror '**When from behind**' the top of the cave the '**huge cliff**' rears its head.
- On line 6 the narrator '**struck**' and '**struck again**' as he begins to row out into the lake, at this point, this action shows the excitement he feels as he steals the boat.
- Later, on line 29, this language is repeated but this time the action shows that he is now feels panic, not excitement as a result of seeing the dark peak uprear its head.
- The repetition of this phrase contrasts the narrator's state of mind before and after the epiphany he has on the lake.
- Despite all the beauty and excitement felt early in the poem, it ends on a sombre note. This shows that Wordsworth wanted his reader to appreciate the seriousness of the situation.

Context

- Wordsworth believed that significant memories surfaced in the consciousness, and he called these 'spots of time', this phrase is used later in *The Prelude*.
- The incident where he steals the boat is one such spot of time, and *The Prelude* as a whole is Wordsworth's collection of such memories.
- The image of the '**small circles**' made by the dipping oars could represent these spots of time; and the way they melt into one may be a metaphor for how humans can only begin to make sense of their inner lives as they grow older and start to look back on past experiences.
- Wordsworth felt a deep spiritual connection with nature and this is reflected in his work.
- Wordsworth's work falls into the genre of Romanticism, a movement that looked to explore individual experiences and emotions.
- At its core, this poem explores how it feels to gain new knowledge and how this is at the expense of innocence. This is something that everyone experiences as they grow older, giving the poem a universal quality.

The Destruction of Sennacherib by Lord Byron

Language

- Byron uses the simile '**like a wolf**' to describe the Assyrians, making them sound fierce; it also dehumanises them and brings them down to the level of beasts.
- The Assyrian army is described as '**gleaming in purple and gold**' and this shows that they are proud and confident in their advance on Jerusalem, they're not making a surprise attack.
- In stanza two, the temporal language of '**sunset**' and then '**morrow**' makes it clear to the reader that the Assyrian army is defeated in just one night.
- It is interesting that the Angel of Death only '**breathed**' on the Assyrians in order to defeat them, demonstrating the power of both him and God.
- There is a lot of imagery to do with light in the first stanza, for instance, the soldiers have a 'sheen' on their spears. This emphasizes that they are a well-equipped army with new weapons, which in turn makes them seem formidable and threatening.
- The image of the dead horse in stanza four brings pathos to the poem, as the animal was innocent and suffered because of the war-like nature of mankind.
- In stanza five, Byron tells his readers that there is '**rust**' on the mail of the dead Assyrian soldier, which is in direct contrast to the '**gleaming**' soldiers of stanza one, proving that their glamour is quickly lost in the face of the power of Christianity.
- The simile '**melted like snow**' is used to emphasize the fact that for all their '**might**', the Assyrians were no match the Angel of Death. This idea is intensified with the final phrase '**the glance of the Lord!**' Proving that God needed to make barely any effort in order to defeat Sennacherib's army.

Form

- The poem is made up of six quatrains, and rhyming couplets are used consistently throughout the poem, giving it a very regular, dependable form. It could be argued that this reflects the idea that the faithful of Jerusalem were able to depend upon their god to defend them against the Assyrian attackers.
- The meter produces a very buoyant rhythm, which seems at odds with the sobering events contained within the poem, however, it could reflect the jubilant feelings of those who have escaped being attacked by Sennacherib and his forces.

Structure

- The volta appears half way through stanza two, before this, the Assyrian army seems powerful and proud, afterwards they are shown to be no match against the power of God.
- In line 5, Byron uses the image of a forest in summer to show the Assyrians are in their prime. In line 7, the image of a forest is both

repeated and adapted, to emphasize that the Assyrians have been destroyed. This repetition and elaboration makes the structure of stanza two very economical and shows the speed at which the 'Angel of Death' kills the aggressors.

- Stanza five details the still and silent battlefield, this is juxtaposed with the violence and noise found directly afterwards in stanza six, where the widows '**wail**' and the '**idols are broke**'. This juxtaposition shows that there are always consequences to war. In this case, the women grieve for loved ones, but also question their culture and faith having lost the battle.
- Every line is end-stopped, giving the structure a feeling of containment, possibly reflecting the idea that the Assyrian soldiers could not escape from the fatal actions of the Angel of Death.

Context

- *The Destruction of Sennacherib* alludes to Biblical accounts of Sennacherib's attack on Jerusalem. For example, in the Second book of Kings it states '**on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand**'.
- At the time the poem was written, Britain had been involved in the Napoleonic wars for over a decade, it is arguable that this poem captures the hopes of a nation, as they prayed for a swift and decisive victory against the French.
- The Temple of Baal, which is mentioned in the last stanza was partially destroyed by ISIS in 2015, showing that war and conflict is an ever present problem for humanity.
- Byron was a key figure in the Romantic Movement, which was fascinated with what it considered to be exotic cultures. Romantics were also drawn to supernatural events. Both of these elements are evident in *The Destruction of Sennacherib*.

There's a certain Slant of Light by Emily Dickinson

Language

- The light on '**Winter Afternoons**' beams down at a low angle, often making it blinding; this becomes a metaphor for how individuals often find they cannot see themselves, or the world, with clarity and are blind to the truth.
- As a '**Slant**' cuts through the clouds it may appear like a search light, seeking out someone on the run, who is being hunted down so that they can be captured and returned to their place of punishment.
- Rays of light that stream through the clouds are sometimes referred to as 'Jacob's ladders', this Biblical allusion, along with language such as '**Cathedral Tunes**' and '**Heavenly Hurt**' give the poem a religious subtext and show that the individual is trying to bring definition to their sense of spirituality.
- The theme of religion is also present in the '**seal Despair**', a possible reference to the seven seals in the Book of Revelation, which when broken brought forth Pestilence, War, Famine, and Death amongst other things, all of which can lead to despair.
- In the first stanza, Dickinson creates a sensation of great heaviness when she says that the light '**oppresses**', making its sound like it is bearing down from the sky in a heavy, domineering way.
- The word '**Heft**' at the end of line 3 adds to this sensation with its connotations of both weight itself and of lifting a heavy weight.
- This is even further intensified as the simile '**like the Heft/Of Cathedral Tunes**' adds in the idea of the deep, heavy sound of religious music.
- The effect of this layering shows the intensity with which the narrator feels the crushing emotions of desolation and despair.
- Stanza two begins with the oxymoron '**Heavenly Hurt**', this language suggests that even though life brings suffering, it is worth trying to find '**Meanings**', otherwise we are nothing.
- Line 6 states that the struggle leaves '**no scar**' showing that the narrator is experiencing internal, emotional and psychological turmoil, the effects of which cannot be seen.
- Line 9 tells the reader that '**None may teach it**' meaning that each individual has to struggle with their internal thoughts and emotions on their own as everyone is different and this evokes the theme of isolation.
- Many of the words in the poem, for example, '**Slant**', '**Heft**' and '**Meanings**' are capitalized. This is done in order to accentuate their significance and importance.
- In addition to this, when the words '**Landscape**' and '**Shadows**' are capitalized, they become personified. Here, the personification shows that nature as a whole, as well as the individual, is affected by the pervasive sense of despair that haunts the poem. Through this personification, Dickinson draws a parallel between the external world of the '**Landscape**' and the internal world of the individual.

Form

- In terms of its metre and rhyme scheme, this poem reflects the form found in many hymns. This form enhances the religious undercurrent found in *There's a certain Slant of Light*.

Structure

- The structure of this poem is broken time and time again through Dickinson's use of dashes, which both arrest the flow of language and suggest that much is left unsaid as the narrator struggles to order their thoughts and feelings.
- In line 5, Dickinson plays with syntax to create a line that seems communicated in reverse order. This structuring again adds to the feeling of discomfort present throughout the poem.
- The poem opens with the imagery of the oppressive light and closes on an even darker note, as although the light is blinding, the alternative is darkness and '**Death**'. This structuring suggests that struggle, despair and isolation are ever present throughout life, and this suffering only comes to an end with death.

Context

- Although Dickinson was a prolific poet, she did not desire her work to be published, in fact, she believed that to have the work bought and paid for was akin to an 'auction of the mind'. However, Dickinson did produce fascicles, hand-bound books, for herself, in order to draw her work together.
- This desire to keep her work private is reflected in *There's a certain Slant of Light*, with its theme of isolation and its exploration of the soul of the individual.
- Dickinson was brought up a Calvinist, but in adult life decided to stop attending public worship, whilst still retaining a sense of faith. This struggle with defining spirituality is evident in the poem as religion is a key theme.

The Man He Killed by Thomas Hardy

Language

- Hardy uses speech marks around the words in the poem to show that he is reporting the words of another, Hardy never passes comment on what the man says, he simply retells the veteran's story. This allows the reader to assume that the story comes from experience, not imagination, and this makes it more intense.
- The vocabulary throughout the poem is straightforward, this reflects the fact that the story is told by an ordinary man in his own straightforward terms.
- In line 7 the man says '**I shot at him as he at me**' and here the internal rhyme of '**he**' and '**me**' links the two men to emphasize the fact that at that moment during the battle, their fates were linked together.
- Line 9 ends with a dash in order to create a pause in the poem that reflects the pause in the veteran's speech. This pause signals that the man needs to think about why he shot the other man dead.
- At the same point in the poem, the man repeats the word '**because**' this intensifies the impression that he is playing for time as he struggles to come up with a good reason for killing the other person.
- On line 17 the man exclaims how '**quaint and curious war is!**' This use of litotes seems to suggest that the man is so overwhelmed by his experience of war that he struggles to find the right words to describe it. His understatement shows that words fail to describe the horrors he's seen and done.
- It is poignant that the narrator describes the enemy as a '**fellow**' suggesting that the man was a potential friend and a contemporary, not a threat.
- No proper nouns are used in the poem, which gives it a universal feel, and here Hardy is suggesting that the situation is not an isolated incident, it is common to all wars.

Form

- This poem has a sophisticated form.
- It never deviates from rhyming alternate lines.
- Lines 1, 2 and 4 of each quatrain uses an iambic trimeter rhythm, while line 3 of each quatrain uses an iambic tetrameter.
- This refined form elevates the seemingly straightforward language that the man uses to express himself, so that the work becomes profound and enduring, not just an anecdote.
- The poem takes the form of a dramatic monologue as the narrator explains an experience he had during the war.
- However, the content in stanzas two and three becomes very reflective as the man tries to justify the killing and give his enemy a context. At this point, the poem almost becomes a soliloquy as it seems the narrator has forgotten his audience and is now wrestling with internal feelings about the event.

- The final stanza begins with the word 'Yes;' as if the narrator has suddenly become aware of his audience again and leaves the soliloquy style musings behind.

Structure

- The poem begins as a mystery. The title tells the reader that killing is involved, but stanza one does not reveal any secrets, leaving the reader wondering where the two men met in reality, and what happened between them. This compels the reader to move on in order to discover the answers.
- Stanza two brings answers, but stanza three reintroduces uncertainty as the man struggles to explain his feelings of guilt and incomprehension at the nature of war.
- The enjambment from line 12 into 13 links stanzas three and four. This shows that as the man reflects on his past he can no longer contain his feelings, the overflowing lines symbolize his overflowing thoughts as he tries to convince himself that he did the right thing.

Context

- *The Man He Killed* was written in 1902, the same year the Boer Wars ended. Although Hardy does not name any specific conflict in *The Man He Killed*, he was deeply disturbed by the events that had taken place in the Boer Wars, and it is likely that this influenced his writing.
- Hardy had a particular interest in the Napoleonic Wars and interviewed veterans of this conflict. It is reasonable to think that these conversations informed him of the perspectives of the common soldier.
- Hardy was a prolific writer of novels and poetry and had a profound influence on writers that followed after him.
- He was known to have met and inspired Siegfried Sassoon, the famous World War I poet.

Anthem for Doomed Youth by Wilfred Owen

Language

- In line 1, the simile '**die as cattle**' shows that the soldiers are seen as less than human.
- Furthermore they are being butchered in a mechanized way, on an industrial scale, which has become as routine as the slaughter of cattle in an abattoir.
- The soldiers yet living cannot afford to mark the passing of their fallen comrades, they must concentrate on their own struggle to stay alive.
- Instead, the guns and rifles are personified, and it is they who commemorate the fallen men.
- However, their prayers are '**hasty**', suggesting a lack of care and they sound like '**patter**', in other words, a well-practised speech, said repeatedly and without thought, making it insincere.
- The fact that the prayers are a '**hasty**' '**patter**' also emphasizes the high frequency with which they are said each day.
- Owen maintains a theme of religion throughout the sonnet with references to '**passing-bells**', '**choirs**' and '**prayers**'.
- He presents the trenches as a Godless place where church bells are replaced by the racket of gunfire and then scathingly suggests that the rituals of religion are '**mockeries**' anyway; it doesn't matter that the men have no last rites as their deaths are senseless, no matter what's done to commemorate their passing. He implies that there was no sanctity of life in the trenches.
- The octet is filled with noise, language such as '**stuttering rifles**' and '**wailing shells**' evoke the soundscape of the battle; while the onomatopoeia of '**rifles rapid rattle**' suggests the noise of the gunfire.
- The sound of the '**bugles calling**' the Last Post becomes a bridge between the octet and the sestet and moves the action from the trenches to back home in England.
- The pace slows in the sestet in order to give it a more reflective tone that befits the exploration of the grief felt by those left behind.
- Having railed against the inadequacy of religion in the octet, Owen finds that there is sincerity in the '**pallor of girls' brows**' and '**tenderness of patient minds**', so while the institution of the church provides nothing, the true emotions of friends and relatives ensures that every fallen soldier does have his death marked.

Form

- *Anthem for Doomed Youth* is an elegy as it laments the senseless deaths of all the young men killed in the Great War.
- It takes the form of a Petrarchan Sonnet with a characteristic octet followed by a sestet. The octet focuses on events happening in the trenches, while the sestet explores how civilians at home in England deal with their grief.

Structure

- The octet and the sestet are structured in the same way, they both begin with a question, which Owen then goes on to answer. This question and answer structure makes the reader think, while at the same time allowing Owen to convey his personal opinions and experiences.
- In the octet, Owen responds to his first question when he bitterly repeats the word '**Only**' at the beginning of lines 2 and 3. This use of anaphora emphasizes the absolute lack of care that is given to the soldiers as they die.
- Owen carefully structures the sestet around the theme of grief, so that when the reader comes to the final image of the blinds being drawn down they understand that this is done so that crying boys and pale girls have a private place in which to grieve, rather than because they are trying to shut out the thoughts or memories of the soldiers in the trenches.

Context

- At the outbreak of The Great War there was an initial rush to join the army, and applicants were buoyed up by feelings of patriotism, honour and duty.
- Motivated by a desire for adventure, or just to escape poverty, many young men lied about their age in order to volunteer for the army.
- In *Anthem for Doomed Youth*, Owen highlights the futility of the fight and undermines the propaganda that initially enticed men to join up, showing that war was systematic slaughter, not a glorious escape.
- By 1916, the death toll had run into millions and the British Government passed The Military Service Act in order to conscript men into the army in order to replace all those who had been killed in the first few years of the war.

Vergissmeinnicht by Keith Douglas

Language

- Vergissmeinnicht is German for Forget-me-not, a flower that symbolises remembrance. It is a reference to the wording on Steffi's photograph but also a poignant warning not to forget the horrors of war as a way of guarding against such events being repeated.
- The metaphor of the '**nightmare ground**' instantly sets the scene and informs the reader that the battle that took place three weeks earlier was so terrifying and confusing, it hardly seems like it could have been real.
- The use of the definite article in the phrase '**the soldier**' tells the reader that the narrator and his companions were looking for a particular man. Their very personal motivation for finding this specific man becomes clear when the narrator reveals that this enemy soldier shot at their tank.
- The sibilance in the phrase '**soldier sprawling in the sun**' voices the narrator's hatred for his dead enemy.
- As the men approach their dead enemy, his gun is seen to be '**frowning**' at them and this personification suggests both disapproval and wariness, mirroring emotions that the reader may feel at this point.
- In stanza two, the narrator explains why he hates this man so much with the simile '**like the entry of a demon**'. When the enemy fired at the narrator's tank, he felt like he was battling an evil supernatural force due to the intensity of the pain, fire and suffering that surrounded him.
- On line 9, the narrator uses the imperative '**Look**' to make the reader jump to attention, echoing his own military orders.
- The narrator defiantly states that they view the enemy's corpse '**almost with content**'. The pain and fear they suffered at his hands during the battle has transformed into triumphant gloating as they survey his '**decayed**' body.
- Here, Douglas juxtaposes the image of the '**decayed**' body with the weapons lying nearby which are still '**hard and good**', this contrast highlights the fragility of the human body.
- In stanza five, the narrator presents several gruesome images to describe the corpse in detail. For example, the simile '**burst stomach like a cave**' suggests that in the past three weeks, the dead enemy has become carrion and that something has eaten his internal organs. The narrator seems to relish this horrific sight, an almost inhuman response that depicts the level of hatred he feels for the enemy.

Form

- The poem has a beguiling form, on first inspection it appears regular with its even, four line stanzas and this seems at odds with the bleak, chaotic scene that is describe within.
- On closer inspection the rhyme scheme falls into a pattern, only to break this and take up a different arrangement.

- In addition, half rhymes such as '**spoil/girl**' and para-rhymes such as '**heart/hurt**' bring a sense of discomfort that augments the disquieting content of the poem.

Structure

- Douglas reveals the details of his narrative piece by piece, for instance, initially, the reader doesn't know if the men are seeking out a friend or a foe, such structuring brings tension and drama into the poem.
- The narrator juxtaposes his own callous reactions to the dead body with the grief experienced by Steffi, while he is glad to see his enemy '**abased**', Steffi would '**weep**'. This contrast shows that the narrator knows his own reactions are distorted and by the final stanza, his attitude has become softer and more reflective.
- At the end, he perceives that the enemy had a life and loved ones back home and that the enemy's death has also caused a 'mortal hurt' in Steffi.

Context

- In his early life, Douglas was already gaining recognition for his poetry, however, it is his war-poetry that has received the most attention.
- When World War II was declared, Douglas enlisted straight away.
- He was posted to the Middle East and took part in the famous Battle of El Alamein.
- *Vergissmeinnicht* was written in response to Douglas's experiences during that battle.
- The photograph that Douglas refers to in the poem is real and can be viewed online, the reader will see a lady wearing a coat, hat and scarf looking directly at the camera, with the words Steffi. *Vergissmeinnicht* written at the bottom.
- Douglas was later redeployed to Europe and took part in the D-Day invasion of Normandy, and was killed in action just a few days after landing in France.
- Despite being a dutiful soldier, Douglas privately thought that combat was destroying his humanity and this is evident in the cold, callous tone of the narrator in *Vergissmeinnicht*.

What Were They Like? By Denise Levertov

Language

- Levertov wrote this poem in 1966 while the Vietnam War was taking place, but she sets her poem in the future with her two characters looking back to a version of the war that resulted in the destruction of the entire Vietnamese race. She signals this by using the past tense throughout the poem.
- The imagery of nature is used throughout the poem to characterize the Vietnamese as a gentle nation. For example, the second speaker tells the first that the Vietnamese spent their time surrounded by '**rice and bamboo**' under skies of '**peaceful clouds**'. Such imagery suggests that the Vietnamese were innocent and therefore victims of the war.
- This bucolic setting also underlines the idea that the Vietnamese had simple lives with no access to sophisticated technology such as planes or bombs, therefore they couldn't have been the aggressors in the situation.
- Line 15 tells the reader that '**there were no more buds**', this metaphor refers to a loss of new life in general and the loss of children in particular.
- In line 6 the questioner asks '**Did they use bone and ivory, / jade and silver, for ornament?**' This gives the reader a clue about Vietnamese culture and shows they were interested in creating beauty.
- Line 18 tells the reader that '**All the bones were charred.**' The imagery of bone has been inverted, it's a direct link between life before and after the war. The bone has gone from being a material used to create beauty, to evidence of the death and destruction.
- The second speaker uses the adverbs '**perhaps**' and '**maybe**' to show that they are not entirely sure about the answers they are supplying. This emphasizes the idea that the war against the Vietnamese was so ferocious, they have almost been wiped from history. Listening to the answers in stanza two is like hearing about myths rather than about a real human race.
- On line 16 the poet uses alliteration in the phrase '**bitter to the burned mouth**' in order to highlight the suffering that the Vietnamese endured.

Form

- The poem is formed of two stanzas. Stanza one is a list of questions and stanza two is made up of the corresponding answers.
- This form means that the poem can be read straight through, or it can be read by alternating between the questions and their answers.
- The poem is written in free verse, which means that it does not employ a rhyme scheme or a consistent metre.
- This poem was written in the 1960s and at this time, free verse was a popular form used by poets.

Structure

- The line '**Sir, their light hearts turned to stone**' is end-stopped in order to give the reader a pause so that they have time to reflect on what they've just been told.
- The phrase '**It is not remembered**' is repeated twice in the second stanza to emphasize the fact that the war has utterly destroyed the entire Vietnamese nation; there is nobody left to remember details about their lives or culture.
- On line 24 the second speaker speculates that fathers would have spent their time telling '**old tales**' to their sons. This peaceful scene is juxtaposed with the image that there was '**time only to scream**' after the bombs started to fall. This juxtaposition shows that the war destroyed lives, families and Vietnamese culture.
- The poem ends with the statement '**It is silent now**', after all the hesitant answers, this is the one definite statement the second speaker can make. It leaves the reader with a lasting impression of bleakness.

Context

- America was involved in Vietnam's affairs from 1955, with active combat spanning the years 1965 to 1973.
- In 1965 America launched Operation Rolling Thunder, their first bombing campaign against the Vietnamese communists; this lasted for three years. In 1972, Operation Linebacker, another bombing campaign, was initiated.
- These bombing raids used technology such as cluster bombs and napalm bombs, both of which caused horrific suffering to casualties, civilians and military personnel alike.
- Both of these operations had a policy of sustained and heavy bombing.
- Millions of Vietnamese people were killed during the Vietnam War, many as a result of America's bombing raids.
- Levertov was part of the anti-war movement in America and campaigned for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.

Lament by Gillian Clarke

Language

- A nest should be a place of safety where new life can grow, but in line 3, Clarke shows that it has become a place of '**sickness**' and death; this oxymoron shows that the turtle's habitat has been ruined by the actions of man.
- In stanza two, Clarke uses the words '**silk**' and '**veil**', both delicate, soft fabrics, to reflect the fragility of the natural world.
- Also in this stanza, the words '**funeral**' and '**shadow**' imbue the language with the presence of death and darkness.
- The '**funeral silk**' is a metaphor for the black oil that now clogs the cormorant's feathers and will bring death to the seabird.
- The '**veil of iridescence on the sand**' and the '**shadow on the sea**' are further metaphorical references to the oil slick and show that it has spread over both the land and into the water.
- The image of the oil slick spills over into stanza three, and here the metaphor of the '**mortal stain**' again reinforces the fact that this event will bring death and be impossible to wash away.
- In line 8, Clarke uses the name '**Ahmed**' to evoke the image of a civilian individual. In this case Ahmed is trapped at the '**closed border**'; like the turtles and cormorants, he too is unable to escape the devastating effects of conflict.
- The focus then switches to people actively engaged in the war and shows that they too deserve the reader's thoughts and pity.
- Clarke features a soldier, and his '**uniform of fire**' is a metaphor that tells the reader he is wreathed in flame and suffering great pain.
- The poem implies that the soldiers are also victims of the conflict, many of them have found themselves in this situation out of naive, even innocent desires for '**company**' or to be '**in it for the music**'.
- Despite this sympathy with the people involved in the conflict, Clarke returns the focus to creatures and the natural world for the final three stanzas in order to emphasize that they are the ultimate victims as the situation is totally beyond their control.

Form

- The poem takes the form of an elegy, and lists all the damage to the natural world and human life caused by the First Gulf War.

Structure

- Every stanza begins with the words '**For the...**' and each time, this brings the reader back to the title '**Lament**', this reinforces the emotions of regret, sorrow and grief connected with the events of the First Gulf War.
- The first stanza focuses on the green turtle who is pregnant with her '**pulsing burden**' of eggs, and this shows that despite the oil spill, nature tries to continue its struggle for survival.
- However, by the last stanza, the earth is '**burnt**', suggesting that in the end, nature has lost its battle against mankind and war.

- Line 5 features the '**veil of iridescence**' and Clarke returns to this image on line 18 with the '**veiled sun**'. This repetition enhances the idea that mankind, through the actions of war, is drawing a cover over both the earth and the heavens. This drawing of a veil is both shutting us out from the natural world and smothering nature to death.
- In line 18 the sun is '**veiled**' but by next line it has been '**put out**' altogether rather than being merely hidden, showing that the effects of the conflict are moving from severe to irreversible.
- In line 15, Clarke laments that the whales have been '**struck dumb**' by the effects of the war. It creates a chilling tone to think that these intelligent animals are no longer able to communicate with each other as a result of the war. It also foreshadows the '**ashes of language**', which is the final phrase of the poem and symbolises that peace talks failed and that arguments prevailed.

Context

- During the First Gulf War, retreating Iraqi troops opened up oil valves and pipelines as a method of slowing down the U.S. forces that were pursuing them.
- This action caused the biggest oil spill in history and at least 240 million gallons of crude oil flowed out into the Persian Gulf, causing an oil slick that had devastating consequence for marine creatures and sea birds.
- Clarke states that she used media images connected to the First Gulf War as source material for this poem.
- These images included cormorants covered in oil and a soldier on fire after his tank was bombed.

Punishment by Seamus Heaney

Language

- Heaney uses language such as '**naked**', '**frail**' and '**undernourished**' to emphasize the vulnerability of the dead girl, and this makes the reader feel sympathy for her.
- The metaphor '**barked sapling**' refers to the girl's youth and innocence but also conjures images of her being flayed in order to communicate the pain she suffered.
- '**oak-bone**' and '**brain-firkin**' are examples of kennings, two word metaphors that were a common feature of Old English poetry. The use of these kennings reminds the reader that although society may have been brutal thousands of years ago, it also had art and literature.
- Heaney imbues the language with religious references. Not only do these add depth of meaning, they also remind the reader that religion was a key characteristic that defined the different groups during The Troubles.
- The '**Little adulteress**' in the poem refers to the woman accused of adultery in John, Chapter 8. Jesus pronounces that anyone without sin is free to stone her to death; her accusers realised that this rules them out so they slip away.
- This allusion is picked up later in the poem when the narrator says he would have cast '**stones of silence**', meaning he knew Irish women were being punished but he kept quiet. He didn't judge but neither did he speak out to defend them because he had his own sins and didn't want these revealed.
- On line 36 the narrator says that the girl's bones have been '**numbered**', an allusion to a Catholic psalm where the speaker is surrounded by enemies. By using this allusion, Heaney evokes the situation in Ireland, where the civil war often meant people were physically close to their enemies.
- The numbering also refers to the fact that the girl's body has been catalogued by historians and anthropologists. Indignity continues after death as she is '**exposed**' and put on display in a museum. Despite all the opportunities for study that her body brings, the irony is that we know nothing more today than we did thousands of years ago, in that humans haven't learnt to be tolerant.
- Heaney is careful not to identify any particular group, his generic language allows the blame to settle on all parties.
- The language is filled with aural techniques, such as the alliteration in '**body in the bog**' and the assonance of '**oak-bone**'. Such techniques produce harmony in the language, and is maybe Heaney's way of counteracting the brutality of the world. Humans may be cruel and ignorant, but they can also bring order and beauty.

Form

- The even four line stanzas give the poem a measured form and seem to reflect the moderated way in which the narrator tries to work through his own feelings of guilt and his observations about human nature.

Structure

- The poem begins with the narrator empathising with the girl from the bog, he can '**feel**' what it was like for her to be led to her humiliating and painful death.
- However, this empathy only leads him to '**artful**' voyeurism, by line 27, he admits that he '**stood dumb**' while women were abused, and by the end of the poem, admits that he can '**understand**' the tribal motivations for violence.
- On line 18, the simile '**like a stubble of black corn**' is used to show that the girl's hair was shaved as part of the humiliating ritual that took place before her execution. This episode foreshadows the modern day Irish women who are '**cauled in tar**', their heads being doused in black tar as their punishment. Such structuring draws the past and present together in order to show that mankind has not developed.

Context

- *Punishment* is part of a series of poems called *Bog Bodies*, inspired by the discovery of human remains that had been preserved in a bog for thousands of years.
- All the *Bog Bodies* poems were published in 1975 in a collection called *North*, and in this anthology, Heaney looked to explore The Troubles of Northern Ireland.
- From 1968 until 1998, Ireland endured a civil war called The Troubles, which saw conflict between Unionists, who wanted to remain in the UK, and the Republicans who wanted Northern Ireland to become part of the Republic of Ireland.
- Both groups had strong identities, rooted in culture and religion and are the '**tribal**' factions that Heaney references in the last line of his poem.
- The poem speculates on the death suffered by the bog person in order to comment on the ritual humiliation and punishment given to Irish women who had relationships with British soldiers.
- In doing so, the poem shows that humanity has not progressed beyond the brutal customs and values that it held thousands of years ago.

Flag by John Agard

Language

- The flag is described as a '**piece**' of fabric and this has connotations of it being a fragment of something larger, and that it needs to be fitted into the context of other 'pieces' for it to be truly understood, and yet, the poem implies that this doesn't happen. People take this '**piece**' as representative of the whole, leading to an oversimplified view of the world.
- People allow the flag to act as a synecdoche, so the fragment becomes the whole country, its identity and its culture.
- The flag is characterised by the verbs '**fluttering**', '**unfurling**', '**rising**' and '**flying**' and all this movement takes place in the air, symbolising that the flag is above mankind and therefore in a position of power.
- People on the other hand are reduced to mere body parts of '**knees**', '**guts**' and '**blood**', in order to emphasize their mortality.
- The alliteration in '**nation to its knees**' emphasizes the fact that flags hold power over large groups of people and that it is not just lone individuals who are susceptible to it.
- The image of the flag '**rising over the tent**' recalls the kind of temporary encampments pitched before a medieval battle, suggesting that mankind has been waging war under the influence of their flags for a long time.
- Later, the flag is seen '**flying across a field**' showing that nationalism is tied up with land ownership and power.
- The alliteration in '**blood you bleed**' slows the pace here and could be said to echo the slowing pulse of a person as they bleed to death.
- The worldly voice in the poem has nothing but scorn for jingoism, for instance they say that the flag will outlive the '**blood you bleed**', suggesting that nationalism encourages people to give up their lives for nothing and doesn't recognise personal sacrifice.
- Throughout the first four stanzas the worldly voice repeats the word '**just**' in reference to the flag in order to try and diminish its power, however, by the final stanza, this word is reassigned in the phrase '**Just ask for a flag**'. Here it is used to show that it is easy to sign up to a flag in the first instance but then bitterly points out that the price is blind allegiance until '**the end**'.

Form

- This poem takes the form of a dialogue, where one worldly persona responds to the questions of another, more naive persona.
- Agard uses a sophisticated rhyme scheme. The first four stanzas follow the pattern of lines 1 and 3 being linked.
- In the first stanza, lines 1 and 3 have a full rhyme with '**breeze/knees**'.
- In the second stanza, lines 1 and 3 are linked through the assonance of '**pole/bold**'.
- In stanza three, '**tent/relent**' sees a return to full rhyme.

- And in stanza four, lines 1 and 3 have a jarring half-rhyme with **'field/bleed'**.
- This alternation between full rhyme and alternatives reflects the content of the poem, some people fully buy into the symbolism of their flag, while others see the symbolism as disingenuous.
- Agard then deviates from this rhyme scheme pattern in the final stanza. Here, the first line is left unrhymed, while the final two lines are rounded off with a **rhyming couplet**, in order to emphasize that the dialogue has reached a definite conclusion.

Structure

- Every stanza begins with a question from the naïve persona, which is then answered by the worldly voice in the poem.
- In the first four stanzas of the poem **'It's just a piece of cloth'** is a refrain used to emphasize the fact that there is no inherent value in a flag.
- The tone of these repeated lines carries a mixture of anger and incredulity as the knowing persona wonders at how people attach such significance to the cloth, to the point where they are happy to fight and die for it.
- This refrain is then reworked in the last stanza so that it becomes the question **'How can I possess such a cloth?'**, and this structuring shows that the naïve persona has learnt nothing from their more worldly counterpart. Despite hearing all the bitter observations about flags and nationalism, the naïve persona still doesn't see the dangers.

Context

- Agard was born in 1949, in what was then the British colony of Guiana, in the Caribbean.
- Agard was resident in his home country when it gained independence in 1966, and has subsequently lived in Britain.
- Much of Agard's poetry is concerned with national identity and the cultural effects of patriotism.

Phrase Book by Jo Shapcott

Language

- A phrase book only allows someone to 'get by' in a foreign country but its use doesn't amount to being able to speak the language or understand the culture. This then acts as a metaphor for the situation the narrator finds herself in, she can grasp a few elements of the war but in no way does she understand it.
- Shapcott uses a lot of military terminology such as '**J-stars**' and '**Harms**'. This language would be familiar to military personnel and like all jargon, would ease communication between specialists, whilst simultaneously excluding non-specialists from a complete understanding of what is being talked about. This reflects the fact that news reports were both informing audiences whilst at the same time excluding them from the full story as they chose what to show.
- The acronym BLISS is part of the lexical field of military jargon but also strikes the narrator in the more usual sense and makes her remember romantic encounters, and through this, the theme of love is introduced.
- In the past, such romantic encounters *transported* her to the point where she felt '**balanced...in the air**', a metaphor for sheer joy. Now, she seems unable to feel love. In place of the balance, she now feels so '**inside**' her own skin it has become a '**Human Remains Pouch**', and just like a corpse in a body bag, she is passively *transported* in a way that is beyond her control, all of which is a metaphor for how she feels as she tries to engage with the war through the televised reports.
- Military terms such as '**Stealthed**' and '**Cleaned**' are euphemisms for casualties and show that language is often used to disguise the truth of the matter.
- Some of the phrase book elements of the poem such as '**Quickly. Slowly**' and '**Things are going well (badly)**' are contradictory and bring a sense of disorientation to the language that reflects the confusion the narrator feels as she watches events on her television.

Form

- This poem takes the form of a monologue.

Structure

- Key elements of the poem are structured around the questions that the narrator asks.
- On lines 6 and 8 she seems to directly challenge the reader with questions like '**Am I disturbing you?**'.
- Her next question comes much later, on line 28, when she asks '**Have I done enough?**' and seems to link back to the previous question. This tells the reader that what she has said in between these questions is intended to shock them and make them think about the horrors of a war that is both real and dramatized into t.v. entertainment.
- Her next question, on line 30 asks '**What's love in all this debris?**', and clarifies one of the main themes of the poem, which questions how love and relationships can exist in a time of war.

- The final stanza contains a rapid succession of questions, some taken from the phrase book and some naturally occurring, and are used to intensify the feeling of disorientation established throughout the poem, so that both the narrator and the reader seem more confused at the end than they were to begin with. Reflecting the idea that war, and the coverage of war, brings only more questions, certainly no answers.

Context

- The poem *Phrase Book* was written in response to the First Gulf War, where a coalition of troops, including Britain and America, forced the invading Iraqi army out of Kuwait.
- The initial phase of the war was characterised by coalition aerial and naval bombardment against the Iraqi forces, and this is alluded to in the poem with repeated references to '**the pilots**' and the technology they used such as the High-speed Anti Radiation Missiles or HARM for short.
- Since the Vietnam War, audiences had been used to seeing television coverage of conflicts, however, new technology took media coverage of the First Gulf War to the next level with its use of real time footage. For instance, audiences were shown live feeds from missiles as they hit their targets. The narrator in the poem references this when she says she is '**lost in the action, live from a war/ on screen**'.
- At times the media's coverage of the First Gulf War was criticised for manipulating events into overly patriotic narratives rather than transmitting impartial reports.
- Many broadcasting corporations allotted a great deal of air-time to coverage of the war, with CNN providing 24 hour exposure, which is why the narrator feels like the war is in her '**front room**'.

Honour Killing by Imtiaz Dharker

Language

- In this poem, the narrator subverts the concept of an honour killing, so that instead of being the victim, she is slaying the customs and laws of her past.
- She also metaphorically kills her former self, piece by piece, in order to be reborn, phoenix-like, ready to step into her new '**geography**'.
- Dharker alludes to many different religions in this poem, for instance the '**veil**' in line 9 can be a reference to both Islamic burkas and the traditional attire of a Christian bride. The '**mangalsutra**' is a necklace given to the bride during a Hindu wedding, and '**rings**' are exchanged in both Christian and Jewish weddings.
- It is not just one religion that seeks to pervert its laws in order to control women, it is a problem found in a variety of faiths.
- The narrator makes it clear that she is not against religion, she believes in '**my god**' but she cannot abide by spurious rules made in the name of religion in order to control women.
- The narrator describes both her coat and veil as being '**black**', both a literal description and a metaphor for the evil, darkness and brutality that characterised her life up to this point.
- The narrator references many types of clothing. The '**coat**' and '**veil**' were used to control her image in public, while the '**silks**' and '**lacy things**' were used to control her appearance in private, and objectify her into a sexual toy for a '**dictator**'.
- The narrator references the specific body parts of the '**skin**', '**face**' and '**flesh**' all of which are physical characteristics that make a woman sexually desirable. By taking these off she is making sure that the '**dictator**' no longer sees value in her and therefore loses the desire to possess her.
- More importantly, the narrator discards another body part, her '**womb**'. She knows that women are controlled because of their role in the cycle of procreation. By controlling reproduction, men are also controlling issues surrounding wealth as well as passing on their genes.
- The alliteration of the '**rings/rattling**' evokes the noise of a few coins in a cup and enhances the image of the woman, made to beg, because everything has been taken from her.

Form

- After a lifetime of being veiled and subjugated, the protagonist's act of stripping down is for herself and nobody else, therefore, this is a soliloquy, a private experience that she narrates to herself with a stately sense of wonder.

Structure

- The poem begins with the words '**At last**', suggesting that she has been planning this transformative escape for a long time.
- The poem is structured around the narrator taking off layers that have up to this point shackled her.

- In the first stanza it is the outermost layer of a '**coat**' that is removed, while by the penultimate stanza she is squeezing past the '**cage of bone**', metaphorically taking off her entire physical being.
- This structuring shows that she is being methodical in her escape from the past.
- The words '**Let's see**' on line 24 are repeated again at the start of the next stanza and are used to emphasize that the narrator is both intrigued and excited by the prospect of her new found freedom.
- The narrator uses the pause at the end of line 31 to give a flicker of a suggestion that her '**plotting**' may be for revenge, but then the enjambment quickly pulls the reader onto the final line to reveal that she is actually '**plotting**' in a cartographical sense as she plans where to travel to in her '**new geography**'.

Context

- An honour killing is the murder of an individual by their own family because they believe the individual has brought shame on the family, and it is only by the individual's death that family honour can be restored.
- Women are the main victims of honour killings but men can also be targets.
- Common reasons cited as bringing shame include: refusal to accept an arranged marriage, seeking a divorce, infidelity and being homosexual.
- Honour killings are also often motivated by the perpetrators using it as a means to maintain control and ownership of property, land and wealth.
- Dharker says that she wrote *Honour Killing* in response to a particular case where a woman was shot by a family member and the Pakistan senate refused to act against the murderers, calling it an honour killing, and therefore they considered it justifiable.

Partition by Sujata Bhatt

Language

- The title refers to the partitioning of India but also alludes to the fact that the mother partitioned herself from those fleeing.
- The auditory imagery strengthens this sense of partitioning. The mother can '**hear the cries**', '**their noise**' and stands '**listening**', but kept herself partitioned from them because she was afraid, with good reason, of the sectarian violence that often happened at railway stations during the migration.
- The mother repeats that she '**stood**' in her garden and this verb proves that she was inactive during the turmoil, paralysed by her fear.
- The fact that the mother is standing in '**her garden**' shows that her and her family were lucky enough to find and themselves and their land on the right side of the partition.
- The mother recalls that the '**birds sounded different**' and even the '**neem trees brought no consolation**', here nature itself seems to be upset by the partitioning and this shows that the events are having a fundamental effect upon the wider world, as well as on the people directly involved.
- On line 24 '**fifty**' is placed in inverted commas in order to show that this number is in a way meaningless, this is juxtaposed with the truth, which is that '**India is older than that**'.
- The mother goes on to add that '**India was always there**', so that now it is not just old, it is eternal, elevating it to a mystical status in order to convey the deep love she has for her country.

Form

- The poem is written in free verse in order to allow the narrators to recall their memories in a natural sounding way.

Structure

- The poem is structured around the volta which falls on line 20. Before the volta, the daughter is recounting her mother's memories and feelings connected with the mass migration. After the volta, time has moved to the present day and the mother expresses her disbelief at the way the partitioning of India was handled by the British.
- This two part structure enables the poet to show the immediate consequence of the partitioning and the fact that it has had a lasting effect on people.
- The phrase '**And each day**' occurs on line 16 and again on line 18. This repetition allows the poet to convey the idea that the crisis was ongoing. This is supported by the fact that the mother felt it was '**endless**'.
- On line 16 the mother '**wished**' she could make herself go and help those in need and this emotion is repeated again on line 27. This highlights the overarching feeling of the poem, which is that of regret.
- The poet often uses dashes to punctuate the poem in order to indicate substantial pauses, these caesuras occur both mid line and at the end

of lines. They create the effect of the narrators struggling to communicate and this emphasizes that they are talking about a painful subject.

- Also, from line 27, until the end of the poem, the lines become shorter and some are indented. This allows the poet to convey the halting way the mother speaks as she tries to come to terms with the horrific consequences of the partitioning and also of her own failure to provide aid to her fellow human beings.
- In the end, the fractured nature of the structure seems to express that the mother is sobbing as she thinks about what happened.

Context

- The title of this poem refers to the 1947 partitioning of British colonial India into the independent countries of Pakistan and India.
- In the simplest terms, Pakistan was intended to be a Muslim nation, while India would be a Hindu country.
- The last viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten, brought the date for partition forward, thereby exacerbating the political and religious tensions that already existed in the area.
- Cyril Radcliffe, a British lawyer, was given the task of drawing up the boundaries for the new countries even though he had little knowledge of the area. He is the '**man**' that the mother refers to on line 34.
- As a result of Radcliffe's hastily drawn borders, people found they were suddenly in the 'wrong' country.
- This sparked the largest mass migration in human history as millions of people desperately tried to get themselves and their families to the correct country.
- Rioting and sectarian violence followed and hundreds of thousands of people died in the crisis.

How to answer a question when comparing an anthology poem to an unseen poem.

Plan your answer

- Even though you feel under pressure in the exam, it's still worth spending time planning your response to the comparison question.
- This could take the form of a simple table where you jot down similarities and differences.

Comparison is key

- Ensure that you make constant comparisons throughout your work rather than discussing first one poem and then the other.
- Each point you make should refer to both poems.
- Use comparative connectives such as 'whereas', 'likewise' and 'on the other hand' to draw your points together.

Compare the surface story

- Identify the surface story in your poems and then see how they relate to each other. This will help to get you started.

Compare the language

- Look for language techniques such as metaphors, assonance or hyperbole and consider which poem is more effective at conveying its message through such techniques.
- Compare the narrators used in the poems, then state which narrator sounds more sympathetic or believable.
- Compare any autobiographical elements, maybe one poem is by a WW1 soldier and the other is by someone who has no military experience, state whether you think direct experience adds value to a poem?
- Consider the intended audience of both poems, and state which is more successful at communicating its point to its chosen audience.
- Consider the purpose of both poems and state which one is better at achieving its purpose.

Compare the titles

- Consider the titles and ask yourself which one is better in terms of conveying layers of meaning?
- Maybe one title is too literal, or too obscure to be truly effective, whilst the other perfectly sums up the poem.

Compare patterns in the form

- Consider the similarities and differences in form.
- If one poem has a regular form and the other is irregular, what effect does this have on the reader?
- Do both poems break patterns to create effects? If so, which poem does this more effectively?

Compare the structures

- Do the poems employ similar use of stanzas, which poem is better at using its stanzas to build up its message?
- Do both poems use a volta? Were either of the turning points a surprise? If so, what effect does this have on the reader?
- Are there any similarities or differences in the way the poems are laid out? Do you prefer one structure to another?
- Does one poem use more enjambment or end stopped lines than the other? Which poem is more effective in its use of these techniques?
- Do both poems use repetition? If so, which poem does this more effectively?
- Compare the opening and closing images in the poems and discuss which you find more compelling.

Find your evidence

- Ensure that you use quotations and refer directly to the poems to prove your points.
- You may want to use a Point, Evidence, Explain, Link structure.
- As an alternative, you may want to blend short quotes into your writing.

Glossary of poetic terms

- **Alliteration** - Repetition of consonant sounds.
- **Allusion** - A reference to a literary, historical, classical or mythic person, place or event.
- **Ambiguity** – When two or more meanings are present.
- **Archaic** - Language that is no longer in modern usage.
- **Assonance** – Repetition of vowel sounds.
- **Colloquial** – Informal language used in everyday speech.
- **Couplet** – A pair of rhymed lines.
- **Caesura** – A pause, usually signalled by punctuation.
- **Conceit** – A form of metaphor that fuses surprising elements to create a complex image.
- **Double entendre** – Language that has a double meaning, where one meaning is innocent, while the other is risqué.
- **End-stopped** - When the phrase or sentence ends at the end of a line.
- **Enjambment** – When a phrase or sentence runs over the end of one line and into the next.
- **Extended metaphor** – When a metaphor is reused and elaborated upon throughout the course of a poem.
- **Euphemism** – Innocent sounding language with an underlying meaning that refers to something vulgar.
- **Homonym** – When a word has the same spelling but different meanings.
- **Hyperbole** – Over exaggeration for poetic effect.

- **In medias res** – When the action is already taking place at the start of a poem.
- **Juxtaposed** – When two ideas are placed side by side for effect.
- **Litotes** – Extreme understatement.
- **Metaphor** – When a comparison is made without an explicit connection being pointed out.
- **Motif** – A reoccurring image.
- **Octave** – The first 8 lines in a sonnet.
- **Onomatopoeia** – When the sound of the spoken language resembles the meaning of the language.
- **Oxymoron** – When two opposing ideas are placed next to each other.
- **Pathos** – Language that creates feelings of pity and sorrow.
- **Personification** – Giving human qualities to non-human features.
- **Polysemantic** – Having many meanings.
- **Pun** – Wordplay where a homonym is used to give two meanings.
- **Quatrain** – A group of four lines, usually with a rhyme scheme.
- **Refrain** – When a line or phrase is repeated at set intervals.
- **Rhetorical question** – A question that is used to make the reader think rather than respond with an answer.
- **Rhyme scheme** – A set pattern of rhymed lines.
- **Sestet** – The last six lines in a sonnet.
- **Simile** – A comparison that uses the words 'as' or 'like'.
- **Stanza** – A unit of sense within a poem.
- **Synecdoche** – When a part is used to represent the whole.
- **Volta** – Turning point.

Glossary of poetic forms

- **Ballad** – A narrative poem that has been passed along using the oral tradition.
- **Blank verse** – Unrhymed verse that uses iambic pentameter.
- **Concrete poetry** – When the visual shape of the poem reflects the content of the work.
- **Dramatic monologue** – Where the speaker is talking to another character within the poem.
- **Elegy** – A poem that laments the death of something or someone but ends with a sense of consolation.
- **Epic** – A long, narrative poem that follows the exploits of a hero.
- **Lament** – A poem that expresses deep grief.
- **Ode** – A poem that celebrates a person, place, object or idea.
- **Sonnet** – A poem with 14 lines and set metrical patterns and rhyme schemes.

Thanks and good luck with your exams.