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| **Poem & poet** | **What’s it about?** | **Context** | **Language** | **Form & structure** | **Themes & ideas** |
| Ozymandias – Percy **SHELLEY** | The narrator meets a traveller who tells him about a ruined statue he’s seen in the middle of the desert. The statue is of a king who boasts of his power, though it has been destroyed by nature over time. | Shelley was a Romantic poet, who valued emotion over reason, art over logic and nature above all. He also was opposed to the monarchy – many believe the poem is an attack on King George III.Ozymandias is another name for Rameses II, the most powerful Pharaoh of Egypt. | **Adjectives** are used to describe the statue and Ozymandias himself as imposing and intimidating.The king’s arroganceis shown through **hyperbole** and **religious language:** “king of kings” and “ye Mighty” both **connote** power, as well as **alluding** to the Bible.The **alliteration** in the description of the desert emphasise the feeling of emptiness in the surroundings. This is **ironic** given the arrogant inscription on a statue that once symbolised a vast empire. | The **framing** of the story through the **narrator** telling a **second-hand account** of the traveller’s story creates a sense of detachment – possibly to show how irrelevant Ozymandias now is, but also possibly as a way of disguising Shelley’s attack on George III.The poem uses the **sonnet** form, but blends Petrarchan, Shakespearean and a third pattern of Shelley’s devising. This shows how art is eventually altered over time and how structures can be destroyed. | Power of natureArrogance/prideThe impermanence of powerHistory |
| London – William **Blake** | The narrator walks through the streets of London, observing misery everywhere. He accuses the church and monarch of doing nothing to ease the suffering. | Blake was a Victorian poet who believed in social equality and questioned the teachings of the Church. Much of his work dealt with these themes. ‘London’ is part of a collection of poems he called ‘Songs of Innocence and Experience’. The Songs of Innocence celebrated joy, childhood and nature, whilst Experience reflected issues in society. ‘London’ is one of the Songs of Experience. | **Contrasts** show how the misery and suffering affects everything, until nothing, not even an “infant” is left innocent. This culminates with a **paradox**: “the marriage hearse.”There are many words with **negative** **connotations** and **connotations** of pain.Blake also makes reference to the Church, monarchy and law. There is a strong **implication** that he sees them as being complicit in the suffering of ordinary people. | The **ABAB rhyme scheme** reflects the sound of the narrator’s footsteps as he trudges around the city. It is unbroken, showing how the misery never ends. **Repetition** and **anaphora** also show this idea of unending suffering. | CorruptionPlaceFutilityAnger at those in power |
| Extract from ‘The Prelude’ – William **WORDSWORTH** | Wordsworth recalls how he stole a boat one summer’s evening and took it out on the lake. At first, the experience is a pleasant one and he enjoys the beautiful scenery. A mountain appears on the horizon, and Wordsworth is struck by its power and size. He returns home, but his view of nature is forever altered. | ‘The Prelude’ is an autobiographical poem, exploring key moments in Wordsworth’s life.Wordsworth was a Romantic poet, so nature was a key influence on him. | Before the **volta**, the natural setting is described with vocabulary which **connotes** magic and peace to create an idyllic and joyous **tone**.This changes to **verbs** and **adjectives** which **imply** threats and danger. The mountain is **personified** as a pursuer.A final shift sees language which **connotes** seriousness and reflection, and focuses on Wordsworth’s internal thoughts, rather than the scenery.Throughout the poem, Wordsworth uses **pathetic fallacy** and **nature imagery** to **convey** different **tones**, showing how nature is vast and changeable. | The poem is written in **blank verse** –**unrhyming iambic pentameter** (da-DUM x 5 per line). This highlights the importance of the moment.The **steady rhythm**, coupled with **enjambment** and **subordinate clauses** as **interjections** makes the poem sound like natural speech, making the memory feel more intimate.The poem is in three main sections: the light, carefree stealing of the boat which changes at the **volta** and develops a more serious **tone.** In the final section, the narrator reflects on how the experience changed him. | The power of natureMemoryFear |
| My Last Duchess – Robert **BROWNING** | The Duke of Ferrara shows a portrait of his now-dead Duchess to a visitor, revealing his jealousy at her friendly nature, and how he felt she wasn’t grateful enough for his title and power. He hints that he gave orders to have her murdered. It is then revealed the visitor has come to help arrange the Duke’s next marriage.  | The poem is based on the death of the Italian Duchess Lucrezia of Ferrara in 1561. After her death aged just 17, there were rumours that she had been poisoned.Browning is famous for his **dramatic monologues** told from the perspective of disturbing and possessive men. | The use of **interjections** and **rhetorical questions** show the natural, unplanned speech of the Duke, and how he loses control of his emotions. His **vocabulary** also reveals his jealousy and anger at his wife.Browning uses **ambiguous** phrases to **imply** that the Duchess’ death was murder. The Duke **objectifies** both his past and future Duchesses: “his daughter’s self […] is my object”. The **juxtaposition** of him discussing his wife/new bride with him showing off his art collection shows that he treats his wives as possessives, illustrating his jealousy. In the final lines, the staute of “Neptune […] taming a sea-horse” **symbolises** his expectations of his new bride. | The poem is a **dramatic monologue** (one character talking and revealing aspects of themselves). The use of **iambic pentameter** and **rhyming couplets** suggest at the Duke’s desire for control. This contrasts to the use of **enjambment,** which suggest that he is losing control of his emotions.The poem is **framed** by the Duke directing his visitor’s attention to his art collection, showing how the Duke **objectifies** the Duchess. | Possessiveness/jealousyCorruption of powerArrogance/prideIdentityHistory |
| The Charge of the Light Brigade – Alfred Lord **TENNYSON** | British cavalry soldiers charge towards Russian soldiers at the order of their commander. Due to a miscommunication, they are surrounded by enemy forces, who are armed with guns whilst the British only have swords. They fight valiantly and bravely. Many are killed, but their glory lives on. | About a battle in the Crimean War (1853 – 1856). At this point, newspapers were reporting errors made in war for the first time (previously, only military successes were announced) but there was still a strong sense of patriotism. | Many of the **verbs** and **adverbs** have heroic **connotations** to emphasise the soldiers’ bravery.Powerful **verbs** and **adjectives** as well as the **semantic field** of military and war highlight the danger and violence of the battle.Death and Hell are **personified** and there are **religious allusions** further signifying the danger. | The **dactylic dimeter** mimics the sound of the horses’ relentless charge forward. **Rhyming couplets and triplets** are used but there is **no regular rhyme scheme**, reflecting the chaos of the battle.The use of **repetition** and **anaphora** reinforces the men’s bravery and sense of duty, as well as the impending doom and inevitability of their defeat. | Reality of warGlorification of troopsObedienceSense of dutyNational pride/patriotismDeathFutility of war |
| Exposure – Wilfred **OWEN** | Soldiers lie awake in the trenches, fearing an enemy attack. It is cold and miserable and the men’s minds begin to wander: they imagine their homes deserted and taken over by nature; they believe that sacrificing themselves in war is the only way to keep their homes and families safe, but are losing their faith and feel abandoned by God. Many soldiers die and are buried by their fellow soldiers. | Wilfred Owen was a soldier in WW1 and wrote about his own experiences. He was part of a group of poets who wrote about the painful, grim realities of war – a move away from patriotic propaganda.He suffered “shell shock” (PTSD) but returned to the war and was killed at the end of the war.Many soldiers died of “exposure” – hypothermia or sunstroke were common. | **Plural pronouns** (“we”, “us”) show the collective experience of the soldiers.**Rhetorical questions** highlight the monotony and futility of war.**Pathetic fallacy** establishes a cold, bitter, miserable tone. Nature is **personified** as another enemy force, showing how the conditions that the soldiers lived in were as dangerous as the war itself; there is a sense of **irony** that the soldiers die of exposure rather than in battle. Nature is shown as a powerful and destructive force. | The **ABBAC rhyme scheme** reflects the monotony of the soldiers’ experiences.**Half rhymes** reflect how there was no satisfaction to be found and reflect the confusion of the men.The **final line** of each **stanza** is a **half-line** which offers a reflection on the bleak, hopelessness of the soldiers’ situation. The **repetition** in these lines shows the relentlessness of the pain and misery.The use of **caesura** and **end-stopping** | Reality of warDeathNatureFutility of war |
| Storm on the Island – Seamus **HEANEY** | The narrator describes how the inhabitants of an island believe they are prepared for a storm. However, the barren landscape they think of as a positive is revealed to be a negative when the storm hits, and the islanders’ confidence turns to fear. | Heaney was a Northern Irish poet and much of his poetry focused on rural Irish settings. The poem is also based on ‘The Troubles’ in Ireland: terror attacks from the IRA; violent clashes between Catholics and Protestants; republicans wanting independence from Britain; ‘invading’/’supporting’ British troops that occupied Northern Ireland. | The poem is an **extended metaphor** for the political disturbances in Northern Ireland. Heaney uses vocabulary with **connotations** of violence and destruction to show the impact of both the storm and the political disturbances in Northern Ireland.**Assonance** and **sibilance** reflect the sounds of the storm.**Plural pronouns** show the community of the islanders, whilst **direct address** involves the reader. | The poem is in one **stanza**, which could be interpreted as it being build squat and sturdy like the houses Heaney describes. It could also reflect the unrelenting power of the storm.The **volta** at line 14 (“but no”) shows the total loss of confidence the islanders have as the storm provokes fear.The use of **blank verse** maintains a steady **rhythm**, which could also show the unrelenting power of the storm. | Power of naturePolitical unrestFearCommunity |
| Bayonet Charge - Ted **HUGHES** | A soldier is running towards enemy lines as part of an attack. The poem focuses on his emotions as he realises the reality of his situation. He sees a hare killed in gun-fire and hides behind a hedge. | Set in World War One; written in 1957.Inspired by Hughes’ father, who served in WW1, and by WW1 poets. | **Figurative language (similes and metaphors)** questioning the point of war.**Semantic field of violence** shows the reality of war.**Nature imagery** show the impact of WW1 on the natural setting, highlighting the harm war has on nature.  | Starts **in medias res** (in the middle of the action) showing the abrupt nature of the charge.In the second **stanza**, the **pace slows** to reflect the soldier’s bewilderment as he questions the point of war.The “yellow hare” and the “green hedge” **foreshadow** the soldier’s fates of death/desertion. | Reality of warFearCowardiceNaturePatriotismFutility of war |
| Remains – Simon **ARMITAGE** | A soldier tells the story of shooting a looter in a bank raid. He can’t get the man’s death out of his head, especially once he goes home on leave. | Based on a true event in Iraq.Part of a collection exploring the effect of war on ex-soldiers.Many ex-soldiers suffer from Post-Traumatic Shock Disorder (PTSD) which can cause flashbacks and nightmares. | **Colloquial language** (chatty/slang) adds to the effect the soldier is recalling an anecdote, as well as trivialising the man’s death.**Graphic imagery** describing the man’s death shows the horrors of war, as well as showing how the speaker had become desensitised to violence and death.  | **No rhyme scheme** and **irregular rhythm** contributes to the feeling that the soldier is telling a story, as does the use of **enjambment**.The **volta (turning point)** shows the change in mood, showing the effect of the soldier’s PTSD.**Repetition** shows how the killing haunts the soldier. | Impact of warReality of warDeathPTSDMemoryGuilt |
| Poppies – Jane **WEIR** | A mother smartens her son’s uniform before he leaves home – it is implied he’s joining the army. She goes to his room and then to the church yard, feeling nostalgic and lonely. | As well as being a poet, Jane Weir is a textiles designer.Armistice Sunday is another term for Remembrance Day on November 11th, which marks the end of World War One and honours fallen soldiers. Poppies are traditionally worn as they were the only flowers to still grow on the battle fields. | The **semantic field** of sewing is used to show the mother’s care of her son.Birds **symbolise** the son leaving and are traditional symbols of freedom, peace and mourning.**Sensory imagery** shows the mother’s sense of loss as she recalls her son in as many ways as she can.**War imagery** is used to hint at the son’s new role and the danger she fears he is in. The “graves” and “memorial” **connote** death and mourning: they could **symbolise** her sense of loss, or could **imply**that her son is dead. | The **first-person narrative** gives a strong sense of the speaker’s internal emotions and show the intimacy of the mother-son relationship.The poem is **chronological**, showing the mother preparing her son to leave, his departure and then her actions and emotions afterwards. The precise timeframe is **ambiguous** and her memories of his childhood blend with her actions, showing the lingering impact his departure has.The **irregular rhyme and rhythm** and **enjambment** reflect the raw, uncensored emotions of the mother.  | LossGriefDeath (?)WarMemoryFreedom/independence  |
| War Photographer – Carol Ann **DUFFY** | A war photographer is developing photographs that he’s taken in war zones across the world. He considers the safety of his home in England compared to what he’s seen. The final stanza addresses the point that the sympathy of the general public seeing these photos is limited | War photographers are photo-journalists who travel around the world taking photos to show the impacts of war. The poem was based on a friend of Duffy’s. | **Contrasts** between England and war zones.**Contrasts** between the widower’s grief and the readers’ limited compassion.**Emotive language** to reflect the horrors he’s seen and their impact.**Religious imagery** in stanza one to show how solemn and serious the photographer is about his work. | **ABBCDD rhyme scheme** + **quatrains** (4 line stanzas) reflects the “ordered rows”: shows the care the photographer has of his photos and contrasts to the chaos of war.**Enjambment** reflects the gradual revealing of the photo as it develops. | Impact of warReality of warSense of dutyMemoryApathy  |
| Tissue – Imtiaz **DHARKER** | The poem explores the importance and control over humanity that paper has: religious texts, records of births and deaths, maps, blueprints, and receipts. The poem also explores the idea of creating things, especially buildings and human life. | The poem is from a wider collection called ‘The Terrorist at My Table’, which questions how well we know the people around us. Dharker is a Pakistan-born poet who grew up in Glasgow and now lives in both Britain and India. Common themes of her poetry are identity and searching for meaning. | The **semantic field** of light is used to show understanding, (positive) change and enlightenment. Dharker repeatedly explores the fragility of paper through **verbs** (“thinned”) and **adjectives** (“fine, “transparent”), which **juxtaposes** with the ideas that paper is powerful. The **imagery** which links paper to religion, buildings and money suggest both that paper is stronger than it seems, and that social constructs are more fragile than they seem. The **play on words** of “tissue” **denoting** first paper and then human flesh creates a link between paper and humans, which also hints at the simultaneous fragility and strength of humanity. | The **speaker** is detached and distant from the poem, creating a sense that the poem applies to everyone.The **irregular rhyme and rhythm** and the **enjambment** highlights the fragility conveyed through the poem, as well as reflecting a desire for freedom and clarity.The **quatrains** suggest that the poem is built up of different layers, which are linked through **enjambment**, much like paper, tissues, and human life.The final line is isolated, emphasising the connection between paper and humanity. | Power of ideasIdentityPower of humanityCreation |
| The Emigrée – Carol **RUMENS** | The speaker recalls the city she had to leave as a child. Despite the fact it is now war-torn, she has a wholly positive view of the city, and is protective of it, despite threats by an ambiguous “they”, and the fact she cannot return to the city. | Rumens’ poetry often explores the idea of “elsewhere”.The “city” is unnamed, making it **symbolic** of all places where refugees have been forced to flee from. | The city is **personified**, showing the love the speaker has for it, as well as making it seem vulnerable. The use of **possessive pronouns** (“my city”) signify a sense of belonging and protectiveness.The **semantic field** of light is used to describe the city as bright and colourful, showing the speaker’s positive feelings for it. This **contrasts** with the vocabulary with **connotations** of violence and threat.There are many references to **childhood**, including the **allusion** to fairy-tales in the beginning, which could suggest both the vulnerability of the city, and the speaker’s naivety.  | Each **stanza** ends with a reference to sunlight, highlighting the speaker’s positive regard for the city.The speaker’s view of the city grows more solid throughout the poem, culminating in the **personification** of the city.The **irregular rhyme and rhythm** reflects the complex and unsettled state of the city. The extra line in the final **stanza** could reflect the speaker’s unwillingness to let go of her city. | IdentifySense of placePower of positivityWarChildhoodMemory |
| Kamikaze – Beatrice **GARLAND** | A kamikaze pilot is remembered by his daughter. She imagines him setting off on his journey, before viewing the fishing village below him and recalling his own childhood, which causes him to return home. He is ignored by his family and neighbours for his disgrace. | Kamikaze pilots were Japanese suicide bombers in World War II. To be a Kamikaze pilot was a great honour, and military bravery was incredibly important. Cowardice would bring dishonour on a soldier. The honour or dishonour of one person was seen as a reflection on the whole family. | **Nature imagery** is used emphasise the power and beauty of nature, perhaps hinting at the insignificance of human war in comparison.The **semantic field** of fishing is used throughout the poem, as a connection to domestic life (which draws the pilot home). The **descriptions** of the fish **connote** treasure (“silver”, “prince), showing the importance of fishing to Japanese villages, as well as the power of nature. They also **symbolise** flags and infinity signs in their movements.The negative and isolating treatment of the pilot on his return is **ironic**, which the speaker notes: “he must have wondered/ which had been the better way to die.” | The poem is an **imagined narrative** from the **perspective** of the pilot’s daughter, showing the lasting impact of the pilot’s actions and their repercussions. The poem is mostly in **third person**, with **reported speech** in italics as the pilot’s daughter talks to her own children – perhaps indicating her forgiveness of her father or guilt at how she treated him. It could also suggest at how the new generation’s view of honour is changing.The pilot’s own **voice** is absent, emphasising the distance between him and his family, and how he has been isolated.Despite its length, the poem consists of just three **sentences**: the first details the pilot’s flight (as the daughter imagines it); the **end-stop** and **change of voice** at the end of the sentence signifies the pilot’s landing back home, and the end of his honour and family life. The final sentence is comparatively short, making its message (“which was the better way to die”) stark. | WarFamilyLossDutyHonour/prideChildhoodPower of natureMemoryHistory |
| Checking Out Me History – John **AGARD** | The speaker details how he was taught British history, but not history relating to his own Caribbean roots. He celebrates historical figures from Caribbean history before declaring his intent to learn his own history and build his identity on that, | Agard grew up in Guyana in the Caribbean before moving to the UK in 1977. His poetry often explores culture and identity. His poetry also plays with language and grammar and is often designed to be performed. | Agard uses **non-standard, phonetic spellings** and **Afro-Caribbean vernacular English grammar** to portray his own accent and dialect, which highlights pride in his culture and possibly his disdain for the colonial education he has received. **Metaphors** for vision and blindness explore how his heritage has been deliberately erased and how he has discovered the truth. | Agard uses **rhythm** and **repetition** to reflect **oral storytelling** traditions as a means of communicating history. There is significant **contrast** between the **stanzas** which focus on British history and those which focus on Caribbean history. The Caribbean **stanzas** use **broken syntax** to show Agard disgregarding the confining language rules he’s been taught. The short lines increase the pace, making them sound urgent. The British **stanzas** have **simple rhymes** making them sound more childish; this is furthered by the **juxtaposition** of historical figures to nursery rhymes. The British historical figures are glossed over, either in assumption that the audience too has been taught about them, or to dismiss them as unimportant. | CultureIdentityColonialismErasurePower of educationAngerPower of humansHistory |